



The Opera Volunteer Voice

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newsletter of
Opera Volunteers
International

on-line issue

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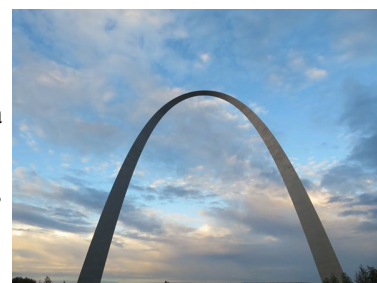


ST. LOUIS | JUNE 20-23

OPERA CONFERENCE 2018

LIFTING MANY VOICES

Lifting Many Voices was the theme of **OPERA America Conference 2018** held June 20 - 23 in St. Louis. OVI attendees heard from key opera personalities. Many of us accepted the opportunity to see four operas at **Opera Theatre of St. Louis (OTSL)**: *Traviata*, *Orpheus and Euridice*, *Regina* and the world premier of *An American Soldier*.



Days were filled with keynote addresses, general sessions and roundtable discussions on special interests. OVI added a prominent voice to the mix with our lively and informative session, "Giving Voice to Volunteers" covering the important relationship of volunteers to the opera. **OVI President Susan Malott** represented us well in the opening session, and we had a well placed media table where we could engage other attendees. At our roundtable discussion OVI member groups shared their award winning Projects of Special Merit, which we highlighted in our previous issue. Nights were filled with music as **ACT 1 tours** shuttled us to the operas. OTSL headquarters and theater are in a charming garden setting where visitors can mingle, enjoy dinner and drinks, and even meet the performers afterwards. OVI Grantor's Circle members enjoyed a private tent dinner reception.

Saturday's Awards Recognition brunch was held at the St. Louis Art Museum. There was also a pre-opera cocktail reception at OTSL Headquarters. In the midst of the activity some of us stole away to visit the Gateway Arch and walk the City Garden directly outside the Hyatt. Arrival a day early enabled attendance to the *Centerstage Concert* and staying a day late provided the colorful pride parade.

Special thanks to the OTSL Guild volunteers who handled registration, gave directions, and engaged attendees at the conference venue, and were the welcoming face of St. Louis.



Find us on the internet at

What I Like to See at the Opera



By Rick Greenman,
Newsletter Editor

As a long time opera volunteer, like many of you, I am dedicated to the continuation of excellent opera. I find innovative productions, wonderful musicianship and gripping drama, absolutely thrilling.

But the thing I most enjoy seeing at the opera is young people. So it was a special treat for me at the June 20 matinee of OTSL's *Traviata* to find myself surrounded by dozens of high school students. It turned out that these 100 or so students had made a four hour journey from Murray, Kentucky as a part of the **Commonwealth Honors Academy**, which sponsors workshops and summer camp programs at **Murray State University**. Their energy and enthusiasm added something to the performance. Their long road trip also included an evening performance of Shakespeare in the park.

Many thanks to Murray State, to **Academic Dean, Dr. Randall Black**, and to the chaperones and sponsors that help bring youth to opera.



The Stockton Opera Guild announces winners of the Kathe Underwood Scholarship competition held February 10, 2018

High School winners Under 25, undergraduate

1st Evalina Espinosa	1st Place Tie
2nd Kristen Gutierrez	Taylor Carnes
	Katherine Elson

Over 25 years 1st Tanya Harris



Tanya Harris and Taylor Carnes

MUSICAL ODYSSEY on the CELTIC SEA

Sept 11 to Sept 21, 2019

Enjoy an eight night cruise of England, Ireland and France aboard the new deluxe five star *Le Dumont-d'Urville*. Included are excursions, Lectures, nightly concerts by a host of extraordinary soloists and virtuoso musicians.

Visit the OVI website for more information

Dates to Remember:

September 12	Hotel special rate reservation deadline for Fall Focus Meeting in Boston, MA
October 1	2018/2019 OVI membership renewal
October 12 - 14	Fall Focus Meeting in Boston, MA
October 26 - Nov 4	National Opera Week
February 1, 2019	Deadline for Matching Grants, Projects of Special Merit, Partners in Excellence applications
June 12 - 15, 2019	2019 Annual OPERA America conference in San Francisco
May 2019	OVI Online Auction
Sept 11 - 21, 2019	Celtic Odyssey Cruise - musical journey to England, Ireland and France

Details can be found on the OVI website

OVI Fall Focus Meeting

October 12-14, 2018
at the
Boston Park Plaza Hotel

50 Park Plaza at Arlington Street
Boston, MA 02116

Boston

Join us for a fun-filled weekend in Boston, MA!

