

THE OPERA VOLUNTEER VOICE

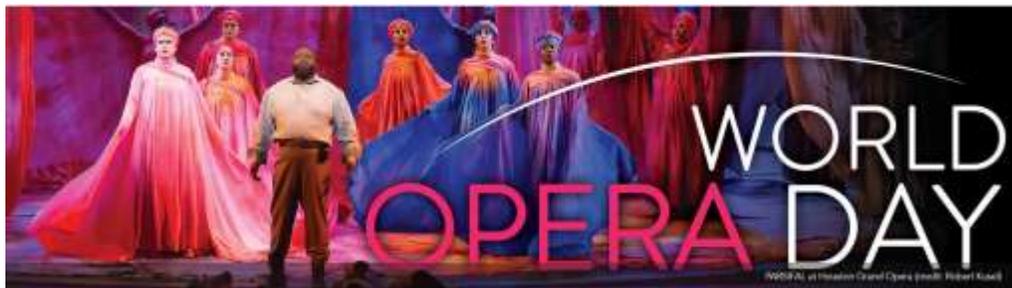
October 2024
Vol. 48, Number 3

The official newsletter of
*Opera Volunteers
International*



<https://youtu.be/RQOGS2LceXM?feature=shared>

Get Ready for World Opera Day: October 25



World Opera Day (www.worldoperaday.com) is held annually on October 25. It is a collaboration between OPERA America, Opera Europa, and Ópera Latinoamérica.

World Opera Day is a social media initiative - an opportunity for the industry's administrators, artists, trustees, audiences and volunteer groups to shine a light on opera through their social media platforms.

For **World Opera Day 2024**, we invite you to be transported by opera. Together, let's celebrate opera as a powerful art form that transports us beyond the ordinary - allowing us to step out of our everyday lives, engage with diverse experiences, cultures, and places, and forge new bonds with our neighbors and neighborhoods.

We encourage opera companies, artists, volunteer groups, and audiences to share how opera can transport us through music and storytelling.

How to Participate on October 25, 2024

- Use your social media as a platform to spread the word:
- Post 2-4 times over the day to each of your social media channels. This extra volume will help break through the oversaturated market and increase the chances that people see your posts.
- Use video whenever possible - in your posts and stories. New research shows that seeing video is impactful in bringing newcomers to opera.
- Tag your content with #WorldOperaDay and follow the hashtag to see what's happening worldwide.
- Add #MeetOpera and tag @OPERAmerica to expand the conversation, share posts, and increase engagement.

For more ideas on how to participate go to: www.operaamerica.org/r/advocacy/4197/world-opera-day

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From the President: Mary Svela



As we begin another fiscal year at Opera Volunteers International, the OVI directors and officers take stock of all we have accomplished during the 2024 fiscal year. Our working board is full, and fully working to bring to you the best news from our member groups.

During the last year, our Matching Grants provided financial assistance to eight groups, totalling over \$10,000. Member groups, including Central City Opera, Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Erwin H. Johnson Fund, Knoxville Opera, Niagara Arts and Cultural Center, Peach State Opera and Young Patronesses of the Opera all proposed great volunteer projects for providing increased community access to opera in underserved communities including many with a focus on opera for children. Your donations or membership at the grantor level helped us support our matching grants. This year, we will feature their follow-up stories on about these grants on social media.

As always, our Partners in Excellence winners, Sandi Bruns (Omaha), Dr. Robert Feibel (St Louis), Kirk Hickey (Houston), and commemoration of the 75th Anniversary Celebration of Tulsa Opera provided us with inspiring summaries of the achievements of our honorees.

Our Projects of Special Merit award winners from Portland Opera Guild and Maine Opera reminded us that the great volunteer ideas need to be shared. Richard Horswell from Portland Opera Guild presented their project along with other splendid volunteer group marketing ideas at Opera Conference 2024 in Los Angeles.

Those who were able to attend the conference learned more about the volunteer efforts of the Opera League of Los Angeles, and we were able to compare successful strategies for volunteers from three of our member groups moderated by Gary Murphy of Opera League of Los Angeles who shared insights from Rick Greenman of Chicago Lyric Opera Guild and Susan Malott of San Francisco Opera Guild.

