

THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

May 2020
Vol. 44, Number 2

The official newsletter of
*Opera Volunteers
International*

Next issue: July

Free to Join

Opera Conference 2020 has moved online!

**May 13 -
June 3**

**Conference Update:
The OPERA America conference
is coming to you!**

Register here:

[Conference.operaamerica.org](https://conference.operaamerica.org)

OPERA America's 50th annual conference ...

... brings together the field's administrators, artists, and trustees to focus on four key themes that are essential to the future of the art form.

Each week it will focus on a key theme with a keynote address and interactive panel discussion via live stream. These general sessions will be followed later in the week by roundtable discussions for each network. We also invite you to join us for a very special toast to the past 50 years of opera.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE visit conference.operaamerica.org for full details.

WEEK 1 — HAVING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

How can having a bold vision lead us through current challenges & the years ahead?

Wed, May 13	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT	Opening Session
Fri, May 15	4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. EDT	A Toast to 50 Years

WEEK 2 — NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR IMPACT

How will innovation affect the production and enjoyment of opera?

Mon, May 18	2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. EDT	Lead Presentation
Wed, May 20	1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT	Live Replay of Mon. Lead
	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT	Panel Discussion and Q&A

WEEK 3 — CREATING REAL BELONGING

How do we create welcoming spaces for audiences, staff, artists, & trustees of color?

Tue, May 26	2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. EDT	Lead Presentation
Wed, May 27	1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT	Live Replay of Tues. Lead
	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT	Panel Discussion and Q&A

WEEK 4 — MAKING CHANGE

How do we anticipate and manage the accelerating rate of change?

Mon, June 1	2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. EDT	Lead Presentation
Wed, June 3	1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT	Live Replay of Mon Lead
	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT	Panel Discussion and Q&A

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From the President: *Susan Malott*



Dear OVI members and friends,

I hope this message finds you and your families staying safe and well as we enter the third month of our shelter-in-place.

These are extraordinary times. We find ourselves adjusting to a situation that until a short time ago was unimaginable. It has been heartbreaking to see our opera companies cancelling their seasons and it is difficult to predict how things will evolve in the coming months. Will we be able to gather again to enjoy live performances, or will the way we experience opera change in fundamental ways? There are more questions than answers right now as companies navigate a complicated, stressful and uncertain path. The implications are significant for all the people who make opera happen. At the same time, we see an abundance of creative spirit and innovation lead to new ways to see opera. Streaming content is available as never before and many artists are sharing their art and passion with us virtually. Shelter-in-place cannot keep art from happening.

This month we would have traveled to Seattle for the OPERA America / OVI conference to enjoy an enriching learning experience and to celebrate **OPERA America's 50th anniversary**. While we can no longer participate in conference in person, OPERA America has created an opportunity to access Opera Conference 2020 Online during May 13-June 3. The schedule of weekly general sessions and roundtable discussions are free to all with registration on the OPERA America website. There are other resources on the site, including streaming and on-demand content as well as news stories and research articles.

We had looked forward to honoring our **Partners in Excellence** and **Project of Special Merit** and hearing about our **Matching Grant** Program at conference. We hope, instead, to do so at our Fall Focus meeting in Chicago on October 1-4. Plans for that meeting are proceeding with cautious optimism and we will share more information as details are formalized, adjusting as the situation dictates.

This pandemic has far-reaching consequences for all of us. Beyond the cancellation of opera performances, our guilds and support groups are being impacted as well. Yet we know that the transformative power of opera and the resilience of the arts will see us through. Our community of volunteers is strong and it is more important than ever for us to stay connected. In this time of quarantine we seek sources of comfort and connections with our families, colleagues and friends. OVI is here to support you and your volunteers. We are grateful to each of you for all you do.

I send my sincerest wishes for all of you to stay well and I look forward to seeing you again in person to share the joy of live opera performances.

With warmth and gratitude,

Susan Malott

For the latest in opera performances, you can watch online by going to:
operaamerica.org/applications/schedule/index

Embracing Change

**Finding new opportunity
wherever we are**

by Rick Greenman

We are living in a time of profound uncertainty. Everything we have known is in question, our lives have been upended, and our institutions are in peril. There is little we can do to change our current situation, but how we think, and what we do can make a difference to all. Know that life will go on, and eventually we will arrive at a resolution. Though the world in which we emerge will be very different these thoughts may be helpful:

1. This will end.
2. Change is inevitable.
3. Old solutions will not address new problems.
4. It is within uncertainty that we can find the greatest opportunity.
5. Technology can be a useful tool.
6. Resilience and flexibility are key.

