

Expanding the future of Opera  
through development, mentoring and advancement of volunteer service

# Opera Volunteers INTERNATIONAL

[www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org)



## The Opera Volunteer Voice

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January

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### Join Us in Salt Lake City October 15-18

OVI's getting ready for an altitude adjustment. We're looking forward to exploring the capitol of Utah - elevation of 4,300 ft - from an opera perspective. Nestled between the Wasatch Mountains and the Great Salt Lake, beautiful Salt Lake City



supports a vibrant cultural scene. Come join us as we get just a sample.

We begin on Thursday evening with a lavish welcome reception organized by Ogden Opera Guild in a splendid private home. We'll meet Utah Opera supporters and learn about the opera scene in the SLC area.

Friday's full schedule begins with a meeting of the OVI board in the Capitol Room of the Capital Theater, the fabulous opera house across the street from our Hotel Monaco base. At the close of the meeting Utah Opera Artistic Director Christopher McBeth will speak to us, and singers from the Utah Opera Resident Artist program will give a mini recital. We'll follow this with a trip to the Utah Production Studio for a tour of their set, costume and props facility. Whew!

Freshen up and join us for pre-opera dinner at Caffè Molise, a two-block walk from the opera house. After the first act of *Tosca*, we'll fortify ourselves for the dramatic second act with wine and treats at an intermission reception in the Capitol Room.

Saturday at 10 AM we can join a morning walking tour of Temple Square. That leaves plenty of time to explore on our own until we meet again in the Capitol Room to hear from Walter Rudolph, world renowned expert on Jussi Bjorling. Those staying through Sunday may be able to see and hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The Early Bird fee for the weekend activities (exclusive of hotel, opera tickets and meals other than the Friday pre-opera dinner) is \$125 per person. Download the form from the OVI website to print and mail the registration form along with your check. For opera tickets, call Shawn at 801-869-9046 and mention OVI for our special rate.

Hotel Monaco reservations (\$149 Thursday, \$129 Friday and Saturday) can be made by calling 800-805-1801 and mentioning OVI. For more information, contact Judy Vander Heide by email or phone (801-479-8977).

Use TRAX, the county's light rail system to get from the Salt Lake airport to the hotel. Trains leave the airport every 20 minutes and stop across the street from the hotel - all for \$2.50.

Find us on the internet at [www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org)

## “Summertime and the livin' is easy.”



Music by George Gershwin,  
Lyrics by DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin  
from the 1935 opera Porgy and Bess

Yes, it's officially summertime, and many of you are taking time away from opera, whether volunteering or attending. But for many, opera is in full swing around North America, including Cincinnati Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, San Francisco Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Santa Fe Opera, to name a few companies whose member guilds are busier than ever at this time of year!

For others, summer is a time to regroup – reflect on the past year, elect new officers, plan for the future, take inventory in the opera boutique, and prepare the scripts for the docents to use in school and community programs – all to bring opera to the people of their communities.

For OVI summer is the time between a successful Conference with OPERA America and our own Fall Focus meeting, this year in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Utah, hosted by the Ogden Opera Guild and Utah Opera. Conferences tend to be very busy, with learning sessions, keynotes by important speakers from the field, panel discussions, and celebrations at our annual Awards and Recognition dinner. Fall Focus meetings are filled with fun events, including a focus on the local opera company's activities and sightseeing in the area. Connections with fellow opera lovers and volunteers are easy because it is just OVI, not 600 others! October is said to be the best month to visit Salt Lake City (unless you are a skier!), and we are excited to be there.

I hope you will plan to join us – to participate in our Board meeting, to see Tosca, and to reconnect with opera volunteers from all over the opera world! BRAVO and GRAZIE MILLE to Sheila McNeill for her terrific planning of our recent Conference 2015 activities, and to Judy Vander Heide for her work on Fall Focus 2015!

See you soon!

