

Opera Volunteers

INTERNATIONAL

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

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The following is the second in a series of articles profiling Life and long term members of Opera Volunteers International.

ANN CRAFT

Life Member and Past President (1991 - 1994) of OVI

By Rhonda Sweeney, Vice President, Membership

*O*n a rainy February afternoon in Houston, Ann Craft and I had a leisurely lunch, reminiscing about Opera Guilds International (OGI), now OVI.

Ann went to her first OGI conference in Charlotte, North Carolina in February 1982, while President of the Houston Grand Opera Guild, during the OGI Presidency of Houstonian Louise Gaylord. She described her feeling after that conference as being "revved up". Ann knew she'd found an organization to which she wanted to belong! We discussed how easily one makes new friends in OVI due to the similarity of interests and passion for opera which members share. Next up was the Portland Conference in October 1983, at which time Houston bid to host the 1984 Conference. Ann was nominated as Conference Chair, and with Houston co-Chairs Joy Morton and Ileene Robinson, hosted a wonderful conference. In 1986, she chaired the creation of the first Resource Manual, providing a compilation of successful projects across the breadth of OGI members to be shared by all.

One of the OVI experiences which Ann values most is the opportunity to see opera all over the U.S. and Canada especially premieres which were often featured at OVI Conferences. She has friends in opera support groups and opera companies across the country due to her active OVI involvement, especially the time she spent on the Board, and can call them wherever she now travels.

According to Ann, OVI Conferences and Regional (now Focus) Meetings provide the opportunity for members to share successes, and to realize that their local problems are not unique! Solutions are shared at Conferences, and members leave feeling energized and inspired to bring new projects and ideas back to their local companies and support groups. She commented that "It's nice to know that you have allies" on whom you can call when you run up against a challenging issue. At each gathering Ann enjoyed meeting new OVI members, re-establishing friendships with long-time members and getting the broad view of what was going on across the U.S. and Canada in the various opera companies and their support groups.

Volunteers, Ann believes, are the backbone of most opera companies, in the past and especially today, whether in Development, Community Outreach, Marketing,

Continued on page 3





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OVI FOCUS MEETING IN SEATTLE

OCTOBER 24 & 25

Attend and participate in the following excitement:

- Meeting headquarters, the elegant MarQueen Hotel.
- Easy access to the opera house and Seattle Center.
- Welcome reception at the Maschmeier/Haggerty penthouse.
- Lunch on the waterfront at Anthony's Home Port with additional free time to explore the area.
- Complementary tickets the pre-performance lecture by the world renowned, Perry Lorenzo.
- A production of Richard Strauss' *Elektra* in McCaw Hall with a 25% discount on tickets in the seating area of your choice.
- Post opera "farewell and what a good time we have had" reception at an Irish Pub.

The Seattle Opera Guild invites you to attend and will be pleased to greet you at this meeting.

For more information e-mail
Evelyn Troughton at Et1000@msn.com

HONORS AND AWARDS

OVI realizes how important it is to acknowledge the time and talent that all volunteers give so generously. For many years our Partners in Excellence program has honored individuals who have given exemplary service to their support groups and their companies, and to support groups who have achieved a special goal or celebrated an important milestone. Our Projects of Special Merit (formerly the Resource Showcase) still recognizes and showcases successful, interesting support group activities that can be shared by other groups and guilds.

This year we are very proud to add another important way to honor special volunteers. We can now present The President's Volunteer Service Award to volunteers who have contributed valuable hours of service to their organizations. The United States President's Council on Service and Civic Participation has recognized Opera Volunteers International as a certifying organization for this award.

OVI PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE AWARD

Opera volunteers are special! Opera Volunteers International is proud to honor those who work so diligently. This year we acknowledged 5 individuals who have contributed their time and talent to support groups and companies in diverse, but very important ways.

- Louise Crowley (nominated by Austin Lyric Opera Guild)
- Kathe Underwood (nominated by Stockton Opera Guild)
- Dr. Heather Clarke (nominated by Vancouver Opera Guild)
- Dr. Morton Creditor (nominated by Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild)
- Mary Earl (nominated by Chattanooga Symphony and Opera Guild)

We honor and welcome these individuals who have given exemplary and extraordinary service.

