



*Expanding the future of Opera
through development, mentoring and advancement of volunteer service*



www.OperaVolunteers.org

The Opera Volunteer Voice

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International

**Next issue:
July**

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Volunteers Make a Difference:

Celebrating our Volunteer Groups

This month Opera Volunteers International will be meeting and participating with **OPERA America** in Montreal where we will be exposed to ideas both familiar and foreign which affect opera today. Next issue we will report fully on what we did, what we saw, and what we learned. We hope to see you at the conference.

This issue celebrates the achievements of some of our members and groups and shares noteworthy projects which you may want to adopt for your own group.

As you look at the groups highlighted here, you may notice that several of them have been featured before. Why isn't your group mentioned?It is likely because we have not heard from you. I know that OVI's opera support groups are doing great things all over North America and we would just love to broadcast them in our newsletter, our website, and our Facebook page. And speaking of Facebook, we would love to have someone new on our communications committee who could focus on Facebook. Know someone? - See the article on page two.

Note that the two groups and seven individuals receiving Partners in Excellence awards will be featured in the next issue. And there is another very special award we will be announcing, so stay tuned.

Rick Greenman, Newsletter Editor



OVI Welcomes Sarajane King to the Board as Regional Director for the Great Lakes

While I have been an involved volunteer for the **Cincinnati Opera** for almost 20 years, I am fairly new to OVI. I joined OVI in 2014 and attended the Washington, DC conference last May where I met so many dedicated and interesting OVI members. I knew at once the organization was a valuable asset for opera volunteers similar to myself.

Hopefully, I will meet many of you or your colleagues at this year's conference in Montreal. I do not yet fully know the role of the Great Lakes Region Director, but I do know I will be interested in hearing from each of you. It will be good to learn about what your opera volunteers are involved with in support of your opera companies.



*We roamed the fields and river sides,
When we are young and gay;
We chased the bees and plucked the flowers,
In the merry, merry month of May”*

--Stephen Foster, 1862

Joyeux Printemps, Happy Spring to all OVI members !

This month, we will emphasize the INTERNATIONAL in Opera Volunteers International as we travel to Montreal, Quebec, Canada for OPERA America's annual conference, **Global Strategies, Local Actions**. OVI is an active collaborator with our professional opera colleagues for an intense OVI Weekend of educational and social events.

On the social side, we will honor our Grantor level members who provide much needed funding for our Matching Grants, and then honor our Partners in Excellence, Projects of Special Merit, and Matching Grant project recipients. This year, our awards and recognition programs reached new heights, with nine Partners in Excellence, including 2 groups celebrating their 60th anniversaries – **Young Patronesses of the Opera** (Miami) and **Seattle Opera Guild!** We awarded 13 Matching Grants, totaling \$16,000, bringing our 30 year total to just over \$103,000! We also awarded two Projects of Special Merit. Quite a year for all these worthy volunteers and volunteer projects, but also for OVI, to be fully engaged in helping local groups recognize, celebrate, and thank volunteers for all they do in their communities to extend the relevance, reach and future of this art form that we all love!

In addition to our Board meeting, which all OVI attendees are welcome to join, we have two educational sessions on tap which will share valuable experiences - part of our networking mission – to highlight successful volunteer projects for local implementation elsewhere. We will first focus on Fundraising and Volunteer Power, looking at a few of the ways our local groups raise money to carry out their own missions, with participation from **Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild, Houston Grand Opera Guild, and San Francisco Opera Guild**. Then we will have a roundtable session to share the ideas behind the Projects of Special Merit and Matching Grants Projects. Oftentimes, these projects can easily translate to other volunteer organizations with minor local twists or flavors!

Merci Beaucoup, Thanks very much to all our OVI volunteers, those taking LOCAL ACTIONS in their own communities, as well as our Board members who are overseeing our GLOBAL STRATEGIES. We are thrilled to partner with OPERA America in this year's Conference, and hope to see many of you in beautiful Quebec!