Rhonda Sweeney, President

## Creating a Successful National Opera Week Event

### National Opera Week

By: Danielle DiStefano, Volunteer

As a young soprano I was very excited to become a board member of the **Erwin H Johnson Memorial Fund, Inc.** at the age of nineteen. I eventually took the position of concert coordinator, and through it I have gained invaluable experience and learned lessons in the business of singing that aren't often learned in the University voice studios. As coordinators of **Celebrate National Opera Week** for our region, our first board meeting was to brainstorm the best way to reach the public, and determine which board members would be best at getting that accomplished. I designed our website, Facebook page and logo, and continue to keep it updated. I chose Vistaprint for our website as it hosts both the domain name and the website for a small fee. The logo became an integral part of our brand used on all forms of our PR materials, including Facebook, social media, as well as the image for entries on free community calendars. That way, the community is coming to recognize it and associate it to the amazing week of events in store.

The Erwin H Johnson Memorial Fund, Inc. has always promoted and supported youth in opera and the arts. During Opera Week, we have designated a special Opera Day celebration specifically for children. In the past, we've been fortunate to have the Hillman Opera Company of SUNY Fredonia perform excerpts from such operas as *La Cenerentola* (Cinderella). Another local opera board graciously provided boxed lunches, and a local bakery brought in a custom sheet cake featuring a glass slipper.

As an opera singer, I realize how important it is to cultivate audiences and inspire the youth. I hope that my participation moves other young singers and performers to look into their local opera guild boards and become members of OVI so we can all work together to grow and expand our beloved art. For further questions you can contact me at:

**daniellegdistefano@gmail.com**

## Mission Possible: Peach State Opera Reaches out to Small Communities and Builds New Audiences

Isn't it refreshing when people and organizations make good on their mission statements? **Peach State Opera**, Georgia's premier opera touring company, was founded with the purpose of bringing opera to small communities throughout Georgia that might otherwise not have the opportunity to see an operatic performance with professional singers.

Last year during a performance of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* in Toccoa, GA, PSO was thrilled when **Union County (Blairsville, Georgia) High School's** choral teacher, **Alicia Covington**, brought eighty of her students to see this delightful comedy. As the last bows were taken, the students rushed to the stage to let the company know how much they had enjoyed the opera.



Seeing an opportunity to channel this youthful exuberance, and perhaps build the foundation for future opera patrons and singers, Artistic Director **Evelyn Hughes** and other members of PSO's all-volunteer Board of Directors worked with Covington to make it possible for these young singers to sing with the company for PSO's 2015 production of *The Elixir of Love*.

Choral conductor Covington accepted the challenge and went to the community to get the financial support to give her students the chance to have this once in a lifetime experience. Music and instructions were exchanged and Hughes and Stage Director **Kurt-Alexander Zeller** traveled to Union County to meet the students and to see how they were progressing with their assignments. They both came home delighted with the preparations that were being made.

Lacking a performing arts center in Union County, GA, the production was scheduled to be performed on February 14, 2015, at the Peacock Playhouse in Hayesville, North Carolina, just across the state border from Blairsville. During the first official run-through on the stage in Hayesville, the directors knew that their belief in these young singers was well founded. The next rehearsal run in costume confirmed for all involved that magic was going to happen at their performance the next evening.

The auditorium filled with excited parents and members of the community, and the young singers did not disappoint. Their weeks of preparation and well trained young voices added a texture to an already outstanding production that will not soon be duplicated.

But wait, maybe it will. Peach State Opera is already in talks with at least two other schools who also want to try this idea for PSO's upcoming season production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. PSO hopes to complete many more such collaborations, giving students not only an opportunity to see live, professional opera, but to actively participate in its production. Not only will students learn about opera, but they will also gain valuable experience working alongside industry professionals. PSO looks ahead to the possibility of enriching more communities and building new audiences for opera in Georgia and the Southeast. For more information on Peach State Opera, its mission and to see additional pictures from *The Elixir of Love*, please visit [www.peachstateopera.org](http://www.peachstateopera.org).

