

# THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

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The official newsletter of  
*Opera Volunteers  
International*

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## Time to Fly



The opera field will come together in person for the first time since 2019 in Minneapolis for **Opera Conference 2022**. It's incredible that it will have been three years since our last conference! The meeting will be an important reunion of friends and colleagues, but it will only be complete if we are joined by the members of Opera Volunteers International, many of whom helped steward our opera companies through the challenges of the last two years. It's been a shared effort to make it through the pandemic, so let's come together in Minnesota to reflect on what we've learned and chart a course for our shared future.

Photo by Dario Acosta

Marc A. Scorca, OPERA America President and CEO

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For those of you who are ready and eager to get out in the world, OPERA America has prepared a conference, OVI has designed interesting and fun activities, and OVI Conference Planning Chair John Kupris is ready to welcome you to his cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Ordway Center for the Performing Arts  
Photo by Mike Boeckmann

In this issue find details on the conference and fun reasons why this might be the time to start traveling again. Page 3 has instructions on registering for your trip to Opera Conference 2022. Not quite ready, . . . . key parts of the conference will be streamed on the internet in June for a small registration fee. Streaming is free to conference attendees.

### Reminder:

For membership year 2021-2022 beginning last Oct. 1, OVI has once again voted to waive dues for group members in order to assist them through this challenging transition period. Individual dues remain unchanged.

## From OVI President: *Mary Svela*

Dear OVI members  
and friends,



As spring approaches, we all look forward to coming together to be a part of live musical events and to spend time together.

I encourage you to celebrate OVI's 50th Anniversary with us in Minneapolis this May at **Opera Conference 2022**.

**Twin Cities Opera** will host a reception and offer special conference pricing for their production of *Carmen* featuring the directorial debut of **Denyse Graves**. OVI Conference Planning Vice President, **John Kupris** of St. Paul, along with **Twin Cities Opera Guild**, plans special events to make your stay in the Twin Cities memorable. So come to the conference to learn, share and grow. Read more about conference events in this newsletter and find OVI 2-Day Conference registration information at a special rate on the [operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org) website.

Our session on the importance of volunteers in the current opera world may offer you a new perspective on how to articulate the value of volunteers. Enjoy detailed discussions of recent Projects of Special Merit awardees for 2020-22. Gain practical 'how-to' strategies from recipients of our recent Matching Grants. These discussions offer you great 'take-aways.' As our world re-opens, let's share our ideas and our time as a way forward.

Looking forward to seeing you in Minneapolis this May.

*Mary Svela*

## OVI Visit to Omaha Opera Guild

### A meeting of the minds

One of the most gratifying features of OVI membership is getting to meet fellow volunteers from other opera guilds, and seeing performances in different cities. We do this as a group annually at Opera Conference and also at our annual OVI Focus Meetings, ... but we needn't always wait.



Pauline Quinn, Karen Ritz and Vivian Lewis Davis (L to R)

On October 23, 2021 **Karen Ritz** (Southwest Regional Director) whose home group is **Central City Opera Guild** of Colorado visited fellow OVI officers who are members of the **Omaha Opera Guild**. They were, **Pauline Quinn** (OVI VP Communications), and **Vivian Lewis Davis** (OVI North Central Regional Director). The meeting was very successful in sharing ideas, initiatives and experiences to expand guild participation and membership. Opera Omaha's **Sheila McNeill** (OVI Treasurer) helped arrange the visit but was unavailable to attend.

Karen identified two priorities that Central City Opera Guild has adopted: appealing to young adults, and initiating activities involving local school music programs.

The Central City Opera Guild volunteers put a lot of effort into producing an attractive quarterly newsletter, **Central City Opera Guild Grapevine**, believing that it keeps members interested, helps with memberships, fundraising and volunteering.

The Omaha members explained the success that Opera Omaha has had in taking its productions beyond traditional venues to attract a wider audience. The Opera Omaha program called **Opera in Conversation** presents three discussion sessions about each opera. These are open to the general public. Two other popular Opera Omaha Guild events are their Victorian Tea and the February Cotillion Ball.