Friday, October 12th

Our weekend begins with arriving in Beantown, then greeting each other for an OVI cocktail reception before heading to the opening night performance of the Boston Lyric Opera's, "The Barber of Seville." You can then choose to stay and mingle with fellow opera lovers, as well as members of the cast, crew and creative team at the opening night party after the performance.

Saturday, October 13th

After breakfast, we will start the day with an informative learning session discussing topics requested by members. Our OVI board meeting will take place during lunch. You have the afternoon free to visit the fabulous city of Boston on a tour or on your own. Then a dinner together at 7pm at the "49 Social" Restaurant.

Sunday, October 14th

Before you leave town, be sure to take the backstage tour of the Cutler Majestic Theatre, led by Boston Lyric Opera.

You don't want to miss this wonderful weekend. Register today!

*** Hotel Registration:** Hotel rooms must be booked individually at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel by 5pm on September, 12, 2018. Room rates: Singles and Doubles (\$269); Triples- 2 beds (\$289); Quads - 2 beds (\$309); Suites (\$409). Contact the hotel directly at 617-379-7129. Be sure to tell them you are with Opera Volunteers International to get our special rate.

*** Tickets:** Tickets for the conference, opera and opening party can be found on Eventbrite. Please copy this Link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ovi-fall-focus-meeting-2018-tickets-48810569728>

*** Tours:** Boston has a large number of tours that can be found online. One suggestion it to view the city's tour website. You can book your tour directly with the respective company. Visit: www.boston-discovery-guide.com.

Opera Volunteers
INTERNATIONAL
www.OperaVolunteers.org

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DETAILS

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ovi-fall-focus-meeting-2018-tickets-48810569728>

Conference registration and all add-on options will be handled through Eventbrite:

Book your hotel room directly with **Boston Park Plaza 617-379-7129** (see p.3)

Conference Registration fee - \$100

(includes workshops, backstage tour on Sunday and more)

Options include:

Friday	Welcoming party	\$25
Friday	Opening night Opera Tickets	\$89.60 & 121.60
Friday	Opera Opening Night Party	\$75
Saturday	Board Lunch	\$45
Saturday	Dinner	\$75

Opening Night: Tickets and After-party

Boston Lyric Opera is opening their season with a new production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre. Tickets will be for opening night, **Friday, October 12, 2018**.

Additionally, you can purchase a ticket to the Opening Night Party immediately following the performance.

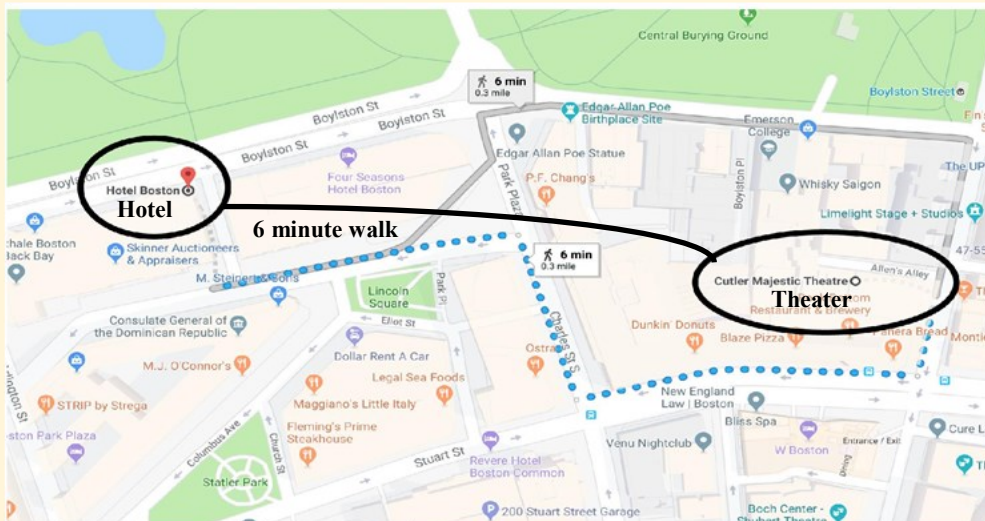
To purchase the reduced special OVI rate, you must purchase your tickets through our registration page on Eventbrite; Tickets must be purchased by September 15th to receive the special rate.