Other educational sessions made available to members this year included a webinar discussion of “How volunteers are used and treated at your company?” led by Past OVI President Don Dagenais, and Portland Opera General Director Sue Dixon. Another presentation “Songs by Heart” presented by Dani Keil and Scott Filstrup of Tulsa Opera is featured in this newsletter. If you missed them, recordings are available on our website.

During the next year, we will continue to provide you with some of our best and most inspiring ideas from the opera volunteer world. Please share your great ideas with us.

Thanks for being a volunteer! *Mary Svela*

OVI Board Leadership 2024-2025

President	Mary Svela
Secretary	Marlene McAllister
Treasurer	Dianne Schemm
Administration	Ingrid Kessler
Nominating	Rhonda Sweeney
Membership	Rhonda Catanzaro
Northwest Region	David Steiner
North Central Region	Tyler McKenzie
Great Lakes Region	Erika Erich
Northeast Region	Danielle Di Stefano
Mid-Atlantic Region	Phyllis Driver
Gulf Southeast Region	Jim Jolly
South Central Region	Jerry Bohannon
Southwest Region	Vikie Hariton

Communications & Marketing	Pauline Quinn
Website/Resources	Barb Eckel
Social Media	Sophie Workman Johnson
Newsletter	Rick Greenman
Matching Grants	Julie Anne Benson
Partners in Excellence	Cindy Niggemyer
Projects of Special Merit	Sarajane King
Database	Anne Prokopovych

OVI is happy and proud to welcome **Tyler McKenzie** to our board as North Central Regional Director. Tyler is Manager of Volunteer Engagement with Opera Theatre of St Louis



OVI Volunteer Groups Across America 2024 - 2025

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Northwest Region

Portland Opera Guild

North Central Region

Opera Omaha Inc.
 Opera Omaha Guild
 Twin Cities Opera Guild, Inc.
 Minnesota Opera Company

Great Lakes Region

Chicago Opera Theater
 Cincinnati Opera Guild
 Lyric Opera of Chicago
 Chapters Exec. Board
 Toledo Opera Guild

Northeast Region

Erwin H. Johnson
 Memorial Fund, Inc.
 Opera Maine
 Glimmerglass Opera Guild
 Friends of Pittsburgh Opera
 Niagara Arts&Culture Center

Mid-Atlantic Region

Knoxville Opera Guild
 Chattanooga Symphony &
 Opera Association
 Friends of Nashville
 Opera