Hello Everyone

Spring has finally sprung here in the Midwest, and here I am already thinking about seasons to come! I am thinking and planning and filled with ideas for two wonderful Opera Volunteers International events scheduled for upcoming seasons.

Fall in Seattle will be an educational and entertaining Focus Meeting: a gathering of members and guests to listen, learn and contribute to a session and workshop about building and marketing your support group's image. This ability is very important in promoting and advancing all the excellent activities you perform for your company. And of course, you'll enjoy the company and conversation of other opera lovers and volunteers, and have a chance to see some of the sights Seattle has to offer.

Summer 2009 brings Opera Volunteers International Conference 2009. We are very excited about presenting it in spectacular Santa Fe. Put July 9 - 12 on your calendars, and we'll send you more details soon.

Our meeting and conference formats are changing a bit: you can expect a little less time spent on sessions and a lot more time for special events and fun. We are looking forward to having you join us.

Please communicate with us! It takes just a simple click on www.operavol.org.



Fern Grauer
President

Ann Craft Continued...

or Education. She feels that many of the tasks of an opera company today would not be possible financially without a strong cadre of volunteers, and that through OVI, successful experiences can be leveraged and shared with others. Many of these "Good Ideas" are being shared today through the booklets created by OVI's Publications team, succeeding the Resource Manual she began 20 years ago.

To help ensure the sustainability of grant funding for smaller support groups Ann became an OVI Lifetime Member. She reflected that "OVI's \$1000 Matching Grants mean a lot to these groups in terms of creating programs to recruit, train, and develop volunteers for their companies and communities." Ann continues to volunteer as an active Life Trustee of the Houston Grand Opera Association, Life Trustee of the Houston Grand Opera Guild, and member of the HGO Opera Studio and Training Committee. Her most vivid memories of opera volunteering revolve around meeting the artists: sitting next to Luciano Pavarotti at a dinner, and hosting Beverly Sills at Houston's Merry Widow Ball were standouts!

Ann remains enthusiastic about the potential for OVI to be a significant force in developing opera volunteerism for the benefit of local communities and is proud to have been a member for the past 26 years!

THEY WILL BE MISSED

Suzanne Hasl, long time member and ex-officer of OGI/OVI sent in the following news.

It is with a good deal of sadness that I report the following news about the passing of two of our organizations long time members and ex-officers. Jeanne Etienne Rape, a founding member of Opera Guilds International (as we were then called) was a member of the Steering Committee when the organization held its first conference in St. Paul in 1973. One of her first jobs for the new organization was putting together a membership brochure and creating a membership directory. At the OGI conference in Cooperstown, NY, she was a recipient of our Partners in Excellence Award. She was an active and vital part of both OVI and the Cincinnati Opera Guild until her passing last winter.

Long time OGI/OVI member, Maxine Davis, passed away last year in Mobile, AL, after a long illness. She joined the Opera Guilds International Board as the Southeast Regional Director at the New York City conference in 1989. Over the years Maxine also chaired the Grants and the Resource Committees and along with her husband, Tom, put all of the material from the projects manual onto a computer disc. Maxine and Tom were also the hosts at a board and regional meeting in Mobile.

VP - OUTREACH
INTRODUCTION TO THE REGIONAL
NEWS REPORTS

By Gerald Elijah

I know that you are all busy out there doing what volunteers do - but the Regional Coordinators and I can help you get the word out, and showcase your activities if you will PLEASE remember to send a copy of your newsletters, invitations, etc. to us. We will use them in this newsletter, and we hope to have more Regional Newsletters in the future, but we do depend on the support groups (individuals too) for information, so add us to your e-lists and mail lists - you are already on ours.

The Pacific Rim Region now has a new coordinator, Rebecca Bowne, from Southern California. She replaces the prior coordinator who has resigned for personal reasons. Rebecca brings great experience (as the immediate past President of the Opera League of Los Angeles) and enthusiasm to this position. Her contact information is already in your roster, and you will find it here in the newsletter under "News from the Regions, Pacific Rim Region". Please contact her when you have questions or problems, and keep her informed about your activities.