Tickets	OVI Group Price (fee free)
Zone A	\$121.60
Zone B	\$89.60
Opening Night Party	\$75 per person

Zones A and B include center and back of the orchestra section.



Visit BLO's website for more information about the opera, at: <https://blo.org>.



St. Louis volunteers Create Welcoming Atmosphere by Patricia Rice

The article below describes the many ways volunteers help Opera Theatre of St. Louis. But the real difference is the charm, the hospitality and the pure friendliness they emanate. To all that visit, the OTSL guild is the face of OTSL.



Participants gathering at **OPERA America's** June conference in Saint Louis in the shadow of the Gateway Arch were impressed by the many volunteers eager to help. Volunteers stood at elevators and in the hotel lobby holding directional signs to guide participants

to buses and off-site receptions. They approached people whose puzzlement reflected on their foreheads, and offered help. They ran errands, ushered, and, of course, registered visitors.

These volunteers were members of the **Opera Theatre of St. Louis Guild (OTSL)**- a corps of about 300 regular volunteers. The company thrives from more than 12,000 volunteer hours a year, said **Michelle Myers, OTSL associate director for Strategy & Organizational Development**. Depending on the number of supernumeraries required in the festival's four annual productions, volunteers have saved the company between, 8.4 and 6.3 full-time salaries in each of the past three years.



Each evening when attendees arrive in the leafy suburb of Webster Groves to attend productions, they notice eager volunteers helping the audience. Beyond the glamorous but time consuming assignment of supernumeraries, there are many other duties directed by 24 committees. One

team of a couple dozen, the Greeters committee, welcome ticket holders to the opera garden tents and theatre foyer. At each performance knowledgeable volunteers stand in the lobby and garden holding a sign saying "Questions? Ask Me!" **Janet Hoyne**, a former Guild president, was the quiz expert during the conference. Newcomers and old-hands were delighted to get answers. Where to pick up box dinners? Where are the nightly pre-opera lectures? What is the plot of tonight's opera?

Most opera volunteers are recruited by word of mouth, Hoyne said. In the company's early years the first two managing directors **Richard Gaddes** and **Charles McKay** directly asked people for help, volunteer **Jane Feibel** recalled. That first year 1976 Gaddes and the late **Georgea Coleman** were the only employees. Feibel helped with bookkeeping.



"We had lots of housewives helping then," she said. "It was work, but we knew that we were really making a difference. Richard set very high standards and seeing them achieved was exciting."

She and her husband, **Dr. Robert Feibel**, now a life member of the company's board of directors, even helped make tickets in first seasons. "We were asked to help, and we were always thanked," she said.

"We are considered to be experienced, knowledgeable, Opera Theatre volunteers, and are never shunted aside," said guild president, **Gailya Barker**.

Volunteers also staff the theater lobby boutique, which benefits OTSL. It sells the practical: umbrellas, shawls for the A/C, ladies' paper fans, picnic accessories, CDs, books and libretti. The boutique also stocks watercolors, sculpture and fabric art by regional artists, handmade gifts supporting artisans in Third World countries and witty opera-related hats, tee shirts, and neckties.

Cont'd from P.5

Volunteer buyer **Beverly Clarkson**, a retired owner of a chic boutique, knows what sells.

“You have to know what the audience wants to buy,” said **Elliot Zucker**, a retired Merchandise manager at the former May department Stores flagship Famous Barr Stores. For many years he was the opera boutique buyer. About 25 volunteers staff the shop nightly during the season.

“People love volunteering in the boutique,” boutique operations chair **Susie Hahn** said. “Shop volunteers become friends like family.”

Over the six-week, May-June season, boutique volunteers stand at the counters from 6:30 PM till final curtain, about 11 PM. They are fast on their feet during intermissions, but when the performance begins they relax and visit with each other. When the season is over many continue to visit together in small groups for breakfast or dinner, Hahn said. About 95 percent of the shop volunteers have been serving there for a decade, said Hahn, who has chaired the boutique operations committee for 11 years. “Most have season tickets and know so much about opera,” Hahn said. “That is really helpful to our knowledgeable customers.”