### How to Contact Our Membership Vice-President:

Changed your address? Moving soon? Make sure you let Susan Malott know at:

[membership@operavolunteers.org](mailto:membership@operavolunteers.org)

(415) 565-3921

### DC Conference: Increasing Civic Impact *and having a good time*

Opera Conference 2015, OPERA America/OVI’s annual event, was held in Washington DC at the Marriott Hotel, Georgetown. The theme was “Increasing Civic Impact.” This year, OVI members had a choice to either attend the entire four-day conference or just the last two days of the conference – also known as the “OVI Pass.”

The first day of the full conference was Opera Advocacy Day or “A Day on the Hill.” The day began with a bus ride to the Rayburn House Office Building for breakfast and a training session on a number of current issues relevant to opera.



Among the issues was more support for the National Endowment for the Arts, preservation of charitable giving incentives, and

the need for processing visas more quickly for foreign guest artists. After lunch, each person was given a schedule of appointments that had been made with congressional and senate aides from their states to lobby for these arts initiatives. That evening, the **Washington National Opera Company** treated us to a “Host Company Reception” on the Roof Terrace of The



Francesca Zambello

Kennedy Center. The weather was lovely, the views stunning, and the food and drink plentiful. These receptions are always a good way to meet up with opera colleagues from all over the world. After the reception many

people opted to attend the *Cinderella* Dress Rehearsal – others were off to see the sights or just relax.



Denyce Graves with Mark Scorca

The General Opening Session was Thursday morning with **Francesca Zambello**, Artistic Director of Washington National Opera, **Frayda Lindemann**, Opera America’s board chairman, and OVI President **Rhonda Sweeney** kicking off the conference. Over 500 conferees listened to **Marc Scorca**, OPERA America’s President/CEO, introduce the conference theme - increasing opera’s civic impact. **Denyce Graves-Montgomery** joined Mr. Scorca, sharing her perspective on the power of opera to change lives and strengthen communities. The Keynote speaker was **Roberto Bedoya**, executive director of Tuscon Pima Arts Council.



The rest of the day was filled with options for open sessions and roundtable discussions having to do with different areas of interest. The day sessions culminated with an Exhibitor Happy Hour.

OVI’s Grantors Cocktail Reception was held at Boveda, a Latino-themed bar located in the Westin Hotel. This event was open to Grantor-level and above members. A few of us stayed on at Boveda for a salsa lesson.

Friday was the first day for the “OVI Pass” people to join in the conference events. After the daily General Session, OVI held a Roundtable discussion – open only to OVI members. In this session, Projects of Special Merit award winners were



allotted time to describe their project in depth. We also heard from some of the grant recipients. These discussions are extremely helpful because time is limited to introducing the awards at the Awards Dinner.

In the afternoon, the OVI Board of Directors met. As always, any OVI member is invited to attend the board meeting.

The Awards Dinner was held Friday evening at Morton's



The Steakhouse in Georgetown. Once our appetites were sated, **Mary Earl** presented the awards. Of the four Partners in Excellence award winners, **Houston Grand Opera Guild** member **Kathleen Moore** and **Dana Kane**,

representing the **Opera Guild of Dayton**, received awards at the Awards Dinner. **Art Axelrod** from the **Opera Guild of Rochester** received his award at a dinner in Rochester. **Jeannie Stier Butler**, **Palmetto Opera** volunteer, received her award in Columbia, South Carolina. Projects of Special Merit awards were received at the Awards Dinner by **Zach Hangauer** for the **Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild**, **Janet Potter** for **Glimmerglass Opera Guild**, **Margaret Green**



for **The Performing Arts League of Chattanooga**, **Gloria Jackson** for the **Opera Guild of the**

