

THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

October 2021
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The official newsletter of
*Opera Volunteers
International*

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2021-2022 A Season of Renewal

Summer festivals are done and fall seasons are upon us. It is not a continuance but a reinvention, a revival, and a renewal. We are figuring things out on a daily basis and making the rest up as we go along. It is tough, but it is gratifying - and we volunteers are resilient! OVI, as well, is beginning its new fiscal and membership year.

In these pages we welcome our new board leaders and recognize the achievements of our groups and their members. *Rick Greenman*

Houston Grand Opera Guild - open for business

Each year, the **Houston Grand Opera Guild** holds a Volunteer Gathering in the summer months, after the end of the season and before the new season starts. It is a way to celebrate the successful conclusion of one year of volunteering and recruiting a new team of volunteers for the upcoming season ahead. Each Guild officer staffs a table with signup sheets describing the work to be done in their area - Boutique, Opera Studio Buddies, Artist Hospitality, School Docents/High School Night, Opera Night Live, Artist in Residence, Special Events, and even OVI gets a table to recruit individual members and talk-up the coming Conference. In a typical year, the event recognizes the volunteers with the highest number of volunteer hours as calculated in the "Track It Forward" system, as well as announcing the upcoming recipients for Volunteer of the Year and other awards that are recognized at the Fall Brunch event. However, due to the pandemic, this year's Volunteer Gathering was a slimmed down event for recruitment only, as a means of



Photos taken by Jess Carnes, HGO Guild Past President and current VP Finance, and 2017 OVI Partner in Excellence Award recipient

kickstarting the fall opera season to ensure that there would be sufficient volunteers for the various HGO activities getting ready to begin in September. Refreshments were provided, the Boutique offered a sample of great buys, and a good time was had by all!

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**OPERA
America
Conference**



**Minneapolis, MN
May 18– 20, 2022**

From Immediate Past President: *Susan Malott*

Dear OVI members and friends,



This month begins OVI's new fiscal year and I want to welcome Mary Svela as our new President. We are incredibly fortunate to have her at the helm at this very important time, as we begin our 50th Anniversary year.

Mary is well underway in the planning process and I look forward to an exciting year under her leadership.

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to everyone on my team for their dedication and commitment to OVI during my presidency. In particular, I want to recognize my board for their perseverance during this pandemic. Each and every board member stepped up to make sure that we continued to be a source of support and information for all our members during this challenging time. Bravi and thank you all for a job well done!

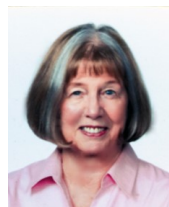
It has been an honor and a privilege to be your president these past four years. I have loved every minute and I look forward to celebrating our 50th Anniversary with you all this year. I hope to see you at conference in May!

Warmly,

Susan Malott

From incoming President: *Mary Svela*

Dear Opera volunteers,



On behalf of Opera Volunteers International, I thank Susan Malott for her inspiring four years as President, and for her eleven plus years of service on the board.

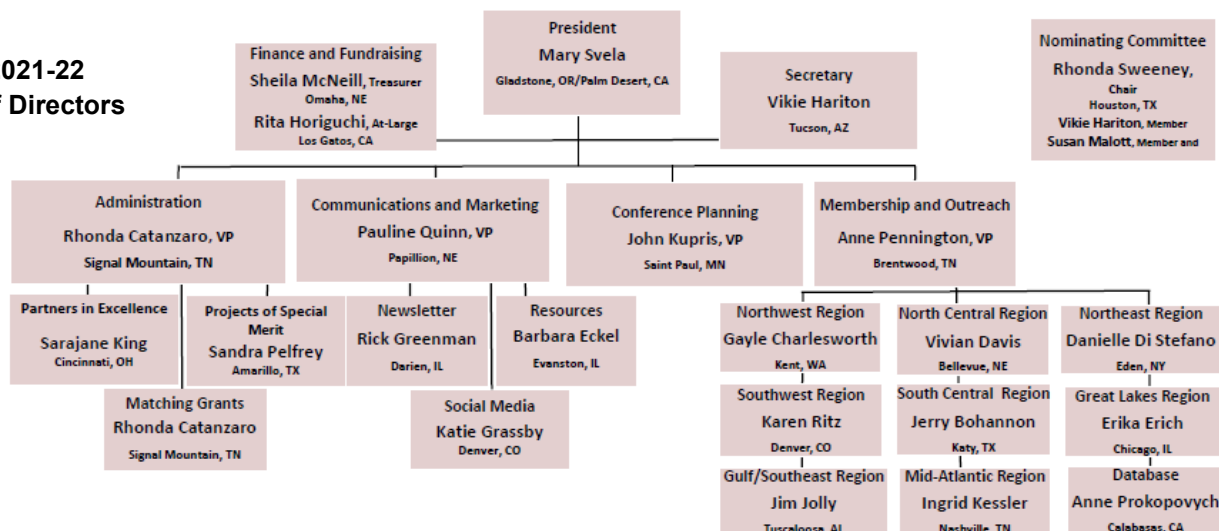
During her tenure as President, she advanced the accomplishments of our organization with her able executive talents, and she has 'steadied our ship' as we navigate the uncertain waters of the present state of the arts. She brought us through these challenges with her charismatic and calming presence, and offered opportunities for members to share their experiences and reactions to what we face. We deeply appreciate all she has done, and plans to continue to do for Opera Volunteers International as Immediate Past President.