With authority, they can suggest buying the opera company’s own libretti editions of each of the year’s four opera productions. Four scholarly volunteers spend months researching, interviewing music scholars and living composers, then, writing and producing the meaty introductions to the booklets. The introductions are so fresh and fascinating that buyer demand led the company to compile a fifth booklet composed just of all four season operas’ introductions.

The introduction, written by volunteer Tani Wolff, to the world premiere of the riveting, two-act *An American Soldier* ran nine pages and included interviews with the composer **Huang Ruo** and librettist **David Henry Hwang**. Dr. Robert Feibel, a medical school professor, had already spent scores of hours researching his introduction for a 2019 edition when the 2018 season closed, his wife Jane said.

After each evening’s performance, singers, conductors, directors, set, costume, lighting and video designers join the audience for drinks in tents set in the acres of candle and torch-lighted garden. Many volunteers get hugs from the grateful cast. Among St. Louisans being embraced were 28 volunteers who met 197 artists and crew at

OTSL Guild Overview

- Nearly 300 volunteers each year
- Over 13,000 volunteer hours in 2017
- 44 Guild Board Members
- 23 Committees

baggage carousels at St. Louis’ Lambert International Airport. After a warm welcome, volunteers drove them to their hotel, apartment, or residence of a family hosting them. Each artist and artisan gets a “Welcome Bag” packed with company and city information, maps and gifts from 18 local businesses. **Elliot Zucker** and co-chair **Linda Seibert** run the transportation committee. They dispatch drivers, reminders and update flight arrival times.

“Artists find it nice to have an airport welcome and transportation,” Zucker said. He and his wife Sharon volunteered at the opera in the 1970s until he took a job away from St. Louis. When the couple moved back to St. Louis they returned to helping at the opera, and renewing friendships that they had made there decades before.

“The drivers like doing it,” Zucker said. They enjoy hearing the stories of the artists recent work, family and plans for the current St. Louis production. In 1976, OTSL’s first year, founding general director Richard Gaddes asked opera buffs with extra bedrooms and extra bathrooms to host the singers. He liked those with swimming pools.

Myrna and Arnie Hershman have hosted singers annually ever since. They invite house guests to eat with them but singers rarely have time. They use refrigerator space for what the couple consider interesting food, like coconut milk and kale chips. Some artists want scant interaction with hosts and they respect that, too. Others appreciate a strong shoulder to lean on when they have ill parents or other emotional issues.

Often volunteers’ friendships with singers goes beyond a warm rapport over wine or ice cream in the OTSL’s tents. Many keep up with their former guests, sometimes

Cont'd from P.6



travelling to cities from Santa Fe to Vienna, London to Calgary to hear them. In 1979 singer Fredda Rakusin was the Hershmans' guest. They followed her career and family life as she married a cantor at a synagogue. Now, 39 years later, the couple shared with delight the news that Rakusin's son is also a cantor.

Many of the volunteers were well out of sight when OPERA America participants visited. The colorful garden is planted, weeded and deadheaded by a core group of volunteer gardeners under staff member **Lucie Garnett**'s direction. Also quiet are seven volunteers who man company phones and do office chores from the first week of rehearsals over the next three months. They are near the front door of the **Sally Levy Opera Center** with its three rehearsal halls.

"We love it and get to know many cast, staff and crew that we help. We talk to (music director emeritus) **Stephen Lord** a lot," said **Rowena Van Dyke**, coordinator of the office volunteers.

Two more committees work far beyond the opera buildings. This year **Jamie Spencer** and **Helen McCallie** lead the opera advocacy committee in meetings with seventeen legislators in the state capitol to advocate for support of all the arts.

And another group educates. Each fall and winter about two dozen docents, and docents-in-training, with strong music backgrounds, attend five or more lectures by music professors, conductors and living composers on the four planned spring season operas. They form their own study groups and share their research.

Michael Herron, an Information Technology high school teacher, transfers docents' videos, slides and music to a disc. Then, docents can smoothly use special computer projectors in multi-media talks. In mid-winter, docents fan out and give dynamic, witty presentations to a variety of groups. This year they gave more than fifty presentations. The docents' presentations draw subscribers and curious people who have never even attended an opera. Docents always explain that the company is a national leader in commissioning new operas. They pass out ticket buying information.