Though many of us are cloistered in our abodes we have the world at our fingertips.

Most of us have newspapers, television, telephone, and stationery to connect us to the world. But if we reach out of our comfort zone beyond those familiar objects there is email, internet, virtual meetings and streaming performances and seminars. It is not the same as being in a theater or giving someone a hug, but for now, it is what we have.

OVI Fall Focus Meeting in Chicago

October 1 - 4, 2020 if conditions permit. Watch for details.

Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org

Join us on Social MediaOpera

Facebook

Find inspiration on our Facebook page, with opera volunteer stories, motivational quotes, and more.

Like us at www.facebook.com/OperaVolunteers



Use this QR Code to access the OVI Website.



Twitter

Follow us on @OperaVolunteer.

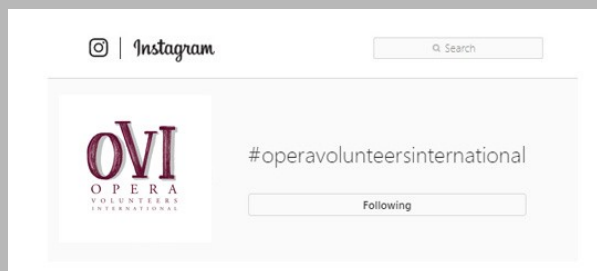
We follow our member groups, so keep up on the activities and ideas of our members and their companies.



Instagram

Follow us today for insta-inspiration and tips

Type “Opera Volunteers International” in the search bar to get started.



Linkedin

Follow OVI happenings on our Linkedin page.



Check out our OVI website at operavolunteers.org for news, information, and resources.



Like us on Facebook to join the conversation!

2020 Partners in Excellence Awardees

The prestigious OVI *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 will be acknowledged at our next conference

Gerry Aitken



Gerry brings passion, expertise, professionalism, and care to every effort in which she is involved. She is a leader among her fellow Guild members and in the greater Houston volunteer community.

Gerry has served as the Vice President of the HGO Guild Boutique, for many years, managing all purchasing, inventory, scheduling of volunteer staff, and the finances associated with the boutique. When HGO's home theater was flooded as a result of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Gerry set up a display table in the company's temporary venue in order to continue selling t-shirts and gift items to patrons.

Houston Grand Opera Guild

Early in 2017, HGO announced a six-year, Seeking the Human Spirit initiative to highlight the universal spiritual themes raised in opera and to expand and deepen Houstonians' connections to opera and to art. A partnership was developed with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), to create growing programming for their book club tours that fit thematically with the Seeking the Human Spirit operas. Gerry agreed to spearhead the program and it has been so successful that it has been maintained in each year of the initiative. In 2019, Gerry traveled to the National Docent Symposium and presented to museum docents the success of the HGO and MFAH Seeking the Human Spirit thematic tours.

Sarajane King



Sarajane joined the **Cincinnati Opera Guild** as Co-Chair of Membership in 2003, and in 2004 became Vice President of Membership and a member of Guild Executive Committee, serving in this capacity six times. Over the years, she introduced new members to the Guild, led the welcoming and orientation process and found new ways to engage Guild members. Sarajane became Guild President in 2015, a season that reflected her great leadership and volunteer focus through the whirlwind of Cincinnati Opera's 95th Anniversary Season, including coordinating Community Ambassadors, Opera Raps, Opera Outbound and many Guild programs and events.

Sarajane possesses the special skills to engage, encourage and harness the support of all different kinds of people. She always works to improve the opera experience for everyone, whether it is volunteering for a fundraiser, coordinating volunteers for school programs, greeting guests at events, or bringing a dish to the Guild's Artist Meet and Greet events for each opera cast.

Cincinnati Opera Guild

Silvia Lin



A San Francisco Opera patron and supporter since 1961, Silvia joined the **East Bay Chapter** in 1990 and was elected Chapter president in 1992, a position she continues to hold today. As Chapter president, she sits on the Board of Directors of the **San Francisco Opera Guild** and served as its Vice President of Chapters on the Executive Committee during the 1990s and again from 2016 through 2019. Under her leadership the East Bay Chapter of San Francisco Opera Guild has grown from 60 members to 400.

