

THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

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The official newsletter of
*Opera Volunteers
International*

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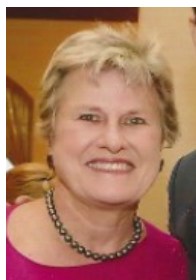


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Celebrating Opera Volunteers for 50 years at Opera Conference 2022

OVI History - Conference Activities - Member Recognition

Rhonda Sweeney reflects on OVI's 50th Anniversary



Past President

When I traveled to Cooperstown, NY in July 1996 to attend the Opera Guilds International conference as President of the **Houston Grand Opera Guild**, I loved the instant camaraderie with fellow opera volunteers from across the United States and Canada, people I had never met before, but felt I had known forever. I joined OGI (which became OVI a few years later) as an Individual member, was asked to join the Board, and have loved my involvement in this great organization!

I love giving back to benefit opera volunteer groups, both financially through our Matching Grants, as well as recognizing outstanding volunteers and volunteer projects each year. Leading Opera Volunteers International from 2013-2017 was a very high honor, and representing opera volunteers at the annual Conference with OPERA America, speaking to over 500 opera professionals about the importance of volunteers, was humbling. Now, as Nominating Committee Chair, I am thrilled to find new leaders to ensure the continuity of OVI into the next 50 years!

Minneapolis / St. Paul - 12 Miles Apart and a World Away

They are the twin cities but so unlike. Minneapolis is west of the Mississippi and St. Paul is east. Minneapolis was founded by Scandinavian and Lutheran Settlers while St. Paul was settled by French, Irish and German Catholics. Our opera conference will be in Minneapolis, but the opera will be in St. Paul. OVI's conference planner John Kupris will lead us on walking tours to introduce us to the very different history and charm of both of these cities.

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**For 50 years OVI
has been the voice
of opera volunteers.
Supporting:
Education
Grants
Recognition
Partnership**

Mary Svela

Dear OVI members and friends,



As we pack our bags and head for Minneapolis, we look forward to being together again at Opera Conference 2022.

When we celebrate Opera Volunteers International's 50th

Anniversary at the conference, we owe a debt of gratitude to our Vice President of Conference Planning, **John Kupris**. His inventive suggestions and tireless efforts to welcome us to the Twin Cities will make for an unforgettable experience for our members attending.

His hospitality is matched by **Kathryn Keefer** and the **Twin Cities Opera Guild** members who have planned so many ways to make us feel welcome in Minnesota.

I would like to give special recognition to members of our Board who are able to attend the conference, and a special thanks to **Rick Greenman** for helping us with conference guides. Thanks also to **Vivian Davis** and her husband, **Dr. Spenser Davis**, for suggesting that we incorporate special recognition for Ukrainian Arts into our conference plans.

Database Board Director **Anne Prokopovych** has offered further suggestions of how we might pay tribute to Ukraine by focusing on the role that arts might serve as a healing force. Their suggestions will be considered during our board meeting and Anne Prokopovych offered this link to a Metropolitan Opera tribute before the opening of Don Carlos. View on You Tube at:

<https://youtu.be/mUfwy3f3R4s>

Thanks volunteers,
you make the difference!

Mary Svela

Public Musicology as Care, or How Should We Respond when the Duke of Mantua Tells Us that All Women Are Fickle?



.... Is the title of the forthcoming book chapter Dr. Everett co-authored with fellow former presenter **Matteo Magarotto**.

Dr. William Everett, is Curators' Distinguished Professor of Musicology at the **University of Missouri-Kansas City**, and was named an OVI

Partner in Excellence in 2021. He has planned a trip back to the US from England to coincide with Opera Conference 2022 where he will speak at our OVI Roundtable Session describing his award winning *At Ease with Opera* program.

At UMKC, he teaches graduate courses in medieval music, American musical theater, music and national identity, research and bibliography in music, and other topics. He regularly leads pre-concert discussions throughout the Kansas City area. William was chosen for a Partners in Excellence Award for his enthusiastic commitment to the Adult Education Programs of the **Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild** where he has brought his skills to create and present multiple educational programs.

Recently during the pandemic William helped the Lyric Opera of Kansas City develop "*Opera in Eight Parts*," an online series featuring opera arias performed by local singers and visual representation of art works from the Nelson- Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City.