Southwest Region

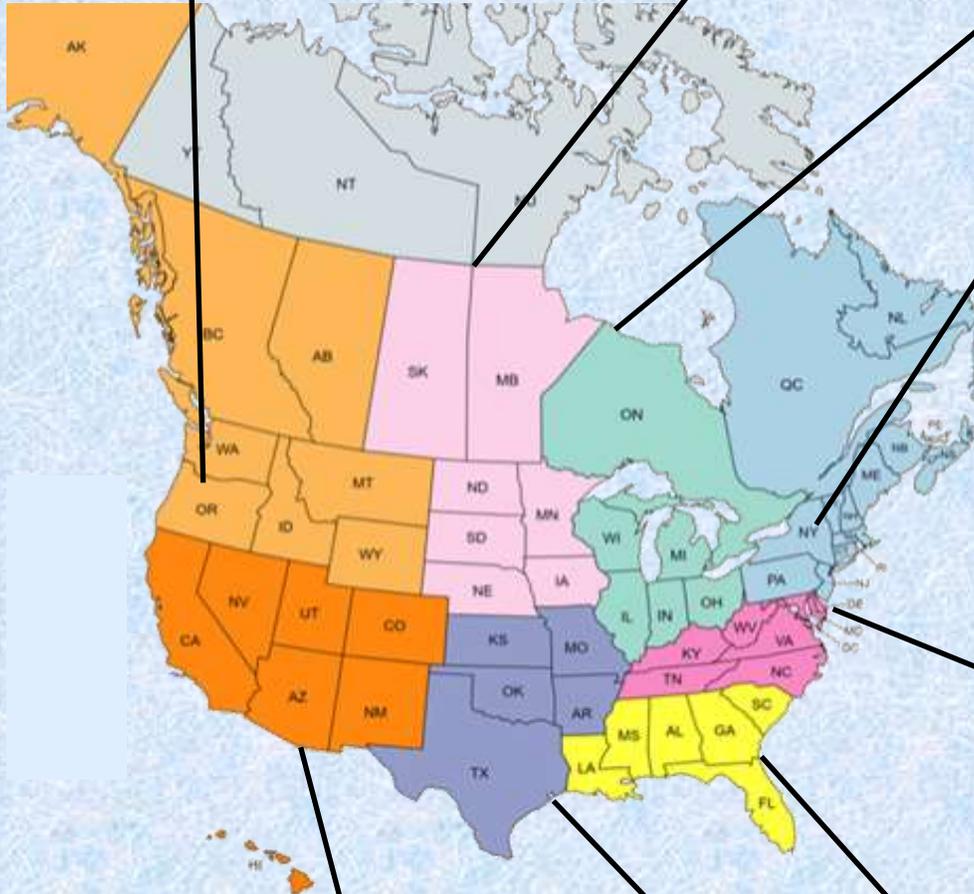
Valley Friends of Arizona
 Opera
 Central City Opera Guild
 The Guilds of the Santa Fe
 Opera Inc.
 Friends of Opera San Jose
 San Francisco Opera Guild
 Opera League of Los Angeles

South Central Region

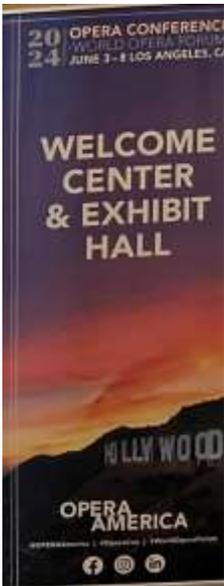
Houston Grand Opera Guild,
 The Guild of Tulsa Opera
 Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
 Guild

Gulf Southeast Region

Bravi! Pensacola Opera
 Volunteer Group
 The Opera Guild at the
 University of Alabama
 Peach State Opera Company
 Young Patronesses
 of the Opera
 Shreveport Opera
 First Coast Opera



International Opera Conference 2024 Los Angeles, CA



On June 5, thirteen OVI members joined with members of the **Opera League of Los Angeles** (OLLA) at the beautiful Omni Hotel to represent opera volunteers to the opera companies of the world. OVI president **Mary Svela** and OLLA president **Gary Murphy** led our delegation.

In addition to hearing the latest issues confronting and energizing opera companies, we were able to interact with company representatives from our optimally positioned table. We held a board meeting/think-tank to share ideas, and conducted an insightful panel discussion called "It takes two to Tango", about navigating the delicate relationship between volunteers and opera companies. We recognized outstanding individuals and initiatives by our opera groups at our awards ceremony, and we received reports from some of our groups on key projects made possible by our Matching Grants Program.

Daily sightseeing, museum visits, and walking tours accompanied nightly opera performances to round out the L.A. experience. L.A. Opera's sumptuous *Turandot* production by artist David Hockney filled the immense Dorothy Chandler pavilion. In contrast, a particularly revealing small scale *Madama Butterfly* by the Pacific Opera Project was able to breathe new understanding into a familiar work by having the characters sing in Japanese and English. Fans enjoying the culture clash of the recent Emmy winning *Shogun* will be well rewarded by a viewing of this production at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjIzn0vBxoY>.

We acknowledge **OPERA America** for giving OVI the platform to represent opera volunteer groups nationally and are grateful to the **Opera League of Los Angeles** for their friendliness, their helpfulness, their talent, and effectiveness. Special thanks to **Gary Murphy**, to **Anne and Ernie Prokopovich** and to the OVI board for their work in planning, coordinating, and communicating our participation in the conference.