Silvia also supports the Guild's signature education program, Opera à la Carte, by serving as a docent in East Bay schools each year. Silvia also supports San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship Program and the Merola Opera Program, both personally and as a Chapter member.

Through her tireless fundraising efforts, her Chapter has been able to contribute to the Opera Center, to the Merola Opera Program and to SFOG's Education Fund Endowment.

San Francisco Opera Guild

Like us on Facebook to join the conversation!

2020 Partners in Excellence Awardees

Jeanette Segal

Arizona Opera League of Tucson



Jeanette has been a devoted member of the Arizona Opera family since joining the board in 1998. She served one term as Board Chair, and three years as President of the Opera League of Tucson. She has been active on multiple committees, including development, gala and governance. In addition, Jeanette currently serves as the President and Chair of the *Tucson Desert Song Festival*, featuring vocal music performances from some of the world's greatest artists, presented in partnership with other Tucson performing arts organizations in an annual recital series with **Arizona Opera**. She is a tireless advocate for the cultural richness of Arizona.

Jeanette never misses an opportunity to make those around her feel welcome. She has generously opened her home on many occasions – from casual donor stewardship parties to elegant fundraising dinners. Whenever there is a need Jeanette always seems to be among the first to volunteer. She leads by example and her warmth, kindness and compassion inspire others to follow suit.

Mary Ann Strasheim

Opera Omaha Guild



Mary Ann has been a distinguished and enthusiastic supporter of **Opera Omaha** for 44 years. She was the founder of the annual Cotillion 35 years ago. To this day, Cotillion remains the largest fundraising event for the Opera Omaha Guild. When she was approached to put a fundraiser together, she was asked for something that had community appeal, involved children, and would raise a large amount of money annually. Creating Cotillion was a huge success, not only for fundraising but as a life gift for the community! It reinforces the importance of etiquette, music and even ballroom dancing.

Mary Ann currently serves on the Advisory Board, Opera Council, and was Guild President more than once. She was the first woman president of the Opera Omaha Board of Directors. She has also chaired many events and fundraisers for both the Guild and Opera Omaha. She is admired for her gift of time and commitment to opera.

2020 Project of Special Merit

Opera Guild Portal

San Francisco Opera Guild

The goal of this project was to create a more effective and efficient way to communicate information among all of the board of directors and to provide a repository for important documents.

This directors' portal was created by the Guild VP of Development who found she was always needing to contact the Guild office to get information necessary for her to do her job and she found it to be inefficient. As an employee of a tech company she was accustomed to sharing information across teams through Google Docs and she was interested in providing the same platform for the Guild board. Her goal was to provide a password-protected repository of information and documents available and accessible to directors and committees whenever they needed them without having to rely on staff.

Information, calendars, agendas, locations of meetings, notes, events, reminders, deadlines, voting, etc. are now organized on the portal.

The creation of the portal was done by one person and the documents were populated by the Executive Committee of 15 people and office staff. Initial creation took about a week, but the uploading of documents took a couple of months longer. Keeping the portal current requires continuous updates.

2020 Matching Grant Recipients

The purpose of Opera Volunteer International's Matching Grants program is to encourage the expansion and development of programs that recruit, develop, and train volunteers for service in their communities and for participation in all phases of opera company support.

AGAINST THE GRAIN THEATRE Vision for Growth

The grant will be used to help diversify the donor base by creating a donor hub on the company website with social media advertising to entice new volunteers. The company hopes that by increasing the number of volunteers and maintaining a relationship with them, including those who are not opera attendees, they will then attend performances, encourage their friends to also do so and become donors.

CENTRAL CITY OPERA Audience Development for New and Underserved Communities

The grant will support the second year of a collaborative project with the young professionals of Impact Denver to develop a roadmap, identifying geographic and demographic opportunities for audience expansion, and programming strategies to engage these audiences. This work demonstrates the power of community outreach as an engagement tool when led by community leaders and volunteers.

This year, several components of that plan are being implemented and expanded to include the performance of Mozart's *Requiem* in collaboration with the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra and the Performing Arts Academy's Youth Chorus. A partnership with local libraries will host a screening of the film *Amadeus*, offering audiences the chance to tap into the mystery behind Mozart's life and his intriguing, unfinished composition.

PEACH STATE OPERA Community Engagement through Volunteer Chorus and Dance Groups

They will be increasing efforts to include local community choruses and dance groups to perform alongside the professional cast of **Peach State Opera's** *Revenge of the Bat*. In addition to giving these community groups first-hand experience of being onstage in an opera, the added benefit is that it engages more of the community at large.