Top 15 things to see and do while you're in the twin cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

1. [Minneapolis Institute of Art](#) – locally called "Mia"
2. [Walker Art Center](#)
3. [Minneapolis Sculpture Garden](#)
4. [American Swedish](#)
5. [Minnesota State Capitol](#)
6. [Historic Fort Snelling](#)
7. [Historic Summit Avenue](#)
8. [Cathedral of Saint Paul](#)
9. [Chain of Lakes in Minneapolis](#)
10. [Paisley Park – The Home of Prince](#)
11. [Minnesota History Center](#)
12. [Science Museum of Minnesota](#)
13. [Como Park Zoo and Conservatory](#)
14. [Minnehaha Falls](#)
15. [Mall of America](#)

Opera Conference 2022 OVI Activities

Wednesday, May 18:

Registration, Opening OA session, and Host Reception for Conference 2-day pass holders

9:00 PM Nightcap drinks* & conversation in Hyatt Bar (an optional time to review events of the day and network)

Thursday, May 19:

8:00 - 9:30 am OVI Board Meeting and discussion - open to all OVI attendees

11:15 am-12:30 pm Grantor's Luncheon at the Minneapolis Club (*Open to OVI Grantor members and above*)

1:00 - 3:00 pm OVI Membership Roundtable -Hear success stories from groups who have received awards and matching grants from OVI. Learn more about how their volunteer work has impacted their companies and their communities.

5:30 to 7:00 pm Reception in the Green Room of Minnesota Orchestra Hall

7:00 pm Music & Mindfulness - Minnesota Orchestra, Purchase one hour long program tickets at Minnesota Orchestra separately online or by phone.

9:00 pm Nightcap drinks* & conversation in Hyatt Bar (Pay for what you order)

Friday, May 20:

7:00 - 9:30 AM walking tour departing from the Hyatt for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden Optional breakfast* at the Woman's Club of Minneapolis

10:00 -12:00 PM Volunteer Sessions - . Barb Eckel leads a discussion with a panel including Stacy Widelitz of Nashville Opera.

The second session, led by Twin Cities Opera Guild President Kathryn Keefer and other members of the Guild, will share their successful fundraising strategies in support of innovative opera education programs as they celebrate TCOG's 70th Anniversary.

12:30 pm Tour with John Kupris at Minneapolis Institute of Art followed by optional light lunch* in the museum's *Agra Culture Café* (pay for own order)

6:00 – 9:00 pm Special 50th Anniversary & Awards Dinner celebration at the Minneapolis Club (\$90.Per guest, complimentary for Awardees) Please confirm with Sheila McNeill.

Saturday, May 21:

Morning walking tour in Saint Paul Start with the Cathedral of Saint Paul Walking tour of historic Summit Avenue between The Cathedral and Overlook Park.

Lunch* (Optional) at the University Club of St. Paul.

6:00 pm Dinner* (Optional) at historic St. Paul Grill on Rice Park across from The Ordway Center.

Nightcap* in Saint Paul Hotel Bar following the opera (optional time to network & review day's events.)

* Pay for what you order.

Hollywood of the North Check these out.

10 FAMOUS MOVIES THAT WERE FILMED IN MINNESOTA

<https://www.exploreminnesota.com/list/10-famous-movies-that-were-filmed-minnesota>

Purple Rain
The Mighty Ducks
Grumpy Old Men
The Good Son
Fargo

Beautiful Girls
Jingle All the Way
Sweetland
North Country
A Prairie Home Companion

2022 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 will be acknowledged at the Opera Volunteers International Awards Dinner held this May at Opera Conference 2022 in Minneapolis, MN.

Vernie Jones Opera Omaha Guild



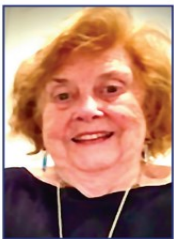
Vernie Jones has long been a passionate and dedicated community leader. She joined the Opera Omaha Guild more than 20 years ago and held several board positions before becoming Guild President in 2005. During her tenure as President she greatly increased membership and created new fundraising opportunities with her leadership, time and talent, raising an impressive \$137,000 for Opera Omaha, as well as providing fun and interesting social events for the opera community. She has contributed to all areas of the Opera Study Group to bring community members together to learn more about and create support for Opera Omaha. Most recently she, along with a co-chair, revived Opera Omaha's upcoming productions. successfully continued as a Zoom program

Nancy Martin Peach State Opera



Nancy Martin has been an invaluable, dedicated volunteer for more than 10 years with Peach State Opera. She offers to take on any job before she is asked and the list of jobs is long. Nancy's been involved with making props, making marketing calls, inventory and making of costumes, creating and typing supertitles, distributing tickets, enlisting and managing community groups to help with "front of house" needs, serving on the Advisory Board and more. She is always available as a "Jack of All Trades" volunteer. Nancy is known for filling in to do whatever is needed, along with a great sense of humor. The success, survival and growth of Peach State Opera has been partly due to Nancy's initiative and can do attitude.