As we begin our 2021-2022 fiscal year, I look forward to working with our outstanding Board of Directors, fulfilling our mission of celebrating the work of opera volunteers, increasing the effectiveness of volunteer involvement, recognizing the achievement and creativity of our members, supporting volunteer projects, and advocating for continued work of volunteers in opera.

At a time when we know volunteer service is more important than ever, we plan to make this a year-long tribute to OVI's 50th Anniversary. We welcome your participation, suggestions and stories. Let's all meet in Minneapolis May 18-21, 2022, where we will be sharing memories and planning for tomorrow.

Mary Svela

OVI 2021-22 Board of Directors



Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org

OVI Board Welcomes New Directors 2021-22

John Kupris



Vice President Conference Planning is an experienced development executive with a 30-year history of working for education and arts nonprofit organizations. Currently Major Gifts Officer with the Twin Cities PBS affiliate TBT, John has strong community and social services experience, skilled in Planned Giving, Nonprofit Administration, Operations Management, Strategic Planning, and Organizational Development. He holds a BA in Business Administration and a Master of Divinity from University of St. Thomas, and has been happily attending Minnesota Opera for the past 25 years. He is a Board member with the Twin Cities Opera Guild and is excited to be joining the OVI Board to help plan events over the next few years, including Opera Conference 2022 in

Minneapolis / Saint Paul May 18-21, 2022.

Anne Prokopovych Database Director



holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Quantitative Psychology and an MBA in Finance, both from UCLA. Since 2003, Anne has worked for Bank of America in Financial Operations Analysis and Reporting. Through her love of opera, she has been a longtime supporter of Los Angeles Opera and a member of the Opera League of Los Angeles (OLLA). Anne initially joined the OVI Board in 2010 as our Database Director following our successful standalone. We are excited welcome Anne back.

Katie Grassby



Social Media Director is a marketing professional with extensive experience in brand and channel strategy and a passion for community service. She holds an MBA in Marketing Management from University of Saint Mary and a BA in Communication from the University of Arizona. A Denver native, Katie is an active volunteer in the community, supporting organizations such as Central City Opera Guild (of which her mother and grandmother were founding members), Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and the Children's Diabetes Foundation. She has co-Chaired CCOG's annual holiday home tour (and only fundraiser) – L'Esprit de Noël – the past two years, taking this now 45-year-old tradition virtual during the pandemic. She and her husband, Taylor, are avid skiers and love to travel. They live in Denver with their two dogs, Roxy and Monte.

Rita Horiguchi



At-Large Director (*with a focus on the Treasurer's role*) graduated from Rutgers University with a BA in Latin American Studies, and worked in New York City for Pan Am, Chase, and Equitable Life for over 10 years before moving across the country, first to Seattle then to California's Bay Area/Silicon Valley, ending up in San Jose where she now resides. She brings extensive work experience in computer programming, systems analysis, and other technical areas, as well as executive management and strategic planning, professional consulting, and teaching personal productivity tools. In 2013, at the request of the Opera San Jose Board of Directors, she founded and was the first President of the Friends of Opera San Jose volunteer auxiliary, and spoke at our OVI 2015 Opera Conference in San Francisco

about her experience doing so. In 2015, she joined the Opera San Jose Board of Directors and became VP and Chair of the Nominating Committee in 2017 and Chair of the Governance Committee in 2018. She loves learning about history, languages, and literature.