The project will ensure that each group from each location has the opportunity to experience first-hand the process of preparing for and participating in an opera. Participation of choral and dance ensembles in our performances gives the audience a richly layered experience that helps our company carry out its mission by featuring young local talent. Our mission is to spread a love of opera, ensuring the next generation of audience supporters and donors, and to broaden the reach of opera through on-stage education, and connecting communities through the art of opera.

YOUNG PATRONESSES OF THE OPERA 2020 Girl Scout Workshop

Through a variety of workshops sessions given by YPO, Girl Scouts earn an opera patch while learning the different components of an opera. The event is centered around one of Florida Grand Opera's performances in the upcoming season. The girls have an opportunity to learn and sing songs from the opera. There are different learning stations including learning the libretto and score, set design, costumes, make-up, props, dance, and listening to performers. Students are given tickets to the dress rehearsal of the upcoming opera.

Each YPO volunteer is given a role at one of the sessions and are given the materials and information to work with the scouts. This program fosters a taste, love and understanding of opera. The project is also bringing opera to not only the scouts but also their parents and troop leaders of the Scouts.

*Please note that the grant to the **Knoxville Opera** which we had previously announced has been withdrawn due to the cancellation of their 2020 Rossini Festival Street Fair. We invite them as well as our other groups to submit new grant requests for next year's volunteer projects by February 1, 2021.*

Austin Opera Guild Extends Opera's Reach to Asia

By Cathy Collins - Austin Opera Guild President

What does a music educator in Hong Kong have in common with music educators in the schools in Austin, Texas? They both have used Austin Opera's Online Education Resources to introduce students to opera. More about that later.



Austin Opera Guild Board members, **Bill Wallace** and **Chris Duval**, chair the guild's Education and Community

Engagement program. In the course of one year, over 15,000 school children participate in Austin Opera's educational programs. For younger children, there is an Opera Treasure Chest which allows them to play with puppets, become a king or queen for the afternoon, and listen to music to expand their minds to the story of opera. With older students, trained docents share multi-media PowerPoint presentations in the schools to prepare students to attend a live opera performance. Free tickets are provided for students to attend the final dress rehearsal of the opera. This event, our **Access Opera program**, is a big hit and tickets go quickly. For some schools with limited resources, Austin Opera pays the fees associated for school bus transportation for these students to come to the performance as well. Even the Girl Scouts have jumped on the opera bandwagon. An Austin Opera merit badge can now be earned for opera performances and opera enrichment.

Now, getting back to Hong Kong and Austin. In January 2020, as the Coronavirus was impacting China and schools were closing, a savvy music teacher was looking online for some resources to help her students learn while being quarantined at home. Using a Google search, she came upon Austin Opera's Access Opera units, multi-media units complete with approachable lesson plans and animated listening maps. Being impressed with what she saw and wanting to gain access to the PowerPoints, this educator contacted **Debra Erck, Austin Opera's Director of Education**. She provided the required password to download the requested materials in addition to sharing other resources Austin Opera has for teaching opera to students of all ages. Since then, educators in the United Kingdom and Ireland have also requested further guidance.

Check out **Austin Opera**. We are now a global entity: <https://austinopera.org/about/guild/>

Volunteers, Opera needs you now more than any time ever!

By Rick Greenman

Given the state of the world today, opera may not be at the very topmost of your concerns. When faced with daily life-changing financial or existential priorities we must bow to surrounding circumstances. But please take a moment to consider the joy and unparalleled experiences that opera has provided. Now think about what your life or world might have been like without opera. It would have been fine. You would have been fine. But something would have been missing. That is why it is important that the art form of opera continues.

Right now it is probably not clear exactly what each opera company will need. Money, of course if you are able, is crucial to a company's existence. Also, let your opera company know that you are there to help when conditions allow. Stay in the conversation. OVI and OPERA America are excellent sources to see what is occurring and what is possible. Join the OA Online Conference. And remember, - sustaining opera for future generations depends on you because you are the audience, the patron, the staff, the advocate, and the ambassador. Thank you.

Opera Volunteers International

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Address Correction Requested

Send your guild news and photos to
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Find us on the internet at

www.OperaVolunteers.org

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Sign up to receive access information for each live stream.

Conference.operaamerica.org