See you soon, *à bientôt!*

Rhonda J. Sweeney



Do you or someone you know have a passion for opera and a talent for electronic communications technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, and Instagram?

OVI is looking for someone to join our communications team on our board to help in the area of social media.

Our goal is to increase our national and international presence, engage viewers, and drive traffic to our website. Helping Create and develop new resources on our website for our members could also be an area for exploration.

This would be an ideal opportunity for someone with some experience in social media to increase their knowledge and make a difference for opera by helping opera fans and volunteers connect with one-another. It could also be a chance for you to increase your own skills in this area and would be a nice item to list on your résumé.

Your communications team,



Sarah Duvall



Barbara Eckel



Rick Greenman



Mary Sveta

Interested parties can contact Communications VP, Sarah Duvall: communications@operavolunteers.org

Projects of Special Merit 2016



Austin Opera Guild *Serenata Wine Dinner and Auction*

Successful events don't just happen. They begin with a great idea and then develop detail by detail. They take effort, coordination, and many volunteers as we all know. In 2011 *Serenata*, (from the Italian "to serenade") was conceived by **Marilyn Davis Rabkin** as a "signature event" an exciting new annual fundraiser that the Austin arts community would associate with **Austin Opera**. Since its inception the event has included operatic entertainment, a multi-course dinner with wine pairings; and live and silent auctions.



This year's *Serenata In the Garden of Seville* was held on February 20, 2016 with themed food and décor corresponding with the opera *The Barber of Seville*. Renowned Executive **Chef Elmar Pramps** and the guild committee planned a gourmet four-course dinner with wine pairings. Two area arts philanthropists, **Eva and Marvin Womack** were honored. Internationally Celebrated baritone **Michael Chioldi** provided entertainment.



Co-chairs Diana Ingram
Carol Logan

As the event has grown bigger and more successful, the Guild has opted to use more professional service to raise the quality of some aspects of the event. This year, they used the catering services of the Four Seasons, professional auctioneer (in-kind), professional photographer/videographer, professional entertainment (opera singer and dance band), and some marketing assistance (invitation design, focal image for collaterals.)

Result this year—a fabulous glamorous evening with net profit of \$279,115. If you are interested in creating a distinctive annual event for your opera company that will produce revenue and publicity you should get in touch with the **Austin Opera Guild**.

Opera Muskoka (Ontario) *Formerly Muskoka Festival*

Note: Opera Muskoka's Eugene Onegin project is a 2016 OVI grant recipient.

In it's seventh year of operation **Opera Muskoka** has established a summer program where young singers and musicians study with professional coaches and attend master classes. The goal is that in the future students will be able to receive accreditation. In 2014 other arts groups were interested in working with the Festival and the **ChautauquaFest** was born. In 2015, there were ten days of concerts and master classes including six ticketed events.

Immediately following each season, five volunteers begin planning the next. Twenty more volunteers join the committee to plan and execute the festival. Professional coaches, musicians, performers, catering, and marketing and printing specialists are used. The Canadian Opera Company assists in publicity. Annual production costs are about \$25,000 which is funded primarily from the town of Bracebridge, generous donors and festival program sales.

This year's opening event is a production of *Eugene Onegin* in Russian. A training program will utilize singers from the University of Toronto. (see page 4)



Desirée Till, Conrad Bloementhal - *Die Fledermaus*



The Bicycle Opera

Grant Recipients 2016

AGAINST THE GRAIN THEATRE (Ontario) Deepening Volunteer Engagement

Goal is to increase volunteers' knowledge and understanding of opera so they can better communicate the mission and differentiation from commercial opera. Volunteers will be invited to an exclusive rehearsal in May 2016 for the production of *A Little Too Cozy*. This special rehearsal will provide an "insider" understanding of how a production is put together and how the work that each volunteer does contributes to the production. The OVI grant will be used to support this volunteer engagement and help cover expenses that include artist costs, venue, and Director.