Pauline Quinn



Vice President Communications and Marketing is a partner with Morey & Quinn Wealth Partners in Omaha and before becoming a financial advisor, worked for over 20 years in the financial services industry. Pauline received a Master's Degree in Securities Analysis and Portfolio Management from Creighton University, Omaha. Her strengths lie in long range strategic planning that supports short term goals, and loves collaborating with both clients and in her volunteer work. Outside of work, Pauline enjoys spending time with her three grandchildren sharing her love of music and nature with them. She is a mother of three and caretaker to two wonderful dogs. She spends as much time as possible in her garden, and always has a book with her. Pauline is active with Opera Omaha and the Guild, and looks forward to engaging with opera volunteers through her role on the OVI Board..

OVI 2021-2023 NEW REGIONAL DIRECTORS

North Central Region Director



Vivian Lewis Davis graduated from Duchesne College in Omaha and was the first “Miss Black Nebraska” in 1970, representing Nebraska in the “Miss Black America” Pageant. She co-hosted “Black on Black” on local television and appeared in “The Trial of Henry Flipper.” Upon moving to California, Vivian received a Certificate in Drama at Kilpatrick-Cambridge Theater Arts School in Burbank, appearing in plays and movies and worked on the staff of various TV shows. She was a member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA). She returned to Omaha to work for Commercial Federal Bank and the Bellevue Public Schools. Retiring in 2012, she has volunteered with Omaha Community Playhouse Act II, Durham Museum On-Track Guild, **Opera Omaha Guild**, Omaha Symphony Guild, and as a historical re-enactor in the Humanities Nebraska Speakers Bureau. She is a member of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Cass County Historical Society, The Omaha Corral of the Westerners and the Sarpy County Museum. Vivian is featured in *Visions of Freedom on the Great Plains: An Illustrated History of African Americans in Nebraska*. She is married to Dr. Spencer Davis and lives in Bellevue, NE.

Northeast Region Director



Danielle DiStefano is from Eden, NY and has done exemplary volunteer work for the **Erwin H. Johnson Memorial Fund** in the areas of graphics, concert coordination, PR, and community outreach. She has developed and teaches the Johnson Fund's outreach program, *Singing it Forward*, an opera/music history and appreciation course series, which has been well-received in the Buffalo-Niagara area. Danielle is also vice-chair of the Celebrate National Opera Week in Western New York. She has published articles in *Modern Singer Magazine*, *OperaBuffs of WNY, Inc.*'s and the OVI newsletter. Danielle attended the State University of New York in Fredonia for Vocal Performance, and is currently completing her degree in Artistic Entrepreneurship at SUNY at Buffalo State College. She made her operatic debut at age 16 in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* with Opera Sacra. She has performed with Nickel City Opera, Buffalo Opera Unlimited, and Opera Niagara, where she has been a Resident Artist since 2018, as well as their Surtitlist and Historian. In 2016, Danielle was named an OVI Partner in Excellence for her outstanding dedication and advocacy for opera and classical music. She has also won two OVI Project of Special Merit Awards, one for her opera coloring book and art exhibit, 'Manga and Mozart,' and for her multi-media opera advocacy project, *The Songstress and the Swordsman*.

