

THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

October 2023
Vol. 47, Number 3

The official newsletter of
*Opera Volunteers
International*



Report from Opera Conference 2023

By Rhonda Sweeney



Attending Conference was a goal I set at the end of 2022 and accomplished! I missed Minneapolis last year and the pandemic took the 2020 and 2021 Conferences virtual. I had really missed seeing my OVI friends and opera company colleagues I'd met since I began attending OA in 1999 in beautiful Vancouver, which also featured a spectacular boat ride, as we had in Pittsburgh, the City of Bridges, this year.

This year's Conference focused on the people in opera – Human Values – and covered the gamut from staff to audiences to the creatives who bring us the human stories we love to see and hear.

I loved hearing from director **Peter Sellars**, a Pittsburgh native, talk about the importance of each of us connecting to others and seeing the human being, even those with whom we disagree. He spoke of the unlimited courage, compassion, generosity, and love in each of us and how these characteristics make us resilient and together can make stronger communities. Pittsburgh's mayor, **Ed Gainey**, spoke about the arts as the engine that will revitalize downtowns across the country post-pandemic, as corporate offices remain half empty. Opera, ballet, theater, museums will invite people to return to the cities, but must also be prepared to take their art out to the audiences who became accustomed to watching from home. Creative approaches to delivering the arts during the pandemic must persist, reaching people where they are and engaging new audiences who suddenly discovered what they have been missing!

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From the President: Mary Svela

Here is an Opera Quiz question for you....



What small but mighty group helps drive innovation in opera education and appreciation?

Answer: Opera Volunteers International

Although we were few in number at the spring Opera Conference in Pittsburgh, our reach was 'supersized' through our Matching Grants, Partners in Excellence, and Projects of Special Merit recognized at the conference.

We were reminded again of our reach when Arlene Schwind, Opera Maine President of the Board of Trustees accepted their Matching grant award from OVI. She told us that theaters in Maine which had been showing Met Opera broadcasts were no longer open, so their Opera for All film series might be the only chance for many to see opera on film locally. Our Matching Grants each brought innovative projects to their local communities.

Both of our PIE winners have worked for decades fundraising as well as friendraising for opera, and our Project of Special Merit Award brought great ideas for bringing young audiences to opera.

Reading of these opera accomplishments can be of value, but coming together to discuss them in person adds a greater dimension to our understanding.

Plans are underway for our next conference in Los Angeles in early June of 2024. We invite you to save the dates and bring your love of local opera to share with us.

Mary Svela

OVI Welcomes New Board Leadership

Treasurer Elect **Dianne Schemm**
*Assumes office 1/1/24

Secretary **Marlene McCallister**

Vice President **Ingrid Kessler**

Administration

Vice President **Rhonda Catanzaro**

Membership & Outreach

Northwest
Regional Director

David Steiner



Social Media

Sophie Workman
Johnson



Grants

Julie Benson



Partners in
Excellence

Cindy Niggemyer



Calendar

October 1

marks the beginning of the year for OVI. If you have not yet renewed your membership, you can do that directly from our website with a secure credit card payment, or you can print out the membership form and renew by mail. If you are able, please consider joining at the grantor level which helps fund our matching grants to opera volunteer groups. <https://www.operavolunteers.org/joinovi/>

February 1

Deadline for submitting applications for Grants, Partners in Excellence, Projects of Special Merit

June 3 - 8

OPERA America / OVI Opera Conference 2024 in Los Angeles, CA. Register early for best rates. Advance Registration opens Nov 1. Watch for email or go to OA conference page for detailed information.
www.operaamerica.org/conference

2023 Opera Volunteers International Recognition awards

2023 Partners in Excellence

*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 were acknowledged at the Opera Volunteers International Awards Luncheon held this past May at Opera Conference 2023 in Pittsburgh, PA.*

Arlene Alm

Twin Cities Opera Guild

Arlene Alm has been a member of Twin Cities Opera Guild for 45 years, serving in many leadership roles since 1977. In addition, she has supported and promoted opera through her company, Ovation Opera Tours - opera tours between 1977 and 2017, leading people to opera in the US and opera tours throughout Europe. Some of her roles at Twin Cities Opera Guild include, 1993-2001 -TCOG Assistant Treasurer, 2001-2005 -TCOG President, and 2005-Present - TCOG Treasurer. She created a d mailing list of 2000 friends of opera and music education for TCOG. The guild has made grants totaling over \$758,000 benefiting 208,000 students.