Jan Schueppert Twin Cities Opera Guild



Jan Schueppert became a member of the Twin Cities Opera Guild in 1977. For over 44 years she has been a creative leader for the Guild. Jan has served as President twice, Fundraising Chairman, Newsletter Editor and vibrant cheerleader of opera education for youth. Opera education for youth has been her forte, identifying and guiding programs for all ages. She continues to this day to be an active and inspiring volunteer. The Twin Cities Opera Guild is alive and active in part because of her dedication as a volunteer. Jan has also represented Twin Cities Opera Guild as a member of OVI since 1986, serving on the board assisting opera companies with the development of Guilds.

Janet Sims Houston Grand Opera Guild



Janet Sims has been a volunteer extraordinaire for Houston Grand Opera. She is currently serving as Guild President for the second time. Janet has served as VP of the Houston Grand Opera Studio program, being involved as a Buddy for young artists and part of the Hospitality and Special Events. Program. She has a passion for hospitality and has served many times as Chief Host for the Guild Artist Hospitality program. In appreciation of her years of Guild Board leadership Janet was named a Volunteer of Distinction 2009 and Volunteer of the Year 2010. Most recently in 2020 she was elected as a Lifetime Trustee of the Houston Grand Opera. Janet shows her love of opera by being a committed and active volunteer year after year.

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2022 Partners in Excellence Awardees (continued)

Twin Cities Opera Guild 70th Anniversary



For over 70 years **Twin Cities Opera Guild** has been volunteering to offer financial and logistical support to opera companies, schools of music and a multitude of Twin City and Minnesota State organizations which perform and educate students and the general public about the art form of opera. This is a long and impressive history of volunteer innovation and success. The Guild began in 1952 as an auxiliary Women's Guild to

promote opera and encourage attendance of the Saint Paul Civic Opera. An early focus, besides selling tickets for the season, was to enable high school students, Veterans Hospital patients and student nurses to see performances.

In the 1960's the Guild originated "Candlelight Dinners" as their major fundraiser. The funds raised helped to expand the promotion of performances and expand their opera education program. This event continues to be the major source of funds today supporting a major portion of annual grant awards totaling nearly \$90,000.

In 1973 St Paul Opera Guild hosted the second Opera Guilds International Conference for 105 Guilds. During the same time period they hired professional singers from the New York Met to form an Artist in Residence Quartet to tour Minnesota Schools. The concept continues today through Fargo Moorhead Opera and the University of Minnesota Opera reaching students in 45 schools.

In 1976, the Saint Paul Civic Opera merged with Minnesota Opera and the name was changed to Twin Cities Opera Guild. The focus continues to be on music education, with many funded opera productions created especially for school tours. The Guild has been recognized locally and regionally for being both pioneers and current active supporters of music education in the field of opera.

2022 Projects of Special Merit

Cincinnati Opera Guild - Artist Hospitality Welcome Bags

The Cincinnati Opera Guild has a signature event called the Meet and Greet, where artists of season productions mingle and enjoy treats and drinks with the Guild, staff and invited board members. Due to safety regulations and artists' union stipulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Meet and Greets have been cancelled for the past two years. As Cincinnati Opera returns to indoor performances, 60 members of the Guild will create hospitality bags to welcome the artists. Included will be a personal handwritten note of welcome, gift cards, local restaurant cards, and a signed copy of Rick Pender's book, "**100 Things to do in Cincinnati Before you Die.**" Donated tickets to attractions will be made available, and social media posts will be made to market the welcoming theme.

The following awards will be presented at the conference from last year, when the conference was not a live event.

2021 Partners in Excellence -

William Everett Kansas City Opera Guild

2021 Matching Grants -

Tradition with Virtual Holiday Home Tour"

**Central City Opera Guild: "Volunteers Maintain a Denver
Accepting - Karen Ritz**

2021 Projects of Special Merit - Lyric Opera of Chicago Chapters Executive Board:

"Virtual Member Engagement" Accepting - Rick Greenman

San Francisco Opera Guild:

"Life Changing: An Evening with Frederica von Stade and Jake Heggie " Accepting Susan Malott

2022 Matching Grant Recipients

Matching Grants are made possible through the generosity of our OVI Grantor Members

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. Details and applications are available on OVI's website.

<https://www.operavolunteers.org/matching-grants-and-awards/guidelines-for-ovi-grant-applications/>

Knoxville Opera Guild



The Annual Rossini Festival International Street is in its 19th year and has been declared a "legacy event". This one-day event provides 11 hours of performing arts programming to over 50,000 attendees free of charge. 300-plus volunteers are recruited and must attend small group training sessions provided by The Guild.