Great Lakes Region Director



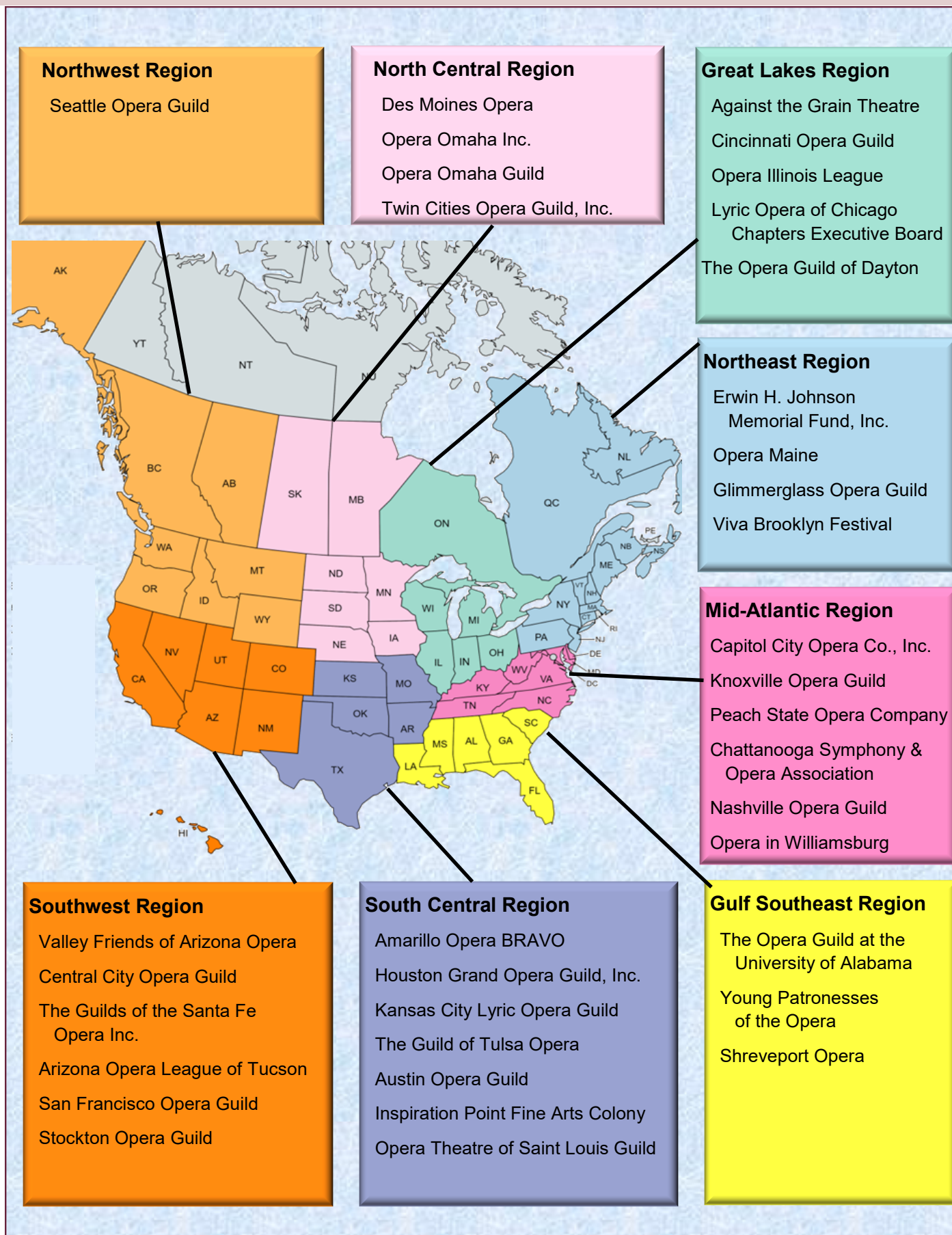
Erika Erich is a retired health services executive, completing her career as Director of Occupational Therapy at Chicago's Columbus Hospital. She received a BA in Occupational Therapy from University of Iowa and a Masters in Health Services Administration from University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL. Erika actively volunteers with numerous arts and music organizations, especially opera. She is currently on the Lyric Opera Chicago's Ryan Centers Board of Directors as well as serving on the **Lyric Opera Chapters Executive Board (CEB)** for the past 4 years. After completing her term as President of the Near North Chapter, she is now Program and Nominating Committee Chair. In addition, Erika is on the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition's Central Region. Other areas of involvement include the Travel Committee with the Art Institute, Chamber Music Society Chicago, and Fortnightly Club of Chicago. Erika has traveled extensively, both within the United States as well as internationally, and loves to attend numerous theater group performances.

Mid-Atlantic Region Director



Ingrid Kessler graduated from University of Iowa with a BA in English Literature and from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Musical Arts. For over 20 years, she had a home piano studio for students of all ages and performed solo recitals. She served as Vice President of the Nashville Chapter of National Guild of Piano Teachers and as President of the Nashville Area Music Teachers Association. Ingrid began her involvement with **Nashville Opera Guild** Board in 2005, where she has served in many capacities including President from 2012-2013, and is currently serving as Guild Historian. From 2013-2015, Ingrid served as OVI Director for the Gulf Region from her home in Alabama. Moving back to Nashville in 2015, she worked with Nashville Opera Guild and is excited about resuming her involvement with OVI. She and husband Robert have been married 50 years, with 2 children and 5 grandchildren, ages 4-12. They enjoy traveling, good food and wine, and watching birds and other wildlife in the woods around their home.

Regional News OVI Guilds Across America



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