"Arlene has gone above and beyond in her volunteer work because she also performs most of the duties that would normally be done by an executive director. The TCOG has been made better because of Arlene's passion, commitment, and talent". **John Kupris**

Lisa Hagstrom

Opera Omaha Guild

Lisa Hagstrom was nominated by Opera Omaha and the Opera Omaha Guild for her over 25 years of volunteer activities. According to **Deb Peterson**, Opera Omaha Guild President, "Lisa's time



volunteering shows her love and commitment to her community, ...[she] is always available to help when needed, all the while working full time and raising her family." Her commitment to volunteering merits recognition with this achievement award. Lisa has served as OOG Marketing Chair, Membership Chair, Guild Vice President, 2014 OOG Cotillion Chair, 2017 Cotillion involvement, 2006 and 2014 Guild President, and 2022 Opera Omaha Advisory Board. Lisa will attend the Awards Luncheon in Pittsburgh with her daughter, who is also active in Opera Omaha Guild's Cotillion.

Reprinted from our previous digital OVI Newsletter

2023 OVI 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.

The Guild of the Glimmerglass Festival

Volunteers Support: *A Day at the Festival for Students*



The Guild will use their matching grant to support volunteer efforts for ***A Day at the Festival for Students*** at the August 1st performance of *La Boheme*. Area high school students will be treated to lunch and a performance. The Guild's Hospitality Committee will provide the meal, serve as ushers and greeters, and ensure educational materials and teacher resources pertaining to the opera are posted on the Glimmerglass Festival website. Approximately 20 volunteers will participate.

Lyric Opera of Chicago Chapters' Executive Board

Revealing the Lost Music of the Holocaust



was a concert held at the **Illinois Holocaust Museum**. Pianist and educator **Paul Dykstra**, who has dedicated his career to uncovering and promoting the music of the Holocaust, was joined by **Cantor Susan Friedman**. Volunteers were recruited to greet the attendees and assist the Museum staff in attendee tours of the facility. Among the goals for this program project are: introducing the Lyric family of volunteers and patrons to those of the Holocaust Museum, and putting into practice Lyric's commitment to the IDEA values of Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Access while growing a more active and engaged volunteer membership. A full report will be given at the opera conference and in a future OVI Newsletter.

Opera Maine

Opera for All film screenings



The 2023 Film Series, conceived, researched and planned by the Volunteer Programming Committee, will present a series of filmed operas from some of the world's most acclaimed opera companies, orchestras, directors and soloists, including *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II, *La Fille du Regiment* by Gaetano Donizetti, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, by Giochino Rossini.

Admission is open to all, and free to selected senior communities and, through Opera Maine's Opera for All initiative, free to audience members aged 25 and under. New volunteers from the University of Maine graduate program will offer pre-show talks and set up and operate audio visual equipment and provide tech support. As always, the volunteers will provide friendly greetings and serve as ambassadors for Opera Maine.

2023 OVI Matching Grants (continued)

Minnesota Opera

Light Walkers Project



“Light Walkers” are volunteers who stand-in for the principals during the often-tedious, yet much-needed technical rehearsals to set light cues in a given production. Approximately 28 Light Walkers will be recruited for the staging of *Don Giovanni*. The volunteers will be recruited and managed by Minnesota Opera using *Galaxy* (a volunteer recruitment, management and communication tool). Volunteers will be given an orientation and directed by MN Opera Staff. These volunteers will get an “up close and personal” behind the scenes experience in the creation of an opera.

MN Opera tracks the cost of staff hours dedicated solely to volunteer support and training, and this project will come to roughly 148 hours, which is roughly \$3700 on average. Ancillary supplies such as printed training materials and light refreshments are also provided.

Opera Theater Oregon

Nu Nah-Hup: Sacajawea's Story



Opera Theatre Oregon's project centers on *Nu Nah-Hup: Sacajawea's Story*, an intercultural collaboration with Agai-Dika/Lemhi-Shoshone culture bearer and descendent of Sacajawea, **Rose Ann Abrahamson**.

Nu Nah-Hup: Sacajawea's Story will reimagine the extraordinary Shoshone woman who was a crucial member of the the Lewis and Clark Expedition in a new opera-theater work. OTO will premier a 35- minute scene of this new work alongside excerpts of music, soundscapes, and presentations of traditional Agai-Dika/Lemhi-Shoshone language and culture. As many as fifty volunteers will be recruited throughout the production period to assist with everything from fundraising, marketing, organizing the benefit soiree, to set design, accounting and more.



OVI Group members in good standing are eligible to apply for matching grants which are awarded annually each February. Visit our webpage for details and to download an application

2023 Project of Special Merit

This prestigious honor is presented to groups who submit outstanding new and long-standing projects in support of opera. Eligible projects feature volunteers, and are designed to educate, build audience, and support the many facets of a company's work.