Northeast Region

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phone 607-264-9312
115 Fish and Game Road, Cherry Valley, NY 13320

Connecticut	Delaware	Maine
Massachusetts	New Hampshire	New Jersey
New York	Pennsylvania	Rhode Island
Vermont		

Southeast Region

Shelley C. Page Spage813@comcast.net
phone 615-665-1957
1813 Tyne Boulevard, Nashville, TN 37215

Alabama	District of Columbia	Florida
Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana
Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina
South Carolina	Tennessee	Virginia
West Virginia		

FLORIDA

The Sarasota Opera Guild joined in the celebration of the Opening Night Gala for the newly renovated Sarasota Opera House on March 1st. Previously, the Guild had held its 30th annual Sweetheart Luncheon where Madame Virginia Zeani, world famous soprano, was the honoree. As the honoree Madame Zeani was not asked to sing but was instead serenaded by the ex-presidents of SOG. The Guild celebrated the return of spring at their annual March Spring Fling Luncheon where Lee Dougherty Ross was honored for her work in promoting great music and helping young artists develop their careers.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

TENNESSEE

The Knoxville Opera Guild held its annual Martini Party on March 13th. This year the party had a Saint Paddy's Day theme. Besides martinis, musical entertainment was provided and a silent auction gave the guests a chance to win some wonderful treasures and at the same time raise money for the Guild. Next on the Guild's agenda is the 4th Annual Croquet Tournament on May 18th. It will be held at the Visitors Center at the University of Tennessee and will include a picnic with strawberries and cream for dessert.

The Nashville Opera Guild announced that their annual La Bella Notte evening of glorious music and fine dining raised \$145,000 for Nashville Opera. The monies are earmarked for the company's education and outreach programs. The Guild also announced that Marguerite Fish, the Guild's first president, received this year's Francis Robinson Award for her significant contributions to the Guild and Nashville Opera. This summer the Guild is sponsoring a trip to Italy. Included will be opera performances at the Arena di Verona and La Scala. Day trips to Stresa on Lago Maggiore, and to Venice will also be available.

Central Region

Wilma Wilcox wilmawilcox@yahoo.com
phone 913-302-9789
16314 West Saddletree Lane, Olathe, KS 66062

Arkansas	Iowa	Kansas
Minnesota	Missouri	Nebraska
North Dakota	Oklahoma	South Dakota

IOWA

In addition to being an artistic and social success, the Des Moines Opera Guild's Mardi Gras dinner and party was also a financial success. Over \$4200 was raised, which will be contributed to DMMO to help underwrite this summer's productions of *A Masked Ball*, *Regina* and *The Elixir of Love*.



Lee and Carol Johnson

KANSAS

The Wichita Opera Guild hosted a fundraiser to celebrate singer Sam Ramey's 66th birthday in March. "A Date with the Devil" as the evening was called, was the party of the year. The color theme for the party was black and red and the devil did not disappoint; Mr. Ramey showed up in black leather pants and red leather jacket. The following evening Mr. Ramey appeared on stage in a production of

Faust with sets and costumes by OVI member Margaret Ann Pent. Guild president, Michael Zerr, also an OVI member, was the head usher, one of the Guild's main responsibilities.

MISSOURI

The editors of the newsletter wish to apologize for taking the liberty, in the last edition, of moving Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild from Missouri to Kansas. Thanks to our friends in Kansas City for bringing that to our attention. In this edition the Guild has been returned to its home in Missouri. And they have been very busy with events surrounding the world premiere of composer Kirke Mechem's, *John Brown*. Several educational programs called "At Ease with Opera", led by Guild members, introduced this work to the public before its opening on May 3.

The Opera Theatre of Saint Louis Guild had a very busy February. On the 2nd Jane Towater, presented a training session for the Guild's docents titled "Perfecting Our Presentation Skills", which proved very helpful to the volunteers who will be out promoting the opera company's upcoming summer season. On the 13th, fourteen volunteers and opera staff members journeyed to Jefferson City for the annual Citizen's Day event where they met with Governor Blunt to discuss the importance of arts funding. The Governor reported Rowena Van Duke, Advocacy Chair, is very concerned about the future of the arts and arts programs in the state. On the 23rd new members to the Guild met with current members to discover the many volunteer opportunities available to them.

