The Opera Volunteer Voice

OVI Honors Outstanding Achievement at Philadelphia Conference

The President of the United States Volunteer Service Award

Mary Earl

Bravo Award

M. Ann Meschery
Jane Hartley

Partners in Excellence

Adelma Graham
Houston Grand Opera
Jackie Wilson
Knoxville Opera Guild

Projects of Special Merit

Artist Hospitality Project -- Houston Grand Opera Guild

Guild Ambassador Project -- Austin Lyric Opera Guild

Education/Audience Development Project -- Opera Guild of Northern Virginia

Audience Development Project -- Opera Guild of San Antonio

Spirits of the Opera Fund Raising Project -- Opera Omaha Guild

Education/Audience Development/Communication -- The SantaFe Opera Guild

Matching Grants Award

Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Erwin H. Johnson Memorial Fund, greater western area, NY
Portland Opera Guild, Portland, OR
Portopera Guild. Portland, ME

What’s Inside This Issue:

Philadelphia Conference 2
New Orleans
Conference Photos 3
Award Recipients 4 and 5
Regional News 6
Volunteer Highlights 7
Nat’l Opera Week 8

Reserve Now

New Orleans Board Meeting Weekend: November 16-19

Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org
Creative Resurgence in Philadelphia!

We knew going in that Opera Conference 2012 would be a new experience for OVI but honestly we had a few apprehensions around whether or not this would really work. The size, the experience and the staff of Opera America would provide great organization and resources but would we be heard and valued? Would our expertise be utilized? Or would we just be overwhelmed?

The consensus of OVI participants was that Opera America keynotes, and open sessions were inspiring, creative and engaging. They caused us to see our opera companies from a different perspective. Support personnel couldn’t be more accommodating and professional. Non-OVI participants were friendly and sociable. There were so many speakers and roundtable discussions that it was sometimes hard to choose which event to attend. OVI offerings clearly were able to attract and speak to the interest of attendees from other disciplines.

Susan J. Ellis of Energize, Inc. spoke to the needs and concerns of volunteer utilization. A session called “It Takes Two to Tango” explored the challenges and benefits of various arts and support group relationship structures.

The highlight for me was when Lawrence Gelbud (consultant and U. Penn and Wharton School lecturer) delivered a humorous and pertinent address on strategic planning. As the room began to fill it was clear that OVI’s offering was attracting a lot of interest. Bringing in chairs would not satisfy the eager crowds. Ten minutes into the program Opera America came to announce we were moving to the Ormandy Ballroom which was accomplished with speed and efficiency.

Yes we felt welcomed. Yes we were appreciated for what we had to offer. The OVI board voted to join forces with Opera America again next year for their 2013 conference in Vancouver, Canada.

Rick Greenman, Newsletter Editor

**Note:** There will be a second chance to hear Mr. Gelbud’s highly entertaining discourse at OVI’s teleseminar on September 10.
The BRAVO Award is given on an occasional basis as a tribute to a person who has performed outstanding and unusual service on behalf of opera volunteers in service to OGI/OVI. Our current membership policy awards Honorary Lifetime membership status to BRAVO Awardees. OVI has awarded the BRAVO Award six times in our 40 year history.

Projects of Special Merit

- Houston Grand Opera Guild Artist Hospitality Project
- Austin Lyric Opera Guild Guild Ambassador Project
- Opera Guild of Northern Virginia Education/Audience Development Project
- Opera Guild of San Antonio Audience Development Project
- Opera Omaha Guild Spirits of the Opera Fund Raising Project
- The Santa Fe Opera Guild Educ/Audience Development/Communication Project

Matching Grants Award

- Lyric Opera of Chicago Chicago, IL
- Erwin H Johnson Memorial Fund greater western area, NY
- Portland Opera Guild Portland, OR
- Portopera Guild Portland, ME

Partners in Excellence

- Adelma Graham Houston Grand Opera
- Jackie Wilson Knoxville Opera Guild

The President of the United States Volunteer Service Award

Mary Earl
Recognizing Excellence

The dedication, creativity, virtuosity and talent of Opera volunteers and support groups worldwide is a suitable match for this unique art form. This year’s OVI Award Winners are the epitome of excellence. We also commend those tireless and committed volunteers who are not mentioned by name but nevertheless give their all for an art which they truly love.