Younger volunteers under forty-five, have their own group, **The Young Friends**. Most have demanding careers and growing young families, and cannot commit to traditional volunteer tasks. They focus on introducing their peers to opera. Many attend early spring cocktail events featuring OTSL singers at chic bars, round up pals for special OTSL picnics/opera performances date nights. The Young Friends program also encourages parents to bring their young children to "**Kids Club**," a babysitting/learning experience while parents attend weekend matinee operas.

"Young Friends are important in getting new audiences," says **Mary Susman**, longtime Guild leader. After a summer breather, in early September, the general director and staff give a thank you party. They invite every volunteer to an elegant picnic under a park gazebo. Departing **OTSL General Director Timothy O'Leary and his wife Kara**, always attended. Nearly every volunteer interviewed said they are buoyed by the leadership's warm appreciation for their hours of service.

"They thank us, continually show their appreciation and respect our expertise," said OTSL Guild president **Gailya Barker**. "We think that our new general director **Andrew Jorgensen** will continue that tradition," she spoke on his first day on the job.

"All our volunteers want people to know how darn good this company is," **Arnie Hershman** said.

Patricia Rice is a journalist who wrote her first article about Opera Theatre of St. Louis in 1976.

2018 Partners in Excellence Awardees

The prestigious Opera Volunteers International *Partners in Excellence Award* program recognizes individuals who have given extraordinary volunteer service to opera in their communities or groups observing special anniversaries.

The awardees of this once-in-a-lifetime honor were acknowledged at the Opera Volunteers International Awards Brunch held last June at Opera Conference 2018 in St. Louis, MO.

February 1, 2019 will be the deadline for next year's nominations.

Julie Alamin

Cincinnati Opera Guild



Julie has been a member of the **Cincinnati Opera Guild** for over 15 years, most recently serving as Membership Co-chair. She has actively recruited members to the guild, made new members feel welcome, and made certain that long-time members are recognized for their service. Julie is an enthusiastic participant of Meet and Greet, a program that welcomes cast members to Cincinnati.

Agneta D. Borgstedt, M.D.

Opera Guild of Rochester



Dr. Borgstedt has been instrumental in initiating many of the **Opera Guild of Rochester's** programs and events. In her long association with the guild, 17 years of which she served as its president, she coordinated the Annual Recital for Donors which presents up-and-coming young artists, began a program of lectures in local libraries, began the monthly newsletter and was an initiator of the Guild's donation of the use of a grand piano to the Lyric Theater. Now in her 86th year she is chair of the Traditional Events Committee.

Muskoka Opera Festival Committee

Muskoka Opera Festival



The volunteers of the **Muskoka Opera Festival** Committee have, since 2010, brought the opera experience to the Town of Bracebridge in Ontario, Canada. The Opera Festival Committee has been committed to ensuring that anyone who attends one of the festival events has an outstanding experience.



Volunteers have raised donations and sponsorships; sold advertising space in the program; hosted performers and organized other accommodations; distributed posters, flyers and road signs; organized the opening night cafe and music; ushered; arranged the opening night dinner for performers and assisted them on performance nights; and much more.

Festivals and events are not only economic generators for the Town of Bracebridge, but also promote cultural well-being. The Muskoka Opera Festival and its amazing volunteers are an important part of this.

2018 Partners in Excellence Awardees

Abby Kreh Gibson**Glimmerglass Opera Guild**

Abby Gibson has been a member of the **Glimmerglass Opera Guild** for over 20 years during which time she has served as chair of the Education Committee, has worked with company members to deliver in-school educational programs, and with a volunteer colleague, presents lectures prior to the Metropolitan Opera Live HD programs. Abby has contributed more than 200 hours of volunteer work every year.

Beverly Fitch McCarthy**Stockton Opera Guild**

In the California Central Valley city of Stockton, an economically challenged community with no permanent opera company, the opera spirit remains vital. This is due in large part to Beverly Fitch McCarthy who, along with eight other women, founded the fundraising arm of the **Stockton Opera Association**, the Opera Guild. Since 1975 Beverly has served several terms as president, chaired the guild's scholarship competition, written by-laws, created and chaired fundraisers and played a major part in raising close to half a million dollars to present more than 50 operas. As with all her other community activities, Beverly continues to work tirelessly and enthusiastically to keep opera alive in Stockton.