Everyone agreed that Covid continues to present problems for scheduling and conducting programs, but hopes were high that this would continue to improve.

View past issues of the **Central City Opera Guild Grapevine** here:

<https://centralcityopera.org/join-the-guild/grapevine/>

### OVI Remembers Hildegard Dutton



OVI Bravo Award recipient - Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild's Hildegard Dutton was Office Manager for OVI in its formative years as OGI (Opera Guilds International.) To read more about this very interesting lady go to:

<https://www.overlandparkchapel.com/obituary/Hildegard-Dutton>

# Book Your Opera Conference:

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

**Opera Conference 2022**  
*May 18 –21, 2022*  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**Attend Opera Conference 2022 for 2 days, 3 days, 4 days or stay longer**

**Our 2 day OVI Pass Thursday, 5/19 - Friday, 5/20** will also allow you to attend the opening keynote session on Wednesday, 5/18 as well as the host reception on Wednesday evening. Each day will feature a General session and smaller sessions specific to various interests. You will need to arrive Wednesday if you wish to attend our OVI board meeting early Thursday Morning.

You can purchase discounted tickets to attend a performance of *Carmen* (Denyce Graves' directing debut) on Thursday 5/19 or Saturday, 5/21. There is also an optional *Minnesota Orchestra* program on Thursday.

Part of the fun of Opera Conference is meeting representatives from other opera companies from across the continent and hearing about their concerns, initiatives, and experiences. We will also engage with our fellow volunteers from the Twin Cities Opera Guild. And if you would rather play hooky and see the sights, your conference pass will entitle you to livestream discussions and sessions free online June 27-28.

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**Register Now**

**1. Book your OPERA America/OVI conference attendance online at:**

**<https://web.cvent.com/event/8826e80c-334c-4451-b985-cb218f69ac04/summary>**

(or just Google Opera Conference 2022)

**Register for full 4 day conference, or choose our OVI 2-day pass**

**Select Minnesota Opera *Carmen* seating from three price areas (optional)**

**Check out and click on Millennium Minneapolis Hotel link for group rate**

### **IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR MINNESOTA OPERA PERFORMANCE OF CARMEN:**

*Only Thursday night's Carmen Performance shows on the conference registration page. If you plan to attend the Saturday March 21 performance you should order your desired seating section for the Thursday performance. Then call Minnesota Opera and ask them to exchange that ticket for the Saturday performance.*

### **IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR HOTEL RESERVATION**

*Conference hotel, Hyatt Regency, is now fully booked. Special conference pricing is available at the Millennium Minneapolis, across the street.*

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----- **Like us on Facebook to join the conversation!** -----



# Opera Tours Can be Profitable for Your Guild

by Don Dagenais

For nearly 50 years, the major fund raising project of the **Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild** has been its opera travel program. Over that time the travel program has grown to the point where (pre-Covid) it regularly accounted for over \$25,000 a year of income for the Guild.

The Guild has run trips to a variety of domestic destinations including New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington D.C., Seattle, Houston and Santa Fe, among others. The Guild has also hosted trips to Toronto.

The most profitable trips by far, however, have been overseas trips. During the last fifteen years the Guild has hosted several trips to Australia, Italy, Germany, Spain, England and Austria. Often the trips have included stops in other countries as well, such as Switzerland and even Slovenia.

How does the Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild do it? The secret is fairly simple: cut out the travel agent and do most of the work yourself, and you can run the trip more cheaply than any commercial travel service and keep the profit for your own organization.

Volunteers, with a little bit of training and experience, can easily handle the purchase of airline tickets, opera tickets, hotel rooms, ground transportation arrangements (such as buses and trains) and restaurant meals.

In budgeting for its trips, the Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild includes in the cost a \$300 per person donation for domestic destinations and \$500 for each overseas trip. Often, with conservative budgeting and carefully controlled spending, the net profit to the Guild exceeds that amount. Our trips regularly attract 15 to 25 participants.