AUSTIN OPERA GUILD (TX) Guild Marketing Collateral and Communications

Project is designed to increase membership, volunteerism, and visibility among opera patrons and the general public by improving communication, creating signage at the Guild's Boutique, and developing a brochure describing Guild activities. The OVI grant will help maintain and train volunteers to use shared communications and membership technology, including Dropbox and **Austin Opera's** new patron database, and cover expenses including printing, design, and training.

CAPITOL CITY OPERA COMPANY (GA) Launch of Children's Opera

Billy Goats Gruff is a story about bullying. The project supports free or discounted performances to under-served school districts with lesser funding levels for the arts. Based on the premise that opera for children is a critical component of the development of future opera audiences and patrons, CCO is looking for ways to engage new volunteers to help drive the success of this program. Volunteers take an active part supporting the opera by helping to fundraise, attend, and man the opera house during performances. The OVI grant helps to mount the production.

CINCINNATI OPERA GUILD (OH) The Show Must Go On "Connecting COG to Community,"

This initiative seeks to recruit and train new volunteers and build the Guild's relationship with the community during the two years of renovation of the **Cincinnati Opera's** home. During this transition time, the OVI grant will be used to support the Guild's Opera Outbound initiatives which include the updating of the Guild printed materials, and renting new space for meetings, volunteer training, and special events for singers and lecturers.

ERWIN H JOHNSON MEMORIAL FUND (NY) Programming 2016

Grant supports a new outreach program, *Singing It Forward*, designed for elementary, middle, and high school students who want to explore and cultivate an appreciation of opera. The program touches on music history, science, language, and critical thinking skills. The OVI grant will be used for this educational and interactive program.

KANSAS CITY LYRIC OPERA GUILD (MO) Guild Marketing Communication

The project is designed to help reverse the steady decline of Guild membership over the past four years by retaining and attracting new Guild members. Strong Guild membership should, in turn, result in greater financial support for the opera company. The OVI grant supports the Guild's development of a brochure and literature for distribution at educational presentations, social events, and helps to build the Guild's social media presence and website.

MUSKOKA OPERA FESTIVAL COMMITTEE (Ontario) Eugene Onegin Project

The festival will use volunteers, including a trainee director, in the production of the opera on opening night during the **Muskoka Opera Festival** this fall. The OVI grant will be used to support the production team, singers recruited from the **University of Toronto**, and related theatre and advertising expenses. (*see the article on page 3*)

OPERA NOVA (VA) Treemonisha Opera Project

Treemonisha is a rarely performed American opera about an African American by ragtime composer, Scott Joplin. It will be condensed and performed for over 3,000 school children and throughout the Arlington community. Twenty-five volunteers will assist in the production. The educational experience starts with teachers introducing the conductor and eight members of the orchestra. Each will explain their role in the performance, followed by a Q&A session. The OVI grant will help pay expenses for this project, including the development of a study guide.

PORTopera (ME) Opera in ME Audience Development Program

The program will use 22 *Volunteer Ambassadors* recruited through local universities, events, and social media to help build awareness of **PORTopera** in the region and increase attendance and support for the summer festival productions. This project will offer 11 special events from May-July 2016 leading up to the summer festival. The OVI grant will support the training and staffing of the Volunteers Ambassadors at these events, Activities include distribution of information to promote attendance at main stage and young artist productions, and collection of demographic information.

SAN DIEGO OPERA (CA) Bolstering the Volunteer Ambassador Program by Reinvesting

This implements a mission-driven strategy to connect with all communities of San Diego by recruiting and managing volunteers who reflect the diversity of the region. Methods of volunteer recruitment include connecting with low income students and families in the community. The OVI grant supports volunteer recruitment events at local schools, volunteer training sessions, the creation of a Volunteer Corner at opera performances, and incentives for volunteer engagement to show appreciation.

