

L'Arria

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SEATTLE
Opera Guild

July 2019 • Volume 68 • Issue 1

Mission Statement

The Seattle Opera Guild is a non-profit organization that supports and promotes opera. The Guild provides financial support for Seattle Opera, funds vocal scholarships and promotes opera education for all age groups to ensure future opera audiences.

President's Chat



We are enjoying our glorious summertime in Seattle. Vacations, family visits and outdoor concerts fill our calendars.

When your SOG renewal form arrives in the mail, please take a quick moment to renew your membership, perhaps increasing your level to the next stage, and pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

The Guild will host more fundraisers during the summer, always such fun. If you are unable to attend, please send a donation. This helps so much with the profitability of an event.

When we return in August for the Preview Chairs' Meeting, there will be a new directory for you. Our apologies for the problems we have experienced this year with the transition of our membership database to our new website.

We now need a data manager to input new members' details and keep the list current. After a bit of training, this should not require more than a couple of hours a week. Please volunteer for this position or suggest a willing member in your group. This is our greatest need, outside of funding, at the moment.

Have a wonderful summer! See you in August.

Gayle Applesworth

Singer Development Awards Final Auditions

By Christine Szabadi

On Saturday, April 6, SOG members and friends enjoyed an outstanding program of operatic arias sung by our eight finalists who had been selected by the Education Committee. The performances were enhanced by the magnificent accompaniment provided by Jay Rozendaal, pianist and assistant conductor at Seattle Opera since 1991. Jay seamlessly switched styles ranging from Handel to Britten; from Mozart to Tchaikovsky. The finalists were Yoojeong Cho (soprano), Dora Barnes (soprano), William Gardner (tenor), Debra McKinney (soprano), Jonah Spool (baritone), Stephanie Pfundt (soprano), James D. Sherrell (tenor) and Priscilla Pizzichemi (soprano). Our judges, Brian Armbrust, Joan Herald and Kate Smith had a very difficult time selecting the winners from this group of talented performers, who all sang beautifully, but finally chose the following singers: Jonah Spool (1st place, \$3000); Debra McKinney (2nd place, \$2000); Dora Barnes (3rd place, \$1000); Priscilla Pizzichemi (Encouragement Award, \$500, generously underwritten by Cheryl Lundgren).

continued



L to R: Priscilla Pizzichemi, Dora Barnes, Debra McKinney and Jonah Spool. Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield.

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Auditions

This memorable evening was organized by the Education Committee (Christine Szabadi, Ruthie Kallander, Judi Kalitzki and Joan Herald), with Ruthie Kallander acting as moderator. All in all this was a spectacular event, demonstrating the importance of SOG’s mission to support emerging artists in opera, and clearly giving “voice” to our local talent. Bravi, singers!



Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield.

Judges L to R: Joan Herald, Brian Armbrust and Katherine Holway Smith.

Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield.



Contestants L to R: James Sherrell, Priscilla Pizzichemi, Dora Barnes, Debra McKinney, Jonah Spool, Yoojeong Cho, William Gardner, and Stephanie Pfundt, with Jay Rozendaal.



Singing and Springing!

Our Allegro Preview Group’s fundraiser, “Singing and Springing” was held April 10 at the new Seattle Opera Center. The festive event featured SOG favorites Nerys Jones (mezzo soprano) and pianist Tony Barrick. Their unique musical program featured songs about spring by Schubert, Fauré, Britten, Richard Strauss, Leonard Bernstein, and Ivor Novello. The music was beautiful and ended with “Tea for Two.”

The committee (Gayle Charlesworth, Ann Milam, Maria Van Horn and Penny Wade) served teacakes, cookies and candies, with hot tea for everyone. We chose from a variety of beautiful tea cups and you could keep the one you selected! Final treats were raffled, including a gift basket won by Suzy Wakefield. Everyone genuinely enjoyed this very special tea party, which was President Gayle Charlesworth’s highly original idea!