Part of the secret is picking the travel destinations and times carefully. We have learned that our travelers like to see major stars who would not otherwise appear in operas locally. Generally, our travelers prefer the tried and true “war horse” operas, although we try to offer a few unusual selections as well, often as extra-cost options.

Not all of our performances are operas. On an “off night” at the opera house we try to offer a symphony concert, ballet, recital, chamber music concert or some other attraction, sometimes as an option. In New York and some other destinations, a Broadway show can be a nice addition.

We have found that for trips to New York we do not have to plan daytime itineraries as many people have been there before and have their own plans for the day. In other locations, however, we offer daytime tours and events. These may include tours to museums or (as in San Francisco) wine country outings.

The international trips are quite a bit more involved. For one thing, being familiar with the local language and customs is very important, particularly in dealing with opera houses and other vendors. We have been fortunate to have associated ourselves with a small travel company that specializes in arts tours to Europe. They have been invaluable in running these tours. We build their fee into the cost of the trip, but since they charge significantly less than the larger travel organizations you see advertised in Opera News and elsewhere, we can still offer our overseas trips for a fraction of the cost you see with other commercial travel agencies.

The bottom line is: a trips program is a fair amount of work for the volunteers, but it can be very rewarding for the Guild.

The Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild, by the way, is happy to permit a member of any OVI guild to join one of our trips. Our standard practice for the last 20 years has been to split the profit from that person’s travel with that person’s own Guild. So if any of your people want to join us, it’s easy money for your organization, and no work!

The next Lyric Opera Guild trip is to Italy in July 2022, when the Guild will visit the outdoor opera festivals in Verona and at Torre Del Lago (the Puccini Festival). We thought that outdoor locations might be more friendly from a Covid standpoint. We are keeping an eye on travel restrictions, but so far it appears to be a “go.” We will enjoy getting back to international travel after a two-year of hiatus due to the pandemic.

I have been the chair of the Lyric Opera Guild trips program for 15 years and would be happy to answer any questions or provide further information. Contact [ddagenais503@gmail.com](mailto:ddagenais503@gmail.com).



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**\*Address Correction Requested\***

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

## *Opera America and OVI Coming to the Twin Cities*

In the Spring of 2022, Minnesota Opera will be hosting the Opera America Conference as it celebrates its 50th Anniversary. May 18-21 at the Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis. Opera America was founded in 1970 to lead and serve the entire opera community supporting the creation, presentation and engagement of opera. It continues to be a national champion and major support system for opera. It is exciting to have this organization of international fame in our cities while it assembles to discuss current topics, provide education, network, attend performances and special events to move opera forward as an industry and art form.

Opera Volunteers International (OVI) will be joining Opera America at the Twin Cities conference. The original Opera Guild International was founded in Seattle in 1972 and their second conference was held in St. Paul. The organization was created to enable the Guilds to share ideas, support one another and work together to create audiences and assist their opera company. Through donations and fundraising, OVI awards Matching Grants to member groups for projects and non-monetary awards for Projects of Merit to recognize contributions and efforts in support of opera.



## **OPERA AMERICA**

The Twin Cities Opera Guild has been involved in OVI since its beginning and has played an active role. As the only independent guild in the nation, an all-volunteer organization and a pioneer in opera education, we have been a major contributor in the area of education and idea sharing with other guilds and volunteers. Our Board member John Krupis, has recently accepted the position of VP of Conference Planning for OVI, and will play an important role in the hospitality, events, focus meetings and awards dinner during the Conference.

Rhonda Sweeney, Past President of OVI writes, "OVI and Opera America look forward to once again meeting in person at the 2022 Conference in the beautiful Twin Cities – Minneapolis/St. Paul, May 18-21 – and celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Opera Volunteers International!"

ALL are invited to participate in the conference and we hope you will attend for a day, part of a day, or the entire conference. More info will be shared in the next newsletter.

*Reprinted from Twin Cities Opera Guild*