SHREVEPORT OPERA (LA) Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year Competition

The annual national competition” selects ten top finalists to compete in the Finalists Concert, with \$10,000 in awards. Many grand prize winners have gone on to secure leading roles in opera houses around the world. Shreveport Opera secures three judges and one accompanist for the competition. Volunteer Guild members are available to educate, encourage and promote volunteer opportunities with the opera company and the Guild. The OVI grant supports this competition by helping with expenses for the judges, accompanist, awards, and event fees. (*see article on page 7*)

TWIN CITIES OPERA GUILD (MN) Marriage of Figaro Educational Outreach

A unique collaborative project partnering with **Angels & Demons Entertainment** presents a site specific historical production. 70 plus students have an opportunity to learn about and see this intensive educational production in two dress rehearsals and four shows. Over 30 volunteers attend educational sessions to help guide students, and directly coordinate all educational components with help from the “Sprockets” collaborative network of public schools, city, and community organizations. An emphasis will be made to attract disadvantaged youth who do not ordinarily have access to opera. The OVI grant will support these educational outreach activities, costumes, rent, props, production staff and cast.

UNDERCROFT OPERA (PA) Don Giovanni - Dracula

Undercroft celebrates its 10th anniversary with an English production. It features a newly adapted libretto and 85-100 local volunteer artists, including principal artists, covers, chorus, orchestra, and others. The Dracula theme will bring freshness to the traditional opera and the audience will include friends and families of the artists themselves. Tickets will be heavily discounted for students and children, and outreach concerts are scheduled in the community. The OVI grant will be used for production expenses, including costume supplies, projection and lighting designer, marketing, and production manager.

Southeast Region Peach State Opera's *Don Giovanni* Awakens the force of discovery in students

2015 OVI grant recipient, Peach State Opera, reports the success of their project, *Opera Impact Engaging Students*.

By Nancy Martin, Board Member of Peach State Opera

In the entertainment industry, there is an unwritten rule that you should never work with dogs and children. Peach State Opera, Georgia's Premier Touring Company, is rewriting that old axiom by collaborating with high school and college students who serve as the chorus in their performances. For their 2015 production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, students from the Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts in Jonesboro, GA, ninety strong, experienced first-hand how all parts of an opera production are put together. With the patient and supportive guidance of director **Dr. Kurt-Alexander Zeller**, choreographer **Katie Kelly**, and artistic director **Evelyn Hughes**, the well-prepared students of **Dr. Kay Pace** filled the stage with youthful exuberance and a polished choral sound.



Demons, SarahJeen Francois, Rachel Snapp, and Christina Justice Sullivan, surround Brian Bonin as Don Giovanni.

Photography by BreeAnne Clowdus Photography

Dr. Pace shared that this opportunity gave not only the students an introduction to the medium of opera, but their parents and the community as well. She felt that her students grew to appreciate the tone quality of the classical voice which has motivated some to begin private lessons with the goal of performing in opera. Another student whose operatic voice was often deemed too strong for a choral blend, felt that she had finally found in opera, a place where she belonged.

During February, Peach State Opera's tour continued to Tifton, GA where student choristers from **Abraham Baldwin Agricultural Colleges' Canticum Novum Chorale**, under the direction of **Dr. Susan Roe**, joined the production as the opera chorus. Dr. Roe shared that the active participation of learning the chorus parts, the staging, and dance choreography provided a complete learning environment which strengthened the students' individual singing and performing work ethic. She felt that it gave their parents a good view into why their students put so much time into their practice. Additionally, the exposure to the sound of mature performing experiences that enhanced the instruction of their applied teachers. She was appreciative of how the principals spent time interacting with the

"being in that opera has made a difference in my life. I want to be a great singer. I may never get to perform opera, but I can strive to be a great singer/teacher and introduce my choirs to opera.

..... **It's cool !"**

students by engaging them in conversation about what they wanted to do with their music. One of her students later shared with her "that being in that opera has made a difference in my life. I want to be a great singer. I may never get to perform opera, but I can strive to be a great singer/teacher and introduce my choirs to opera. It's cool!"

