

*Opera Volunteers International*

***OVI***  
**GOOD**  
**IDEAS**

Development Projects

*Raising Funds and Raising  
Enthusiasm*

*2006-07 Edition*

- ✓ Projects to Adapt and Make Your Own
- ✓ Successful Projects from Opera Guilds Large and Small

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# Opera Volunteers International

## ***What is OVI?***

Opera Volunteers International was formed as a nonprofit educational and charitable organization of volunteer support groups, associations of volunteers, volunteer coordinators and individual volunteers to promote the awareness of opera and encourage its growth in communities through volunteer activities, to stimulate interest and participation in opera for the benefit of the cultural, educational and musical life of any community, and to cooperate with other groups that share these objectives

## ***Helping Support Groups Be More Effective***

As part of its mission to provide support to opera volunteers, OVI has for many years collected interesting, innovative and successful project ideas from its members from the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Many of the challenges faced by any one group of opera volunteers are those faced by every guild: raising funds, educating opera goers, maintaining and increasing a vibrant membership, building audience.

Groups supporting companies small and large, new and established, have contributed to this collection of projects. While each may not fit your needs, there are, we hope, enough ideas on which to build your own successful projects.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:** *RAISING FUNDS AND RAISING ENTHUSIASM*

### **AIDA DINNER SPECTACULAR**

As a prelude to the production of *Aida* and to raise funds for the opera company and a theater trust, support groups from both organizations staged a dinner-dance with entertainment, and decorations with an *Aida* theme. The menu included items such as hors d'oeuvres à la Verdi, *Aida* salad, and Yummy Mummy soup. Entertainment included a triumphal procession with an elephant, belly dancers, and a chorus that sang the music from the Act II finale of *Aida*. Raffle tickets were sold in advance.

A military band (whose captain transcribed the music from the opera), trumpeters, a concert band, a chorus, and artists who prepared Egyptian-themed panels participated in this ambitious event that took four months to plan.

FRIENDS OF STATE OPERA OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA - 1991

### **ON! (OPERA NOW!)**

ON! was a creation of the Junior Opera Guild, an organization of high-school students from 19 Dallas-area schools whose goals are to provide cultural and civic leadership training, to develop future opera audiences, to provide a setting for interaction among students from both public and private high schools, and to raise funds for the student performance program of The Dallas Opera.

The students planned and executed a multi-faceted party with six student bands and a professional band, a midway of games, a casino, midway-style foods, a raffle, fortunetellers, a caricaturist, and game and door prizes. The project received underwriting and many gifts, goods and services were donated. Parents chaperoned the party, the games, food service, and registration.

The event organization consisted of a student chairman, four co-chairman, and a citywide committee of about 70 students serving on committees such as acquisitions, underwriting, food, and decorations. Each participating school was had at least three students on the citywide committee, one of whom served as the Director of his/her school's in-school committee made up of representatives from each grade level. There were adult advisors at as many levels as possible. The Dallas Opera Guild project chairman served as the event coordinator and advisor to the student chair.

DALLAS OPERA GUILD - 1993

## **ANNUAL HOMES TOUR**

To raise funds, a tour of five private homes with a luncheon at a local restaurant was held on two consecutive Saturdays. Builders, architects, and designers were contacted to locate homes suitable for the tour. The committee then chose from among those whose owners were willing to open to the public.

Tucson *Lifestyle* magazine sponsored the tours and gave the event extensive coverage. Local businesses provided underwriting for additional advertising and rental of vans used to take viewers into gated areas. Volunteers acted as docents and cashiers. Door prizes ranged from a champagne dinners to restaurant certificates.

ARIZONA OPERA LEAGUE OF TUCSON - 1993

## **CINDERELLA BALL**

To promote interest in Lyric Opera of Cleveland's production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and to raise money for the opera company the Guild planned an entire season around the Cinderella theme. In March there was a "Cinderella Shoe Show" to kick off the season. Saks underwrote the costs; the Guild paid for the food. The next event was the Ball, where many women tried on the glass slipper for Prince Charming. Two hundred fifty people attended the ball in a new building in Cleveland.

LYRIC OPERA CLEVELAND GUILD - 1991

## **"ARIAS" MAGAZINE**

"Arias," a glossy, colorful magazine, was published in the fall to involve members, and to raise money and awareness of the Canadian Opera Company and the Canadian Opera Women's Committee. The magazine contained profiles of the activities of the guild and the opera company as well as other articles and ads from local and national businesses. These ads are sold by members of the Guild. Seventy thousand copies are printed and distributed free in target areas in the home delivery of a national newspaper.

Putting together the magazine required a good professional photographer, a knowledgeable printer with a good art department, lots of sales people, and committee members with the artistic ability to work with layout artists.