L to R: Nerys Jones and Tim Barrick.
Photo credit: Tony Barrick.



Penny Wade.
Photo credit: Ann Milam



Maria Van Horn and Gayle Charlesworth.
Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield.

Our Previews of Carmen

By Judi Kalitzki

The expression “born to sing a particular role” was exactly right for mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Galafa, who sang *Carmen* in our SOG previews. Elizabeth’s strong, expressive singing and equally dramatic acting truly brought Bizet’s tragic heroine to life. From her opening aria, the famous “Habanera,” to the final duet with Don José, Elizabeth made the audience believe in all the contradictory elements that make up Carmen’s character: her sexual allure, her selfishness, her zest for life, and finally her acceptance of death. By the time she lay murdered in Don José’s arms, it was impossible for the audience not to mourn Carmen’s death, too.

SOG is very proud of Elizabeth, who received an SOG Singers’ Development Award in 2018 and performed to acclaim at our last Holiday Luncheon.



Photo credit: Ann Milan

L to R: Li-Tan Hsu, James Walters and Elizabeth Galafa.

plenty of curiosity about the non-western world, but their access to real information was extremely limited. That didn’t stop them from writing all these operas; and since they were writing mostly from their imaginations, to appreciate these works today we must approach them as fantasies.” Although we may not think of Spain today as “the East,” in the 19th century it was considered not quite “Western,” but rather heavily influenced by Africa. Far from being a realistic portrait of a Roma woman, *Carmen* is a distillation of the Western male fantasies of Mérimée, who wrote the *Carmen* novella, the librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, and Bizet himself.

But it’s the music, of course, that brings opera lovers to *Carmen* again and again, and the *Carmen* preview gave us not only six selections of arias and duets, but also two piano solos, the Overture and the *Entr’acte*, performed by pianist Li-Tan Hsu and, for the Bellini-Vivace preview, by Steven Luksan. That was a first, and a real treat.

Carmen was a wonderful close to our 2018-2019 season—we all look forward to what next season brings.

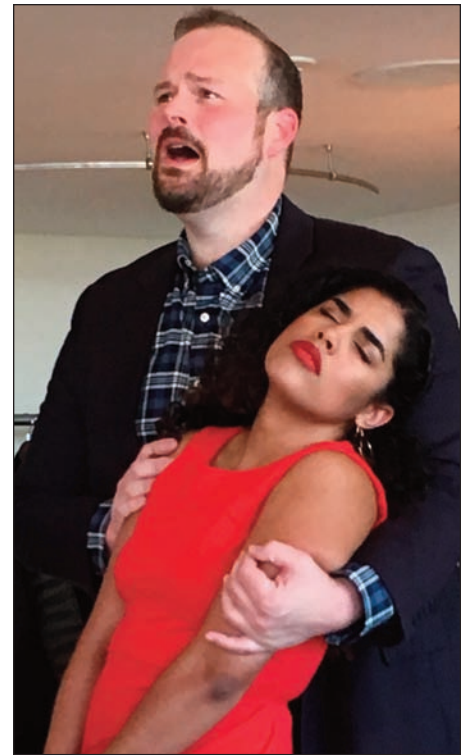


Photo credit: Ann Milan

The tragic ending of *Carmen*.

Our Don José was ably portrayed by tenor James Walters, who with Elizabeth read a selection of vitriolic reviews of the early *Carmen* productions. Astonishing as it seems, *Carmen* was not well received after its initial performances at Paris’ Opera Comique. On the other hand, we also learned that soon after its Paris debut, the opera was much better received in Vienna and Brussels. No surprise that it’s one of the two most performed operas in Seattle Opera’s history (the other being *Die Walküre*).