Toledo Opera and Toledo Opera Guild

Opera on Wheels

This year, **Toledo Opera Guild** presented **Opera on Wheels** with a performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* titled **"Pizza and Pirates,"** Each year, Toledo Opera's Resident Artists serve as touring artists for the Opera on Wheels program which travels extensively, bringing live opera to the Toledo area. Annually, the program is performed for 20,000 students. This season, the traveling production is a newly adapted children's opera, of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. **Joshua Borths** of Virginia Opera adapted the score and wrote the libretto. Toledo Opera's **James Norman**, directed.



Founded in 1962, Toledo Opera Guild has played an active role in supporting Toledo Opera's performances, education, and community outreach programs. It is the mission of the Toledo Opera Guild to promote opera awareness, education, company service, and financial support for Toledo Opera. In the past decade, Toledo Opera Guild has directly contributed over \$350,000. This is in addition support such as cast rehearsal dinners (approximately \$1,000) along with countless hours of volunteer expertise and help with various tasks. Accepting the award will be Co-president of Toledo Opera

Guild **Celinda Niggemyer** and presenting information about the program in Pittsburgh will be **Rachael Cammarn**, communications and patron services coordinator for Toledo Opera.

2024 grant application and recognition deadlines are February 1, 2024.

Grants

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

Now is the time to think about the kinds of projects that can benefit your opera volunteer group or support your Opera Company and reach out to your community. Details and applications are available on OVI's website.

Partner in Excellence:

<https://www.operavolunteers.org/matching-grants-and-awards/partners-in-excellence/>

Is there an individual your group would like to honor or a special anniversary to celebrate.

Nominate an individual or a group for an OVI award.

Project of Special Merit:

<https://www.operavolunteers.org/matching-grants-and-awards/projects-special-merit/>

Did your group create a unique project either before or during the current quarantine shut-down?

Let us know about it so we can recognize you and share your great idea with our other opera volunteer groups.

By Rhonda Sweeney

(continued from page 1)



Our OVI sessions were equally inspiring, from hearing about award winning projects to discussing how to engage younger volunteers. **Marilyn Egan's** presentation on **Pittsburgh's Opera Trunks** was fascinating and made me wish I was one of the lucky children who got to spend a month exploring all aspects of various operas! It was truly wonderful to see OVI Past Presidents **Jane Hartley** and **Susan Malott**, both from San Francisco, in these sessions, as well as Board members **Pauline Quinn** and **Sheila McNeill** from Omaha; **Rick Greenman** and **Barb Eckel** from Chicago; **Rita Horiguchi** from San Jose, **Mary Svela** from Portland, and OVI members **Louise Ryssmann** from Chicago and **Lee Damus** from Miami

Great ideas can be shared at each of these annual gatherings, but the best part is reconnecting with the people I love and meeting new opera people. Getting a hug from Peter Sellars, visiting with Pittsburgh's **Christopher Hahn** about his beautiful city and his South African homeland, reminiscing with Lyric's **Anthony Freud** about his time in Houston, chatting with **Larry Edelson** about his upcoming move to Chicago from Houston, and so many others I've met at Conference in prior years.



"Opera is the vehicle for sharing these universal human stories and that music is the universal language."

Though I hadn't plan to attend the operas because I wasn't sure I was going until the last minute, I did end up seeing both *Macbeth* and *We Shall Not Be Moved*, and was glad I went. The 1847 Verdi opera, at its barest bones with the orchestra onstage with the performers, told the human story of greed and power in an intimate setting. The intimate 2017 opera, a hybrid dance and hip-hop poetry opera, gave me much to think about, telling a powerful story about an event I was unaware of because it did not happen to my community. Both reminded me that opera is the vehicle for sharing these universal human stories and that music is the universal language.



Next year's Conference will be in Los Angeles, the City of Angels, where we had spectacular OVI and OPERA America Conferences in 2010. I am setting a goal to attend, and hope to see more OVI members there than ever before!

There's more to La-La Land than movies!



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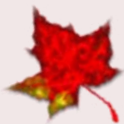
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Send your guild news and photos to
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**Find us on the internet at
www.OperaVolunteers.org**



October is a time for renewal

Renew your OVI Membership Today

<https://www.operavolunteers.org/joinovi/>

Your support allows OVI to celebrate the hard work of volunteers and offers ways to help make more volunteer involvement possible by:

- **Recognizing achievement and creativity**
- **Supporting volunteer projects**
- **Advocating for continued involvement of volunteers in opera.**



Joining at the Grantor level helps fund our Matching Grants program for member projects.

Volunteering enriches the lives of volunteers, builds bridges to the community, and makes it possible for opera companies to do more.

Opera Volunteers International is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to connecting and bringing together volunteers who support opera companies in cities and local communities throughout the United States and Canada.