CANADIAN OPERA WOMEN'S COMMITTEE - 1991

## **GREEN THUMB SALE**

The Green Thumb Sale is an opera guild project that is part of the Mayfest in Edmonton. The guild members purchase begonia bulbs from a local supplier, plant them and donate the plants to the sale. Members also start cuttings from their own gardens and donate the rooted plants to the sale. A nursery donates other plants. Homemade cookies and beverages also are sold.

EDMONTON OPERA GUILD - EDMONTON, ALBERTA

## **OUTRAGEOUS OPERA OUTINGS (OOO)**

A black-tie, red carpet, musical Saturday evening was designed to feature the lighter side of opera while raising funds. Each year has had different theme, but each involved young opera singers, dancing, and a buffet supper in the center courtyard of a new mall.

In addition to music, food, and door prizes, the event has featured a dessert contest judged by a television news personality: television news coverage is an added benefit.

*LA JOLLA GUILD – 1993*

## **LYRIC OPERATHON**

More than 300 volunteers and opera company and radio station staff organize and operate an eighteen-hour radio fundraiser, featuring music, guest interviews and information that promotes donations and sales of merchandise and premiums to the listening audience. This annual event is usually scheduled in October (the start of the opera season) and takes place in the Opera House; work by various committees continues over the course of the entire year, using Lyric Opera offices as a base of operations.

Volunteer committees get donations of gift certificates and refreshments and distribute catalogues throughout the city and suburbs. Catalogues also are mailed to subscribers and donors and are inserted in programs in the weeks before the event.

On broadcast day scores of volunteers man the phones, process orders, assist in the broadcast booth and feed the hungry workers and guests. Weeks of volunteer and staff work are required after the event to see that all purchases are mailed; the majority of the logo merchandise is shipped by a professional fulfillment house.

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO CHAPTERS - 1992

## **DINE AROUND**

The Dine Around is the guild's most popular and financially successful event. The events are held in members' homes, and underwritten by the hosts and, in some cases, co-hosts. The dinners have been catered, or prepared by the hosts. Some include a musical program. The size of group is up to the host to decide. About 12 venues are offered each year, with interesting themes and cuisines such as *Passage to India*, *Welcome*, *Sakura* (Japanese), *White Cliffs of Dover* (English), *From Russia with Love*, *Fiesta Mexicana*, *Orient Express* (Chinese), and *Direct from the Met* (Entrees of the Stars).

OPERA PACIFIC GUILD ALLIANCE - 1991

## **RAREE GOES INTERNATIONAL**

The Raree, or street fair, is a fund raising event held on a Saturday in May on private grounds overlooking the San Diego Bay and beyond. A boxed luncheon is provided in the admission price, which includes a drawing for one of many door prizes. There are booths manned by guild members selling gourmet foods, castaway treasures, books and records, and exotic and non-exotic plants. Entertainment includes strolling musicians, jazz instrumentalists and opera directors and other opera board and opera chorus members singing.

A year to seven months of pre-planning are needed to carry off this exciting annual event to raise funds, exchange opera ideas and tales, and to have fun for the love of opera.

Food is the largest expense if it is catered. Other expenses include invitations and postage; sound equipment and piano rental; rental of tables and sanitary facilities; wine permit, and trolley bus transportation.

*POINT LOMA GUILD OF THE SAN DIEGO OPERA - 1991*

## **DINNER OPERA**

Dinner Opera, Anchorage Opera's major fund-raiser, aims to present a broad spectrum of musical entertainment to a mixed audience of opera patrons and the general public in a relaxed setting of dining and entertainment. A Silent Auction precedes dinner. Strolling singers then entertain between mainstage presentations of solos, ensembles, choruses, and/or one-act operas. A central theme connects the decorations and program.

ANCHORAGE OPERA COMPANY - 1993

## **OPERA GOES TO BED**

Opera Goes to Bed was an exhibit of the art of creating a bedroom following an operatic theme. The title, selected for its modern connotation, tried to make opera more accessible without taking away its sacred aura. A series of artists each created a different bedroom display, each with a theme taken from a different opera. Besides using their own talents, each creator called upon renowned interior designers, florists, antique dealers and fashion designers.

The bedrooms created by the artists included flowers and greenery under a canopy of trees (*La Cenerentola*); a flood of white lace for *Manon Lescaut*; bouquets of white roses adorning chartreuse silk to accentuate the ornate bronzework in the Directoire style (*Der Rosenkavalier*); and a camellia and a lace handkerchief to evoke fragility yet passion for *La Traviata*.

Some of the decor contained details that identified the opera, some conveyed the refinement that we associate with opera, and others were more metaphoric, evoking the symbolism of theater sets.