The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (The NACC)



The NACC was founded in 1924 and has been a haven for struggling artists who maintain classroom and studio space. The humble beginnings of the NACC inspired the idea for the production of Puccini's "La Boheme" for an inaugural performance. The NACC relies heavily on volunteers, including on stage, back stage and front of house. Even the Director and performers are paid only a nominal fee.

Opera Maine



COVID-19 cancelled plans for the 2020 production of "The Flying Dutchman", a collaboration with the Maine Maritime Museum and named an Official Bicentennial Event by the State of Maine. The project is now on "go". Funds will be used to support the Volunteer Ambassador Program, including training and materials and health and safety equipment to protect the teen and adult volunteers.

Peach State Opera



PSO plans to use the **Matching Grant** funds to support volunteer activities for the touring company production of "The Marriage of Figaro." Many of the volunteers are Vocal Performance Majors from Reinhardt University, Clayton State University, and Georgia State University at Perimeter, and the students will be utilized for all aspects of the production including backstage and front-of-house, providing wonderful training opportunities for these students.

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

OGI to OVI 50 Years and How it all Began

Brief history of Opera Volunteers International

by Don Dagenais



Leta Autry

The organization now known as Opera Volunteers International (OVI) saw its origins when a young lady working for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, **Leta Autry**, became the first volunteer for the Seattle Opera upon the company's creation in 1963.

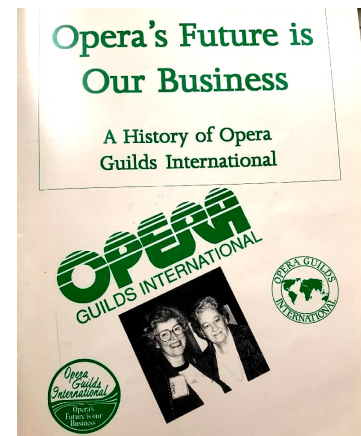
She helped found the **Seattle Opera Guild** that same year and swiftly encountered a problem which everyone in the opera volunteer world will find familiar: how to recruit new volunteers? She was already organizing guild functions and projects, but who was to staff them?

Seeking to broaden her guild's volunteer base, she decided to see how guilds with other opera companies did it. A few years later she had a fateful conversation with **Toni Lowden**, then the president of the **Nevada Opera Guild**. The two of them decided that guilds in various cities could help each other cope with these issues. So, in 1972, they sent a mailing to 52 opera guilds across North America inviting them to an ambitiously named **International Conference of Opera Guilds**.

This meeting, held in Seattle in 1973, became the first of many conferences attracting opera volunteers from the United States and Canada. Thirty volunteers from 17 different opera guilds attended the first conference and learned about the importance of opera volunteers, recruiting new volunteers and training of opera volunteers.

Nobody knew whether this meeting would lead to any others. As far as the organizers knew, this would be a one-time gathering. But many delegates found the discussions so useful that they insisted upon a second conference, which took place in Memphis a year later.

By the time of the third conference in Toronto in 1974, the delegates decided to get serious about creating a formal organization. The name Opera Guilds International (OGI) was selected, bylaws were prepared, and the first officers were elected. Leta Autry, of course, was the President. Many other opera activists across the country also served on that first board, including representatives from Boston, Memphis, St. Paul, Reno, San Diego, Vancouver, Toronto, Cincinnati and New York, to name just a few. The organization was later incorporated in Michigan and received a Section 501 (c)(3) tax exemption from the Internal Revenue Service. Successive conferences, board meetings, workshops, regional meetings and other activities led to many OGI initiatives. These included a competition for outstanding guild projects, workshops devoted to guild-sponsored education programs (in the days when few opera companies had their own education departments), a matching grants program, a program to honor outstanding opera volunteers, and publishing pamphlets to help volunteers recruit and train others, to name a few.



Opera Volunteers International

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Send your guild news and photos to
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**Find us on the internet at
www.OperaVolunteers.org**

Opera Volunteers International is a nonprofit, volunteer-led service organization and the premier resource and advocate for the development and advancement of volunteerism in support of opera. This year, OVI celebrates 50 years as the primary umbrella organization for opera volunteers, opera volunteer groups and opera organizations that use volunteers.

OPERA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

- Grants for Volunteer Projects
- Recognition of Volunteer Excellence
- Resources for Groups

Learn more at **operavolunteers.org**

Celebrating 50 years of service to opera



OVI celebrates the hard work of volunteers and offers ways to help make more volunteer involvement possible by recognizing achievement and creativity, supporting volunteer projects, and advocating for continued involvement of volunteers in opera. Volunteering enriches the lives of volunteers, builds bridges to the community and makes it possible for opera companies to do more.