Represented here are projects that range from backstage tours (Lyric Opera of Chicago), caring for visiting performers (Houston Grand Opera), financing And arranging free concerts to commemorate National Opera Week (Erwin H. Johnson Memorial Fund). An audience education project called Opera 101 (Santa Fe Opera) increases attendance and a new opera commissioned for children (San Antonio Opera) creates the new audiences to replace us when we are gone. Austin Lyric Opera’s Guild Ambassador Project reestablishes and maintains contact and connection to opera donors and volunteers.

By far, one of the most innovative fund raising events, Spirits of the Opera (Opera Omaha) gives dressing up for the opera an entirely new meaning. Appetizers and signature cocktails were served in a posh club while glamorous female impersonators lip-synced to stellar arias. The only challenge was handling the overwhelming crowds. Try this one out for your opera company and see what happens.

Remembering the Future

Ann Craft, OVI President 1991-1994, OVI Partner in Excellence, and a Life Trustee of the Houston Grand Opera Guild, Guild President 1981-1983, will forever be remembered for her passion for the Guild and specifically the young artists of the Houston Grand Opera. Ann passed away February 2, 2010 and included a generous Bequest in her will in favor of the HGO Guild. The Guild established an account in the HGO Endowment, permanently generating an annual distribution. The annual distribution of this account is directed by the Guild. Currently the distribution will go to *HGOco’s High School Voice Studio in Ann’s memory. A bequest of any size can now be added to the account. It is the Guild’s hope that Ann’s generosity will be the catalyst for others to remember the Guild and grow the account.

The High School Voice Studio is a 13-year program which has served over 100 students to prepare for an academic career in music. HSVS provides one voice lesson per week with Dr. Jason Lester and one studio or master class per month to prepare students for college auditions. Additionally, the students prepare two recitals: one in January to prepare for auditions and one in May which is an adjudicated scholarship recital. Additionally, the students are ambassadors for the Houston Grand Opera and provide information about all facets of HGO to peers and family members as they are becoming familiar with the craft and art of opera.

*HGOco is Houston Grand Opera’s unique initiative that builds new and lasting community relationships by telling stories with words and music.

HGOco connects the Houston Grand Opera company to the community through collaboration.
Gerald Elijah  
Vice President Outreach

At the Philadelphia conference I met with Regional Coordinators, President Julie Benson and Membership Vice-President Rhonda Sweeney to firm up plans for the remainder of this Membership Year. Looking forward to 2012-2013, I also attended the luncheon meeting of Opera Canada. The agenda included member reports and an update on the Strategic Plan.

This is a year in which many changes have occurred in our Regions. We reorganized geographically to better be able to serve our members, and have seen several new Regional Coordinators come on board. Effective May 1, 2012 Southeast Regional Coordinator Gloria Jackson has gone on a Leave of Absence while undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. With Gloria, LOA appears to mean “lots of activities”, as she continues to work hard in support of OVI …. and I am pleased to announce that she has now been replaced:

Margaret (Peggy) Paulk is the new RC of the Gulf Region (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. Contact her at: gulf@operavolunteers.org, and plan on coming to meet Peggy and the rest of us at our next OVI Board Meeting Weekend taking place in New Orleans in mid-November this year. I will be retiring from the Board of Directors at the end of October 2012, but can’t resist the call of wonderful New Orleans!

I want to thank all of you who completed Support Group Profiles this year using our new report system. Although still not as complete as I had hoped, I have used the reports to compile a summary report of membership Characteristics which were distributed to the OVI Board in Philadelphia and will be available online.

South Central Region

Wilma Wilcox, Regional Coordinator for South Central Region, just returned from OVI in Philadelphia with Opera America. It was a wonderful conference attended by Steve Brenner, Houston Grand Opera Guild President, and Rhonda Sweeney also of Houston; Life Members of OVI Don & Pat Dagenais of Kansas City; and Rose Betty Williams of Austin, Texas. Omaha was represented by Life Members Joanne & David Kolenda, Sheila McNeill and Vernie Jones who used to be in our Region and are now in North Central OVI.

Guild Hospitality Chairman and OVI member Lynn Guggolz accepted a Project of Special Merit Award on behalf of Houston Grand Opera Guild this year. I was fortunate to visit the Houston group recently for the opera Maria Stuarda with Joyce Di Donato in the title role. The hospitality committee organized transport, snack box, and cast party. Then the following night we attended a Houston Studio Young Artists performance at the Rienzi Museum in Houston. It was a good weekend to meet OVI member support group with Guild president Steve Brenner, Jan Upole, and OVI member Gerry Aitken.

Austin Lyric Opera Guild also received a Project of Special Merit award for Guild Ambassadors.

Houston Guild also was awarded Partners in Excellence for Adelma Graham who was there to receive her award at the dinner on Thursday evening.

I also met with Margaret Pent of the Wichita Opera Guild during the conference in Philadelphia.

Shelley Garcia of the Dallas Opera won the two tickets to Vancouver for next year’s Opera America OVI conference in May

In February I met with Tulsa Guild members at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Regional Dinner which included past Guild President and past Treasurer Kay and Franklin Miller.

Want To Be An Effective Volunteer? Learn the Volunteer Rule!

by Dr. Charles Wood, Director of Opera at The University of Montevallo

An article outlining the importance of volunteers to performing arts schools will appear on-line and, space permitting, in our next newsletter.

For latest updates between newsletters be sure we have your email address
The Opera League of Los Angeles celebrated their 30th anniversary by honoring all 14 past presidents at the annual Peter Hemmings Award Dinner June 3 with over 200 guests. Classical KUSC radio host Rich Capparela and League President Diane Gray co-hosted a brief narrative on each president, with Placido Domingo and Maestro James Conlon thanking the presidents and League members by video. Five of the Domingo-Thornton Young Artists provided a concert. The written program featured the history of the League’s beginning years, developed from interviews by the first three presidents. Initially, the Opera League served visiting opera companies and the Olympic Arts festival, before the formation of what is now Los Angeles Opera. Early League presidents recruited Peter Hemmings, the first executive director of LA Opera. The program book featured each past president with a full page color professional photo, as well as a page of priorities and accomplishments during each term. Warren Schubert, current OVI northeast coordinator and League president 1996-1999, traveled from Maine to attend the event, completing the entire array of past presidents.

**Erna Murphy**, Stockton Opera Guild member, volunteer and long time supporter of opera in Stockton, will be honored at The Curtain Goes Up Nov 1, 2012.

**Wilma Wilcox**, **Lynn Guggolz**, **Joyce Di Donato**, **Steve Brenner** of Houston Grand Opera Guild

**Erna Murphy**, Stockton Opera Guild member, volunteer and long time supporter of opera in Stockton, will be honored at The Curtain Goes Up Nov 1, 2012.

**Wilma Wilcox**, **Lynn Guggolz**, **Joyce Di Donato**, **Steve Brenner** of Houston Grand Opera Guild

**Partners in Excellence Awardee**, **Adelma Graham** of Houston Grand Opera Guild with **Vernie Jones**

**Houston Grand Opera Guild**

**Guild Ambassador Program**

More than 118 HGO Guild members participate in a program to personally welcome artists joining an HGO production to the company and the city. The hospitality team members pick up artists at the airport, give them welcome baskets, remember them on opening nights with gifts, and offer to take them shopping or to dinner, or other places if they show interest. More unusual requests of volunteers have included a last-minute dentist appointment or a flea-market trip to browse for collectable cookie jars. After one production in the run, the team members get together and throw a very informal party for the entire cast. It generally follows the last show, so cast members are happy to see their colleagues before leaving.

In the last two years, the HGO Guild Hospitality Committee volunteered 2,746 hours, drove 25,468 miles and donated more than $22,811 in-kind to make this program a success.
Join organizations throughout North America in celebrating opera by providing fun, free activities to new audiences during National Opera Week 2012: Friday, October 26 thru Sunday November 4. From backstage tours to flash performances and YouTube contests, National Opera Week has something for everyone, everywhere. National Opera Week is a great chance to gain attention for your opera company, guild or support organization.

**How can you participate in National Opera Week?**
Whether you have events already scheduled or are looking for ideas, contact Patricia K. Johnson at [pkjohnson@operaamerica.org](mailto:pkjohnson@operaamerica.org) for more information on how you can join in the fun.

**What are your Plans?** Please let us know how your volunteer/ opera support organization took part and we will try to include it in our next newsletter. Remember to take lots of pictures and have fun!

*Submission deadline Nov. 10*

---

**Join Us in New Orleans for our November Board Meeting Weekend**
Plan to join us for a Board Meeting Weekend in New Orleans, Nov. 16-19, 2012, staying at the Royal Sonesta, then Sunday jazz brunch at The Court of Two Sisters, followed by the New Orleans opera production of The Barber of Seville. Check the OVI website for the latest information.

---

**Opera Volunteers International**
PO Box 7032
Evanston, IL 60201-2284

[Address Correction Requested](#)

**Newsletter Editor and Publisher:**
**Rick Greenman**

newsletter@operavolunteers.org

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