Great Lakes Region

For the time being send all updated information to Warren Schubert at wschubert4@aol.com

Eastern Canada	Illinois	Indiana
Michigan	Ohio	Wisconsin

OHIO

The Opera Guild of Dayton fought the grayness of winter with three events. First, there was a Guild Game and Grab Day on February 6 when members and friends joined together for a luncheon and a day of games which included bridge, euchre, pinochle and mah-jongg. Second, was the annual Spring Luncheon on February 27, chaired by Rosalie Jennings. The theme this year was "Shakespeare Sings". The opera's artist in residence performed selections from *Romeo et Juliette*. The third event was the annual Opera Gala on March 15. The theme this year was "Opera Royale" subtitled "Bond Goes to Monte Carlo". To celebrate Opera Guild of Dayton's 44th anniversary they offered guests 44 and younger a reduced ticket price to attend the event. Chair

Margarete Jennings and her committee went all out in recreating the glamour and excitement associated with Agent 007.

Old West/Mountain/Desert Region

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Arizona	Colorado	Idaho
Montana	New Mexico	Texas
Utah	Wyoming	

Pacific Rim Region

Rebecca Bowne rebowne@aol.com
phone 626-577-4224
1151 Heatherside Road, Pasadena, CA 91105-1115

Alaska	Australia	Baja California
California	Hawaii	Oregon
Nevada	Washington State	Western Canada

ALASKA

Anchorage Opera Guild president, Jean Paal, reports the Guild' last event - Luncheon with the Stars of *Don Pasquale* was another big success. The "Stars" entertain with selections of their own choosing and everyone enjoys a "delicious" buffet lunch. "People who attend these lunches for the first time claim that this is the best kept secret in the world of Anchorage entertainment", says Ms. Paal. At this writing the Guild is preparing for their big fundraiser, Dinner Opera, which takes place in May.

CALIFORNIA

The Opera League of Los Angeles is gearing up to support LA Opera when the company presents its first complete Ring Cycle during the summer of 2010. The League has been encouraged to develop its own proposal for taking part in the Arts Festival which will surround this happening.

The Opera Pacific Guild Alliance "Viva" chapter is planning opera related trips for its members from now through the summer of 2009. Some trips are in the local Southern California area while others take the members across the country. All the trips are limited in size and have become very popular. Dianne Penza, the group's leader, will be conducting tours to the following venues: The Hollywood Bowl in July, Sarasota Opera and the Santa Barbara Opera in March, Walt Disney Concert Hall and Santa Fe Opera in August 2009.

WASHINGTON

The Seattle Opera Guild will host the Opera Volunteers International Board of Directors meeting and Focus Session on October 24-25, 2008 (see the following article). Attendees will have the opportunity to attend Seattle Opera's exciting production of Richard Strauss' *Elektra*, starring Janice Baird, who will be singing Brunhilde with the company in 2009. Ms. Baird, an American, has performed *Elektra* from Bilbao to Zurich, but this will mark her United States debut.

WESTERN CANADA

Following up on Vancouver Opera Guild's "Bake to Order" December fundraiser the Guild announced that twenty-five volunteers baked about 1800 cookies. The event was organized by Lore Hoffmann, Pat Hancock and Fay Forrester (who baked the plum cakes as well). The sale was well advertised and not a crumb was left. As a bonus it netted the Guild \$1254.

MATCHING GRANTS

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

Awards up to and including \$1000.00 are available to opera support groups, organizations, and opera companies which create and/or support such programs. Recipients of the cash award must match each grant award with funds which may be held currently in the organization's treasury or raised as new money.

Recipients of awards may not receive subsequent awards for similar projects. Special consideration is given to programs directed toward and involving disadvantaged or under-served groups, multi-cultural communities and/or those who have not been traditionally associated with opera.

Please contact
Mary Earl, Matching Grants Chair
at Maryopera1@aol.com for an application.
The next deadline is March 1, 2009.