**University of Alabama**, and **Sheila McNeill** accepting for the **Opera Omaha Guild**.

OVI's Open Session on Saturday was "**Running on Volunteer Power.**" **Laura Lee Everett**, **Director of Artistic Services for Opera America**, moderated this panel. Her introduction to this session was "Stitchers, woodworkers, ushers, docents – volunteers are offering their service to opera in myriad ways beyond fundraising. Learn how companies are effectively tapping into volunteers' passions, talents and expertise to move the field forward. The three panelists were **Brooks Boeke**, manager of **The Friends of Kennedy Center**, **Marsha Leboeuf**, Costume Director of **Washington National**

**Opera**, and **Christopher Tombrello**, President of the **Opera Omaha Craftsmans Guild**. Kennedy Center relies on volunteers to do many of the things that need to be done – **Brooks Boeke** is at the helm of 600-plus volunteers.

**Marsha Leboeuf** relies on volunteer stitchers to do a lot of the more tedious tasks, such as sewing buttons. This leaves the professional



seamstresses more time to focus on more demanding jobs. **Chris Tombrello's** Craftsmans Guild is trained to work with costumes, wigs, makeup, and some set work – he says it all depends on the director and

whether professional people have been hired or not. One of the favorite tasks that the Guild does is run a canteen. The canteen serves artists, orchestra members, and directors comfort food, like tuna salad sandwiches, tomato soup and brownies.

The final General Session featured **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, **Associate Justice of the Supreme**



**Court of the United States**. Justice Ginsburg, a huge opera fan who frequents performances at the Kennedy Center, spoke about her love of opera and her great interest in new operas by American composers. Fellow Justice, **Antonin Scalia**, shares her interest in opera and Ginsburg shared with us that an opera about them is being presented at the Castleton Festival in July called "**Scalia-Ginsburg**" by composer and librettist **Derrick Wang**.



**Art Axelrod**

**Opera Guild of Rochester, Inc.**



Art's love of opera was nurtured by his father and it became a life-long passion. In 2002 he developed a newsletter for a former group, the Rochester Opera Theater Guild, and this led to an invitation from the Brighton Memorial Library to give a series of lectures about opera. Starting in 2004, he organized and led these opera chats in local libraries and community centers aimed at raising the level of appreciation and understanding of opera. Art helped plan the formation of Mercury Opera of Rochester and served as a member of the Board. When MOR's treasurer died suddenly, Art volunteered to take over the treasurer duties. Since the demise of Mercury Opera Rochester in 2011 Art has been a strong advocate for the Opera Guild of Rochester. He is invaluable in providing graphic design, newsletter subscriber data base, technical assistance with mailings, servicing of the Guild's computer, and planning with the development committee. Art's name comes to the top of the short list of those whose tireless work, dedication, expertise, people skills and passion for the art form truly make a sustaining difference in our community.

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**Jeannie Butler**

**The Palmetto Opera**



Jeannie is a leader among leaders, always ready to step in and do what is needed, from positions of responsibility to tasks as menial as clean-up after donor receptions. Not only has she demonstrated her excellent leadership skills, but she is equally enthusiastic about helping plan events, keeping a mailing list, fundraising, searching for volunteers and advocating opera to anyone who will listen. Financial sustainability of The Palmetto Opera is a major goal, and Jeannie, a seasoned and careful numbers specialist among artsy entertainment types, has been indispensable to the effort. She keeps the books and keeps everyone on track. She is passionate about establishing a regular grand opera season in Columbia, South Carolina, and also about offering full productions that combine rich international, national and South Carolina opera talent. It was noted that: Opera is happening in Columbia, South Carolina, and Jeannie Butler has been a critical player. We express our appreciation by including Jeannie in Partners in Excellence."