OVI Online Edition additional photos from conference



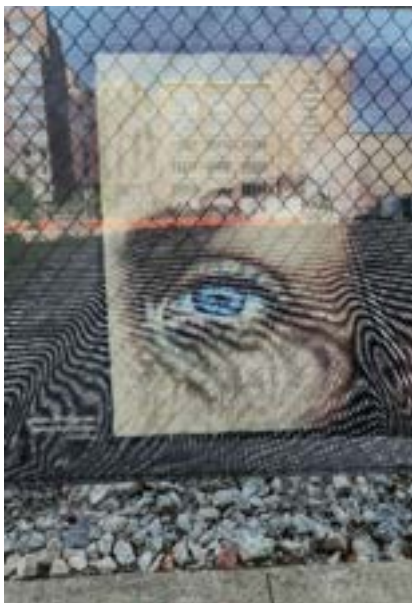
The Sessions



The Awards



OVI Online Edition additional photos from conference

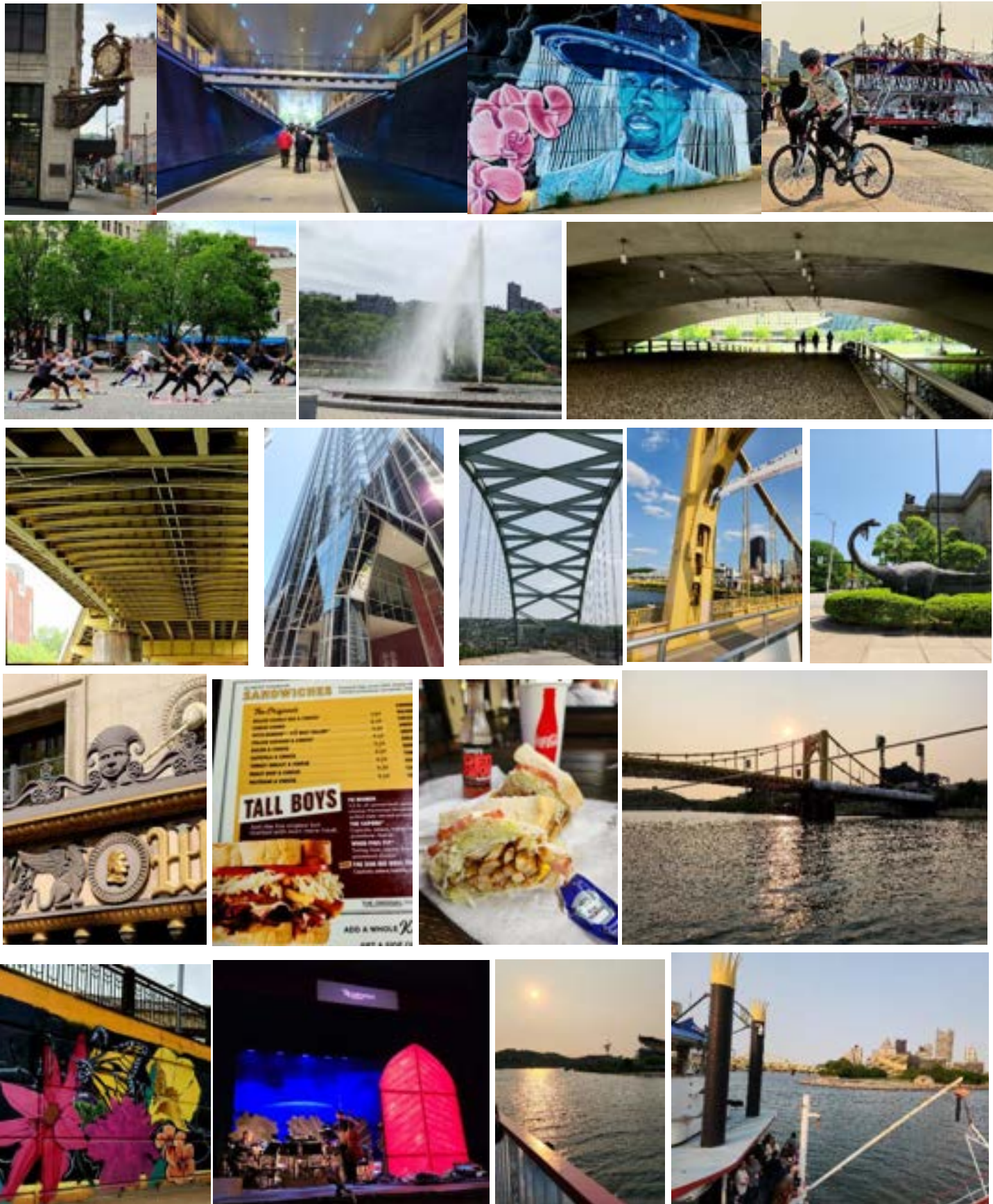


Sights of the City



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OVI Online Edition additional photos from conference



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