Like these students, **Peach State Opera**, too, has found its place. The company will continue its mission to make opera accessible to all through their productions and to give students the joy of discovery and performing in opera. Their spirited voices and enthusiasm add a textured nuance that contributes to the success of its productions. It is no surprise that the Stilwell students plan to be a part of **Peach State Opera's** next production as the force continues to inspire future performers and patrons.

www.peachstateopera.org

North Central Region

Twin Cities TOSCA honors Jan Schueppert

Twin Cities TOSCA, a privately held company founded in 2005 by Gail Weber, is dedicated to bringing the arts to more people. TOSCA – which stands for **Theatre, Opera, Shakespeare, Culture and Art** - publishes a quarterly fine arts magazine, *Exploring TOSCA*, and hosts arts events (Experiencing TOSCA) such as “Shakespeare, Shoes, and Champagne” and “Puccini, Pasta, and Purses”.

At the 10th anniversary celebration, Twin Cities Tosca honored five 2015 TOSCA Winners. **Jan Schueppert** of the **Twin Cities Opera Guild** received the Opera Award for her nearly 30 years of dedicated volunteer service to the opera and music education of students in the Twin Cities.



Paul Coate, Jan Schueppert, Paul Reyburn

Jan challenged the room filled with artistic and creative minds to take a moment and think back to when they first experienced their love for the arts and culture – “I bet it was when you were a child”, she said. The applause from the audience proved her point. She also complimented **Arlene Alm** for her 30 years of incredible contribution to the Twin Cities Opera Guild and Gail on 10 years of contributions to the arts in the Twin Cities and her service to Twin Cities Opera Guild.

Southwest Region

Do you know Opera Bobb?

OperaBobb



Last January OVI heard from an old friend and member, Robert Brock, who sent us a contribution for our Matching Grant Fund. I never knew Bob, but it made me realize how most of us are involved in many groups and how our volunteer work connects us with and inspires so many others. So if you go to **OperaBobb.com** you will see that “OperaBobb is now a primary resource for opera information throughout the Bay area and he serves on the Board of Directors for the San Francisco Opera.

Bob is a graduate of Xavier University in Cincinnati and holds an MS degree in Theater from Southern Illinois University. After serving 21 years in the army he has been national Sales Manager for a Palo Alto software firm, and has managed a home health care agency owned by his wife. In addition to his professional life, Bob has worked semi-professionally as an actor, director, designer, and dramaturg. We are happy to have received Bob’s gift, but we are happier to see the difference he is still making for the world of opera.

Thank you Bob, for your continued volunteer service to the arts.



Bob with composer, Jake Heggie

Gulf Region

Shreveport Opera names Andrew Manea 2016 Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year

Shreveport’s 2016 MJS competition is a 2016 OVI Matching Grant recipient. (See page 5)

March 6, 2016 **Shreveport Opera** hosted its annual **Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year Competition**, Shreveport’s only national singing competition. Shreveport Opera Guild volunteers are instrumental in the planning and execution of the event. Contestants traveled from across the country to vie for the title of *Singer of the Year*, and **Andrew Manea** received that title and the \$5,000 1st prize. Other winners were **John Riesen, Gillian Cotter, Megan Nielson, and Mary Beth Nelson.**



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Find us on the internet at
www.OperaVolunteers.org

The Opera Volunteer Voice

Opera Volunteers International

Focus Meeting in Knoxville, TN

Arrive Thursday for the welcoming event. OVI board meeting Friday morning, Dinner Friday followed by **Knoxville Opera's** performance of ***Pirates of Penzance*** in the beautiful **Tennessee Theater**



Additional events will be announced shortly Extend your trip to experience the magnificent fall colors of the Smoky Mountains

Save the Dates - October 20-23, 2016



National Opera Week 2016 - October 28-November 6

Mark your calendar, Let everyone know, Start planning now.