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**Kathleen Moore**

**Houston Grand Opera Guild**



Kathy's involvement with Houston Grand Opera and the HGO Guild began in the 1990s; and since that time, she has held several board positions and chaired multiple fund raising events. Kathy's true love has been the Houston Grand Opera Studio, the world renowned program for young opera singers, and one of the cornerstones of Houston Grand Opera. For nearly 20 years Kathy has been a subscriber and has provided support for the HGO Annual Fund drive, to the Studio as a Studio Committee member, and as a member of the Laureate Society. She earned the HGO Guild Award of Distinction in 2002, which salutes Guild members who originate or sustain programs that meet specific Guild goals, and the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2004, which is given to the HGO Guild volunteer who best exemplifies a spirit of volunteerism effort and accomplishment. "We enthusiastically support Kathy as Partner in Excellence, an extraordinary example of the power of volunteering, whenever and wherever." "She is more than a volunteer, she is part of our family."

## Opera Guild of Dayton, 50th Anniversary



In 1963, two years after the Dayton Opera Company was formed, a group of opera lovers organized **The Opera Guild of Dayton**. It handled the increasing demands of a growing opera audience: asked for funding, publicized, sold tickets, and entertained singers, members and supporters in grand style. Support for Dayton Opera has grown with cash donations of almost \$1.5 million since 1999. Celebrating its 50th year in 2013, the Guild hosted four major events to remember and recognize its history. Events covered the entire year with variety in ticket prices, allowing Guild members in all financial circumstances to participate. A banner was designed and displayed at all anniversary events; a bookmark listing anniversary events was distributed at all Guild and Opera functions; Opera Notes included articles about the Guild's history in each of its 2013 issues. A handsome remembrance book was published and given to Guild members and used as a development tool to attract new support. A large committee of Guild members planned the successful year of events on a very slim budget. A grant covered the costs of printing the memory book, *Opera Guild of Dayton, 1963-2013*.

## Cincinnati Opera Guild Hosts 10 year Anniversary Reception for *Opera Goes To Church*.

For the last ten years **Opera Goes to Church** and **Opera Goes to Temple** have become some of the most anticipated events for Cincinnati Opera's partner congregations and beyond. Each concert is a uniquely crafted event where audience and artists find inspiration in the power of music to bring people together and create collective joy. Free tickets are available before the concert and they always are gone weeks before the event.

The **Cincinnati Opera Guild** was honored to host the first ever post concert reception in celebration of the Ten Year Anniversary. The anniversary concert was held May 20 at the Lincoln Heights Missionary Baptist Church. The church can accommodate 1700 people and attendance was at capacity. The evening was an audience engaging, rousing concert of jazz, gospel and opera music. Several hundred of those attending gathered in the fellowship hall following the concert to enjoy desserts and coffee.

The Guild arranged for caterers to provide more than a thousand bite size desserts. Guild volunteers arrived early to set up and stayed late to clean up. Guild hosts greeted guests and mingled to ensure the reception's success. Cincinnati Guild members fully embraced the event and the opportunity to host this special anniversary reception.



Al Lopez, Marilyn Ott, Sarajane King, Carla Walker, Karlee Hilliard, Emily Hodges, Richard King  
Taylor McCallam, Marlene Johnson, Edita Hoffman



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Find us on the internet at  
[www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org)

### *The Opera Volunteer Voice*

## ***"What are you doing for National Opera Week?"***

**It's the question you should be asking yourself .... and people you know!**

National Opera Week is a communications focal point, coordinated on a national level by OPERA America and implemented locally by individuals and organizations in communities throughout North America. In addition to offering public programs, participants are encouraged to make announcements about their positive year-round impact, creating a concentrated critical mass of opera messaging.

**You can:**

- ♪ **Promote scheduled performances**
- ♪ **Offer free public events**
- ♪ **Hold press conferences**
- ♪ **Advocate for arts issues and legislation**
- ♪ **Issue season or program announcements**
- ♪ **Conduct social media campaigns.**
- ♪ **Or simply enjoy a performance with a friend**

**October 23-November 1, 2015**