David Ryan**Opera NOVA**

David Ryan is above all else an opera lover. He attends and supports every opera company in the Washington, DC, area. But it is with **Opera NOVA** that he has volunteered his time and prodigious computer and data analysis skills in countless ways. David created systems for managing and analyzing financial data, wrote and sent press releases, managed musical instrument donations, helped with grant applications and is Opera NOVA's tech specialist.

David has been a volunteer with **OPERA America** and with **Washington National Opera**. With Opera NOVA he has served as Chair of the Board, Treasurer and Admin Officer – he frequently volunteers up to 30 hours each week.





ST. LOUIS | JUNE 20-23

OPERA CONFERENCE 2018

LIFTING MANY VOICES

The Conference:



Experience Omnivores:

Audiences now hunger for and expect experiences that suit their every need and mood.



The Operas:



Photo: Ken Howard



Traviata

Regina

*Orpheus &
Euridice*

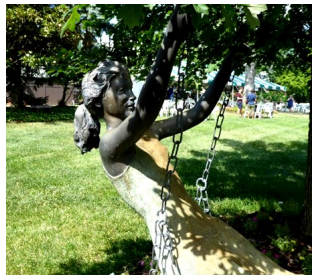
*An American
Soldier*



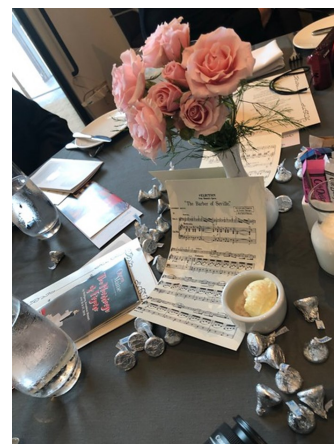
The Cameraderie:



The Garden Experience:



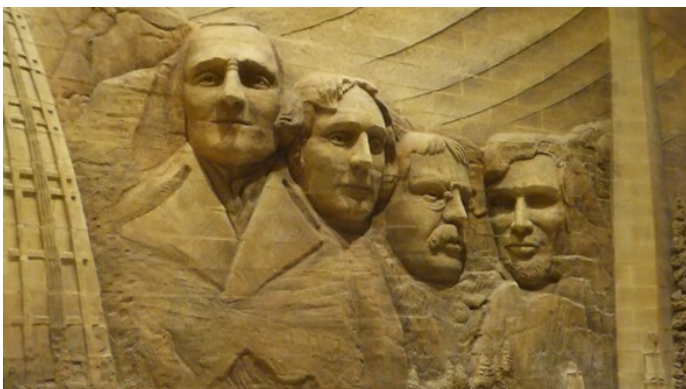
The Celebrations

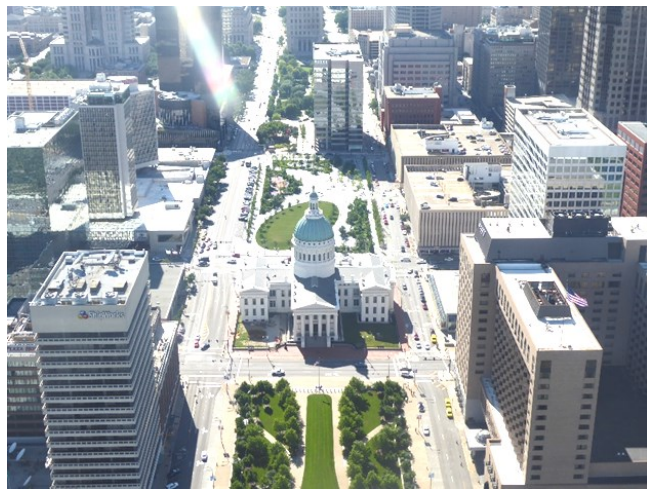


The City



DRED AND HARRIET SCOTT FILED SUIT
FOR THEIR FREEDOM AT THIS
COURTHOUSE IN 1846. THEIR CASE
CHANGED THE UNION'S SLAVE SYSTEM





The End

See you next year in San Francisco June 12-15, 2019