TRIP TO RIPLEY

Matching Grant Follow-up

In the winter edition of this Newsletter it was reported that the Cincinnati Opera Guild was the recipient of one of Opera Guilds International matching grants. The grant was to help the Guild finance a trip to Ripley, Ohio to generate enthusiasm in its volunteers and to educate them in the historical importance of this town featured in the Cincinnati Opera's world premiere of Adolphus Hailstork's, *Rise for Freedom*. The trip took place in February 2008. To make the most of the day and to make the experience available to the largest number possible, Guild members made the commitment to personally drive to Ripley so the seats on the chartered bus could be made available to the opera cast, staff and some news media representatives. As a result four media stories were generated in the local newspapers. This advanced press helped to maximize attendance at the opera's performances. The Opera Volunteers International matching grant helped the Cincinnati Opera Guild accomplish several important objectives:

- Building long-term outreach to the African-American audiences
- Giving school children (over 2900) a memorable and relevant opera experience
- Supporting new opera in America

THANK YOU

Opera Volunteers International is thankful for all of its members. There are a few members, besides the Life Members who are being profiled in our newsletter, who deserve a special thanks and they are the two memberships at the Maestro Level, Jane Hartley of San Francisco, CA and Rhonda Sweeney of Houston, TX. In addition we have five memberships at the Benefactor Level, Don Dagenais, of Kansas City, MO, Lee Damus of Miami, FL, Roy Fisher of Chicago, IL, Louise Gaylord of Houston, TX, and Shirley Litchfield-Bird of Scottsdale, AZ and Bartlett, IL. Their extra giving to OVI is greatly appreciated.



Marion Pickering Couch, an ex-president of the Nashville Opera Guild, sent in the following story.

The Nashville Opera Guild has said "adieu" to its oldest member and probably the oldest opera guild member anywhere. Margaret Lindsley Warden left us just before her 104th birthday. The two loves of her life were horses and opera. Widely known for her equestrian knowledge, she wrote for the "The Tennessean" for fifty-five years, covering horse shows and competitions all over the United States. She especially liked to report on events in and around New York City so that she could also attend the Metropolitan Opera. Her interest in opera developed as a child when she was given a "Victor Book of the Opera" one Christmas. Her friends knew never to call her on Saturdays during the hours the Met broadcasts were on the air, because she would not answer the phone. She had a favorite story about attending a Met performance during WWII. It seems she was invited to go backstage, and since she had come to the opera house directly from covering a horse event she had with her a camera. Much to her amazement, she was detained by the military police and accused of being a spy. The Met staff quickly identified her as an invited guest and she wasn't carted off. "Miss Margaret", as she was respectfully addressed, was a member of the Nashville Opera Guild since the 1940's. When asked what the secret to her longevity was, she responded, "Just keeping on". Her entire collection of opera memorabilia was willed to Nashville Opera.

Opera Volunteers International is your organization and it is growing. The following are our newest members, listed by region. Welcome!

**NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF
OPERA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL**

NORTHEAST REGION

Gingert Karren, New York, NY

SOUTHEAST REGION

Doris Hixon, Nashville, TN

CENTRAL REGION

Roger and Kay Berger, Ames, IA
Martha Letcher, St. Louis, MO
Sally Levy, St. Louis, MO

PACIFIC RIM REGION

Rebecca Bowne, Pasadena, CA
Nina Haro, Los Angeles, CA
Lyz and John Kurnitz-Thurlow, Tacoma, WA
Margaret Mostue, Altadena, CA

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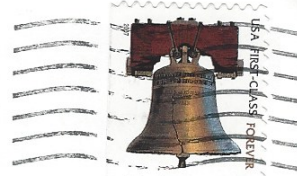
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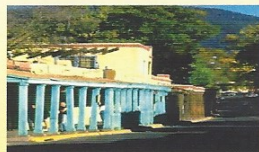
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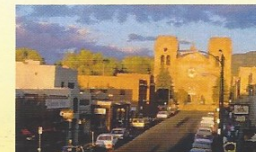
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- * On Saturday 11th, attend the renowned **Santa Fe Opera**, with dinner at the new cantina followed by a performance of Verdi's **La traviata** with world-famous soprano, **Natalie Dessay**, making her first appearance in this opera.
- * On Friday 10th, SFO presents Donizetti's **The Elixir of Love** (with Jennifer Black, Dimitri Pittas—seen in the Met's **Macbeth** this past year - and John Del Carlo)
- * Enjoy **garden tours** of Santa Fe's finest homes.
- * Savor the city's world famous and **distinctive cuisine**.