Mary & Gary Svela Murphy



----- Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org -----

Representation . Revitalization . Recognition . Recreation

Conference Attendees:

Barb Eckel
Rick Greenman
Jane Hartley
Richard Horswell
Susan Malott
Tyler McKenzie
Gary Murphy
Anne Prokopovych
Ernie Prokopovych
Fernando Sanchez
David Steiner
Mary Sveta
Rhonda Sweeney



OPERA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM
OPERA CONFERENCE 2024
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
June 6, 2024
WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
Mary Sveta, OVI President
PRESENTATION OF AWARDS
PROJECT OF SPECIAL MERIT
Portland Opera Guild
Richard Horswell
PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE
DR. ROBERT FEIBEL - Opera Theatre of St. Louis
TYLER MCKENZIE
KIRK HICKEY -Houston Grand Opera
RHONDA SWEENEY
TULSA OPERA 75TH ANNIVERSARY
LOWI DECTER WRIGHT & SCOTT FILLSTRUP



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

Inspiring and Connecting Through Music

As Opera volunteers, we understand the power and reach of music and drama. Sweep away the lofty notions of opera's grandeur and elitism, and we find, at its heart, the core of human experience. The brain is more than a complex reasoning tool, and it contains pathways, only navigable through the senses. Music reaches us in ways far beyond logic with a power that can actually altar and enhance comprehension and feeling.

You will find, on these pages, examples of how some guilds and opera companies are using music to reach individuals beyond the opera house. **Tulsa Opera Guild's** support of this valuable program, and the national nature of the initiative gives it particular relevance to all of us as supporters and believers in the power of music.

Changing lives one song at a time



Connecting people with memory loss to the language and joy of music

Songs by Heart Foundation, a not-for-profit organization founded in 2015, aims to improve the quality of life of sufferers from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia through the power of music. There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's. The people suffering from this disease are often cut off from the world around them, unsure of who or where they are. According to studies done in partnership with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, "music can shift mood, manage stress-induced agitation, stimulate positive interactions, facilitate cognitive function, and coordinate motor movements. With this knowledge, they have been able to create a program that uses music to engage residents at a higher level than a standard sing-along. The interactive sessions help bring residents out of themselves and reconnect them with their surroundings.

Tulsa Opera's "Songs By Heart" is an engagement-centered program designed for those living with Alzheimer's and dementia, along with their caretakers, that uses simple, familiar songs as therapy. Music has unique ways of connecting people — with other people, with complex ideas and profound emotions, and with our own memories. Those connections are especially important to those dealing with the effects of Alzheimer's and other conditions that erode people's memories and mental faculties. " James Watts, Tulsa World

Since the first programs in three Chicago suburbs nine years ago, Songs by Heart has expanded to reach over 50 memory loss communities across the country.

The number of people with Alzheimer's and dementia continues to climb at an alarming rate. There is an ever growing waitlist of new communities and cities who are eager for their residents to reap the benefits of Songs by Heart. The immediate goal is to build an infrastructure that enables them to serve this rapidly growing population of dementia sufferers and their families.

Where to find out more about Songs by Heart

Websites:

www.songsbyheart.org

www.tulsaopera.com/songs-by-heart

Songs by Heart OVI presentation:

https://youtu.be/z_6JCHoxHX8



Presenters:

Scott Filstrup has been active with **Tulsa Opera** for nearly 30 years, serving the **Tulsa Opera Board** as **President, Chairman of the Board**, and member of the **Executive Committee**. He is a long-time member of **Tulsa Opera Guild**, and has been inducted into the **Tulsa Opera Hall of Fame**. Inspired by their parents and grandparents, Scott and Margee Filstrup have spent a lifetime with a love, an appreciation and support of opera and classical music.

Dani Keil is a director, community organizer and arts educator. Dani began working with **Tulsa Opera** in 2017 as their season's assistant stage director and then joined the staff in 2020 as the **Director of Outreach** to oversee a community program that has grown to engage with more than 55,000 people annually. Dani currently serves as the **Chief Operating Officer**, is a member of **Tulsa Opera Guild**.



----- Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org -----

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Address Correction Requested

Send your guild news and photos to
Newsletter Editor and Publisher:

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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.