Preview attendees were also given an interesting lens through which to see the character of the gypsy Carmen: the “Orientalism” that was a defining element of many nineteenth century operas. To quote Jonathan Dean in the Seattle Opera blog (Oct. 12, 2015), “Historically and artistically, orientalist operas occupy a curious position. These works were created during a period of enormous western imperial expansion, when European powers were racing each other to establish colonies all over the world. The folks back home had

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UPCOMING OPERA EVENTS IN OUR REGION

August 10-28, 2019

Rigoletto

by Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
www.seattleopera.org/tickets
(206) 389-7676

September 13 and 15, 2019

La Traviata

by Vashon Opera
www.vashonopera.org/tickets
(206) 388-2926

October 19-November 1, 2019

Cinderella

by Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
www.seattleopera.org/tickets
(206) 389-7676

October 26, Nov 1 and 3, 2019

L'elisir d'amore

by Tacoma Opera
Rialto Theater
www.tacomaopera.com/single-tickets
(253) 627-7789

November 2, 2019

Three Singing Sisters

by Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
www.seattleopera.org/tickets
(206) 389-7676

Upcoming SOG Events:

July 13

Summer in Seattle Fundraiser

by Magnolia/Queen Anne Preview Group

Featuring Erich Parce & Lisa Bergman

5 - 8pm. 805 4th Ave North, Seattle, WA 98109

Contacts: ffrrose@comcast.net; 206-285-6510

nickelder@msn.com; 425-770-7750

August 4

Rigoletto Fundraiser by Parties and Previews

Sunday, 5pm – 8pm

Home of Gabriela Sirbu

4603 118th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98006

Contacts: emilymattson@hotmail.com

MaryEllenMullen@live.com

December 13

SOG Holiday Luncheon at Seattle Tennis Club

Costume Preview of Carmen

By Suzy Wakefield

Have you ever seen one small postcard, announcing the *Carmen* Shop Tour and *Carmen* Costume Preview, generate such a powerful response? There appeared to be several hundred people (annual fund donors of \$500 and more) attending the free event on April 2 at the Opera Center, with appetizers and beverages (wine), for all attendees, a Reception and Costume Shop Tour in the new Opera Center at 5:30 PM, and the Costume Preview in the Lecture Hall at 7 PM.

My friend, Christine Szabadi (former SOG President, now Education VP) and I attended the Tour, with color-coded wrist bands. We had a fascinating narrated tour of the costume shop as well as the enormous costume storage area. Then we returned to the foyer of the Opera Center and walked up Mercer to attend the Costume Preview in the Lecture Hall at McCaw Hall, given by Jonathan Dean, Dramaturg, and Susan Davis, Costume Shop Director. The presentation, with slides and music (and items of clothing for viewing), ran 90 minutes and most stayed for the whole event, as the questions kept coming from the audience about Susan's work with costumes. Her stories were entertaining,

especially when she recounted what she had to go through in the old Seattle Opera Administration Center on John Street, as every item had to be found and stored exactly as intended, using storage bins, lockers and hallways, and whatever other space could be marshalled. The new Opera Center makes the inventory and storage processes so much easier, as the appreciative staff members shared with us!

We stayed for the whole presentation, and always love Jonathan Dean's immense grasp of music and composers, this time telling us where George Bizet found some of the music for *Carmen* (in a popular bar in Paris!) He detailed the beginnings of the *Habanera* song, and shared two renditions of it, one with mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe. This was an evening to remember, with hundreds of donors enjoying the evening and the tour.

If I've ever seen brilliant marketing strategy come out of a free Seattle Opera event, this was it! My compliments to the planners! The evening was awesome!

Editor's Note: Suzy and Jay Wakefield generously underwrote Seattle Opera's production of Carmen. Thank you both for your ongoing support of the Opera!



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Photographs should include subjects' names & name of
the photographer.

Editorial Policy: Editorial changes to submitted articles,
other than correction of grammatical errors, will be made after
consultation with the contributor.

Deadline for September, 2019 issue of *L'Aria*: August 1, 2019

Don't forget to renew your SOG membership!



seattleoperaguild.org/join-us/membership-application/

Or contact
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sally.buckingham21@gmail.com

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