THE MONTREAL OPERA GUILD - 1995

## **SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

Special Occasions was a series of 17 dinner parties held during a 3-month period to renew interest in the Guild and to raise enough money to sponsor three performances of "Hansel & Gretel." Member hostesses held private dinner parties with tickets purchased on a first come-first served basis at a premium price. The series began with dinner hosted by the Governor and First Lady at the Governor's Mansion (a 90-mile bus ride) for 50 people. The parties were varied and creative: Three members hosted bridge luncheons in a local bank for 36 guests. A local dance instructor hosted a "Tea for Tots" and a "Champagne Ballroom Party." Guild members hosted dinners including a New York Italian Dinner, An Evening at a Chateau, a Sunday Garden Party, an Elegant Candlelight Dinner, a "Madama Butterfly" Pre-Curtain Dinner, and a Stay-at-Home Dinner.

The final event was the "Titanic" party for 60 in a local high-rise club, a re-creation of the eleven-course last dinner served on the fateful ship.

GUILD OF TULSA OPERA

## **MASK SALE**

The mask sale and auction was conceived as a fundraising event that would tie into the upcoming Carnival in Venice-themed opera ball and would, at the same time, showcase local mask-maker artists.

Local and state artists donated thirty masks, a local mask maker consigned thirty masks and, through the Italian Consul, thirty Venetian masks were consigned. The masks, in a wide range of prices, were offered for sale and at auction at a local jewelry store. The auctioneer donated his services. The evening included complimentary wine, cheese, and pâté.

BRAVO - BATON ROUGE AREA VOLUNTEERS FOR OPERA - 1991

## **ITALIAN OPERA DINNER**

This annual lavish spread of antipasto, salad, and various pasta dishes is donated each year by the same opera-loving restaurateur. A brief but informative program given by an opera conductor or a knowledgeable staff member follows dinner.

*SOUTH BAY GUILD OF THE SAN DIEGO OPERA ASSOCIATION*

## **OPERA THEMES Á LA TABLE**

A theatrical exhibition of the art of table setting served as an original fund-raiser that would attract persons other than those who usually support the opera. Personalities from the world of politics, business and the arts (including the wife of the Prime Minister of Canada) revealed a facet of their talents in creating a table for two inspired by operatic themes.

Thirteen tables were designed by personalities based on thirteen different opera titles. The exhibition was held at a reception hall and was organized in collaboration with specialized boutiques and renowned antique dealers.

THE MONTREAL OPERA GUILD - 1993

## **YULE WALK**

Top floral designers decorated five or six area residences for a holiday house walk. Each residence was decorated to reflect the expertise and artistic vision of the florist, who received publicity through advertisements and printed programs. Tickets were sold in advance and at the door. A battalion of volunteers sold tickets, served as hostesses, and filled a multitude of other functions.

OPERA ILLINOIS - 2004

## **FESTIVAL OF FINE DINING**

The Festival of Fine Dining not only raises money for the opera company, but also promotes camaraderie among its members, many of whom become friends for life. Some of the major donors to the opera began their involvement at one of these unique dinners.

Members participate in a variety of culinary events in private homes and restaurants. Each host underwrites all expenses of his/her *Festival of Fine Dining* event, including any entertainment. The only expenses to the Guild are for printing and postage.

There have been many wonderful events, from black tie dinners to informal wine samplings, some large and some small. One hostess had an event for only one other couple, while another had over a hundred guests. There have been events on boats and in airplane hangers, a picnic on the back bay; a clam bake on the beach, and many other creative events in members' homes.

Another traditional part of the *Festival of Fine Dining* is the annual *Holiday Tea* at a private club. Always held the first week in December amidst the holiday splendor of the club, guests sip sherry or champagne and nibble dainty sandwiches and scones and are seated at tables that are uniquely decorated. Informal modeling, Christmas and operatic entertainment, and a raffle complete this special afternoon that is always a sell-out.

GOURMET DINERS GUILD, OPERA PACIFIC GUILD ALLIANCE - 2002

## **FALL FAIR AND FOLLIES**

This multi-faceted fun event was created to celebrate the opening of the opera season and to increase membership and member participation.

Each the Fall Fair and Follies has been held in a different and interesting venue: a newly constructed luxury estate, the renovated former metropolitan train station, and a private club. The first year thirteen chefs provided hors d'oeuvres and desserts based on recipes from the Guild's cookbook. A booklet of recipes created by the chefs was sold along with copies of the cookbook. A 25-minute follies, written and performed by Guild members, provided a spirited look at the many volunteer opportunities of the Guild. In other years, the Follies parodied the operas of the season, or the entertainment featured winners of our young singers competition.

The guests have played games based on Guild activities with prizes awarded and a volunteer signup sheet at each. The boutique enjoyed successful sales at the event. Even with the admission price set low to encourage new membership the project has been financially successful.

THE DALLAS OPERA GUILD - 1992

## **METROPOLITAN AUDITION WINNERS' CONCERT AND RECEPTION**

As a fundraiser and social occasion, the winners of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions were invited to give a recital for the members of the local guild and the community. The recital was followed by a champagne reception with hearty hors d'oeuvres and delicacies. It is a graceful and elegant event.

A member of the guild worked with the Metropolitan Opera Auditions Committee to coordinate the timing of the event and music arrangements. The chairman of the local District Metropolitan Opera Auditions introduced the singers on the day of the program. The Opera Company sponsored the event; many of the contestants were members of the local opera company and chorus.

Contestants in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions are advised that if they win, they will receive this extra free performance award. A guild liaison is at the competition to congratulate the winners and personally extend the invitation to perform. A guild committee procures the hall, decorations, invitations, programs, reception, food and publicity. Underwriting and food and drink donations are solicited as soon as the date is set.

LA JOLLA GUILD – 1991

## **PORT TO PORT: A WINE AND TRAVEL AUCTION**

Port to Port was an elegant evening dinner and auction party to raise funds for the Guild, to involve more members of the Guild and Association Boards, and to bring more sponsors and donors into the opera family. The event was held at a newly opened luxury hotel. Dinner was preceded by a reception and silent auction of about 100 wine and travel-related items. After dinner, a professional auctioneer auctioned off over 40 items, including a personal wine cellar to be constructed at someone's home, a Mediterranean cruise for two, two cases of French wine, and dinner and the opera with the General Director of the opera company. The Guild also published a *Wine and Travel* magazine with articles and ads.

Extensive Board and volunteer support involvement was aided by the support and cooperation of the Company in offering opera-related items for the auction. A well-known auction house provided the services of an auctioneer as well as advice throughout the organization of the event.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD - 1993

## **AN EVENING CHEZ ROSSINI**

An Evening Chez Rossini re-created a Saturday evening at the Paris mansion of Gioacchino Rossini in the 1860s. The Opera Theatre Guild of Rochester offered a festive dinner of Rossini specialties followed by a musicale typical of those that might have been held at Rossini's home during the latter part of his life. The musicale consisted of arias, songs, and a violin and piano duet of Péchés de Vieillesse (Sins of Old Age), all by Rossini.

OPERA THEATRE GUILD OF ROCHESTER - 1993

## **WORLD OF WINES II: WINE TASTING AND SILENT AUCTION**

This wine tasting and silent auction was devised as a fund-raiser and social event as well as a way to interest wine-connoisseurs in opera. Using the theme of a different winemaking region each year, sixteen wines from that region were available for tasting. Regional appetizers were prepared by guild volunteers to complement the wines. Volunteer hosts poured at each of seven tables. In addition, fine and rare wines were consigned or donated for a silent auction. A drawing was held for a round trip airfare.

Two fifteen-minute entertainment periods of opera, operetta and show tunes lightened the evening and showcased an opera performer. A wine supplier arranged for donations from producers. Committee members arranged for wine donations from individuals and businesses.

BRAVO-BATON ROUGE AREA VOLUNTEERS FOR OPERA - 1991

## **PASTA & PUCCINI EVENING**

Apprentice singers from Lake George Opera supplied the entertainment for an evening of Italian-themed food and entertainment to raise funds. A local, inexpensive caterer provided the meal, and merrymakers could pose for photos in front of a picture of gondola for a virtual, if not actual, souvenir of Venice. In a twist to door prizes, the red, green and white balloons - colors of the Italian flag – that decorated the room were sold. Each contained a number corresponding to one of an array of gifts leading to lively trading and noisemaking.

LAKE GEORGE OPERA - 2004

## **OPERASHOP**

This all-volunteer, all-guild project has sold merchandise to raise funds for the company before selected performances and during the first intermission. The project has grown to include 61 sales dates: on some dates two sites in the opera house are staffed. A guild member acts as chairman and is aided by a committee of volunteer supervisors who restock the display cases, track inventory and supervise other volunteer salespeople. The 60-plus OperaShop volunteers come from all 21 Chapters (guilds) and receive discounts for parking, refreshments and merchandise. Guild members attending the opera receive a 10% discount as a benefit of guild membership. A program to take merchandise to outlying guilds for sale to those members was piloted this year. In addition to providing funds for the opera company, an added benefit is the good will generated for the company by the enthusiastic volunteer salespersons.

CHAPTERS' EXECUTIVE BOARD OF LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO