

L'Arria

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SEATTLE
Opera Guild

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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



Summertime and the living is easy! We are due for a break and for renewals of many sorts. The SOG itself is undergoing renewal and we count on your support as members. Please take a moment when your renewal letter arrives to reply promptly so it doesn't get lost in the "do later" pile.

You are essential to the SOG for participation, suggestions and funding. Our previews and Singers' Development Awards are programs that depend on membership, which is therefore our primary focus for the summer.

Renewal of spirit and purpose is my goal for the summer and I wish you the same!

Gayle Charlesworth

SOG'S 61th Annual Meeting & Luncheon

by Ann Milam

Our luncheon Chair Penny Wade welcomed the attendees and thanked all who helped with the event, held June 7 at the Seattle Yacht Club. She introduced President Gayle Charlesworth, who recognized our members and past presidents. She described this season's accomplishments and encouraged members to renew their membership (by mail or online) and to recruit younger members to the Guild.

Nominations Chair Peggy O'Brien-Murphy introduced the slate of officers. She was assisted by her committee: Pat Ernst, Danielle Gaines, Mary Beth Marx and Mary Scott. Gayle conducted the election and the candidates were elected by voice vote (see last page for list of incoming officers).

Christine Szabadi presented this year's Award of Distinction to Penny Wade and gifted her with a scroll and floral bouquet. Christine was assisted by her committee: Ann Milam, Florence Rose-Thompson and Suzy Wakefield. Penny expressed her

surprise and appreciation for this prestigious and well-deserved award (see page 2).

Gayle recognized Lisa Bergman and the outstanding operatic performances at elementary schools by NOISE, with ongoing support from SOG. Gayle presented SOG's annual donation to Aidan Lang, Seattle Opera's General Director. Aidan thanked SOG and announced that the number of young attendees at the Opera has increased significantly over the past 2-3 years, in contrast to other opera companies. Seattle Opera has a new mission statement that reflects an intention to unite our community and emphasize inclusion, with special emphasis on racial and lifestyle differences. The goal is to offer an opera experience that simultaneously entertains and provides



Greeters (L to R): Sally Buckingham, Penny Wade and Dorothy Petersen.

Photo credit: Ann Milam

food for thought. He concluded by announcing that the Education Department is now named Programs and Partnerships to reflect these changes in emphasis. Other Seattle Opera representatives at our luncheon were Allison Rabbitt, Barbara Lynn Jamison and Doug Provost.

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Annual Meeting

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Members of the luncheon committee were Regina Thomas (Program Chair), Sally Buckingham, Zoe Erickson, Peggy O'Brien-Murphy, Joan Parker, Dorothy Petersen, Mary Scott and Maria Van Horn. Maria sold raffle tickets for a unique "Musical Basket" donated by Christine Szabadi, which was won by Gayle.

Regina Thomas organized the musical program and introduced the performers, Rachelle Moss (contralto) and pianist Beth Grimmatt-Tankersley. Rachelle entertained us with her hilarious impression of Julia Child, the American master of French cooking, in "Highlights of Bon Appetit" by Lee Hoiby with libretto by Mark Shulgasser. This light-hearted musical monolog tells the listener how to make a chocolate cake, ala Julia! Rachelle received a SOG Singers' Development Award in 2017 and is clearly on her way to a major operatic career!



Maria Van Horn selling tickets for the Musical Raffle Basket. Photo credit: Ann Milam



Incoming board members in a light hearted moment after the luncheon! (L to R): Cheryl Lundgren, Sally Buckingham, Suzy Wakefield, Judi Kalitzki, Gayle Charlesworth, Christine Szabadi, Joan Herald, Nick Elder and Ann Milam. Photo credit: Maria Van Horn.



Rachelle Moss and Beth Grimmatt-Tankersley. Photo credit: Ann Milam

Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield



SOG Award of Distinction

By Christine Szabadi

Likely as not, the welcoming smile that greets you at Seattle Opera Guild events, fundraisers, our Annual Meeting or the raffle table at the Opera, that of Penny Wade, who was honored with the 2018 Award of Distinction at our annual meeting. This thoughtful, level-headed, super organized and fair-minded member has done so much to help keep our organization on the right track. A few years ago she assumed the task of running the raffle and worked tirelessly to make it successful. Penny joined SOG in 2013, bringing with her managerial skills acquired over many years as a finance manager for the King County Parks Department. She quickly made her presence felt with her intelligence, personality and drive, and assumed the role of Preview Chair of Amici in 2014. Her terms on the Executive Committee, both as VP of Special Events and VP of Administrative Services have resulted in a purposeful and more focused Guild. All of this has been achieved with a sense of fun. Congratulations on your prestigious award, Penny!

Our Aida Preview Group Fundraisers

By Ann Milam

Our preview groups agreed that the *Aida* presentations by Corinna Quilliam (soprano) and Erin Murphy (mezzo) were outstanding! They were accompanied by pianists Li-Tan Hsu and Greg Smith from Seattle Opera. We found that the paper programs created by Jonathan Dean and provided by Seattle Opera were very helpful and informative.

Amici's fundraiser was a potluck dinner at the home of Carl Sutter and Christine Riley of Yarrow Point on April 21. At the conclusion of the delicious dinner, guests enjoyed silent and live auctions. Co-chairs of the event were Penny Wade and Maria Van Horn. Amici

had 26 members and guests in attendance and many felt this *Aida* preview was the best ever!

The Bellini and Vivace groups held their preview of *Aida* at the Inglewood Golf Club on Sunday afternoon, April 22. About 100 attended, including 24 from Vivace and 24 from Bellini, plus opera-loving golf club members. Emily Bennett and Mary Scott co-chaired the Vivace program and Suzy Wakefield and Sally Buckingham organized the Bellini portion. Joan Parker and Mark Perez arrived at the event in style in his vintage 1990 Corvette!

The Parties and Preview group met April 27 at the Capitol Hill home of Lesa Sroufe and Matt Barnes. The total attendance was 40.

They enjoyed an Egyptian themed meal, including chicken kabobs, turmeric rice, baklava and manoul cookies, followed by the operatic preview.



L-R: Corinna Quilliam, Erin Murphy and Li-Tan Hsu.

Photo credit: Suzy Wakefield

Allegro and Mercer Island held their fundraiser at Aljoia on Mercer Island on April 28, featuring wine (which was underwritten), appetizers and a delicious dinner. Opera CDs were sold and the guests enjoyed the *Aida* preview. They had 33 in attendance. The event was chaired by Lorraine del Prado and Sigrid Hokanson.

M/QA's *Aida* preview on April 28 at Brookdale was attended by 23 opera lovers. They were enchanted by the performers and enjoyed a delicious dinner and lively discussion of their upcoming June 23 fundraiser, "Summertime," a preview of *Porgy and Bess*.



Joan Parker and Mark Perez in his 1990 Corvette.

The MONC Grand Finals in New York City

By Ann Milam

SOG has been a long-time supporter of the Northwest Region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council. We're delighted that our regional winner, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon, was a Grand Finals winner in NYC on Sunday, April 29! There were 9 finalists and 5 grand prize winners. The concert was conducted by Bertrand de Billy, with Joyce DiDonato and Bryan Hymel as featured guest artists who performed during the judges' deliberations. This prestigious award includes a cash prize of \$15,000. The MONC program has launched major careers for well-known singers, including Stephanie Blythe, Renée Fleming, Ben Heppner, Susan Graham, Frederica von Stade, Deborah Voigt, Lawrence Brownlee, Thomas Hampson, Eric Owens, Angela Meade, Jamie Barton and many others. Ashley performed "Enfin, je suis ici" from *Cendrillon* (Massenet) and "Amour, viens rendre à mon âme" from *Orphée et Eurydice* (Gluck). Congratulations to Ashley!



L-R: Competition winners Hongni Wu, Jessica Faselt, Carlos Enrique Santelli (Ashley Dixon's husband), Ashley Dixon, and Madison Leonard.

Photo Credit: Richard Termine

SOG Singers' Development Awards

By Ann Milam

The Grand Finals Competition for our Development Awards was held May 4 at the Queen Anne Christian Church. SOG VP of Education, Regina Thomas, was moderator and our judges were Christine Szabadi, Ryan Bede and Joan Herald. The finalists were Meridith Marano (soprano), Kwangsuk Ku (baritone), Kelly Lynn Ferguson (soprano), Elizabeth Galafa (mezzo-soprano), Katrina Deininger (soprano), Ibidunni Ojikutu (soprano), Brett Sprague (tenor) and Debra McKinney (soprano). All of the contestants sang beautifully in a program that ranged from arias by Verdi to Mozart to Wagner to Corigliano, all performed so professionally. The winners were Kwangsuk Ku (Suzy Mygatt Wakefield Encouragement Award, \$1000), Elizabeth Galafa (Ann H. Milam Encouragement Award, \$1000), Kelly Ferguson (3rd place, \$1500), Meridith Marano (2nd place, \$2000), and Brett Sprague (1st place, \$3000). Our outstanding accompanist was David McDade, Seattle Opera's Principal coach, pianist and assistant chorus master, whose performance was underwritten by Gayle Charlesworth. Members of the Training Grant Committee were Joan Herald, Christine Szabadi, Regina Thomas, Ann Milam, Gayle Charlesworth, Penny Wade, Nick Elder, Cheryl Lundgren, Florence Rose-Thompson and Maria Van Horn.

We were particularly pleased to welcome our Guest Adjudicator, Ryan Bede, who in addition to being a highly accomplished performer with Seattle Opera and other companies, received a SOG Training Grant several years after he earned his MA in Opera from the University of Washington. Our tradition of supporting the development of young opera singers continues and with Ryan, has now come full circle!



Our finalists (L to R): Debra McKinney, Ibidunni Ojikutu, Elizabeth Galafa, Brett Sprague, accompanist David McDade, Meridith Marano, Kelly Lynn Ferguson, Katrina Deininger and Kwangsuk Ku.

Photo credit: Ann Milam



Our judges (L to R): Christine Szabadi, Ryan Bede and Joan Herald.

Photo credit: Ann Milam



Our winners (L to R): Kwangsuk Ku, Elizabeth Galafa, Kelly Lynn Ferguson, Brett Sprague and Meridith Marano.

Photo credit: Ann Milam

In Memoriam

Aida Kouyoujian (1928 - 2018)



Aida was a long-time member of our Bellini preview group. She led an active life as a teacher, writer, musician, dancer, actress, world-traveler and fund-raiser. Born in Fallujah, Iraq, Aida described herself as "Armenian by heritage, Arabic by education and American by choice."

A 50-year resident of Mercer Island, Aida was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Washington, studying English literature and later teaching 5th grade at West Mercer Island Elementary School. She earned a masters degree in bilingual education from SPU, where she joined the part-time faculty. Aida received teaching awards and was active in fundraising for victims of the Armenian earthquake and for *Arshak II*, an Armenian opera performed by the San Francisco Opera in 1997. She also authored two books about her mother's life as a destitute but musically gifted orphan in Armenia. Aida is survived by three sons, a sister and their families. Memorials are suggested to the Armenian Cultural Association of Washington: seattlearmenian.com/donations.

Much Ado About Music!

By Ann Milam



This year a number of Seattle organizations are celebrating Shakespeare, including the recent production of Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict* by Seattle Opera, Symphony and ACT Theater. Seattle Opera Guild topped the celebrations with our "Much Ado About Music!" held May 20 at Resonance at SOMA Towers in

Bellevue. Organized by our Parties and Previews and Bellini Preview Groups, the event featured a highly entertaining program of Shakespeare-related songs organized and accompanied by pianist Glenda Williams, a long-time SOG favorite. Our SOG training grant winners who performed were Rachelle Moss (contralto), Ksenia Popova (soprano) and Ibidunni Ojikutu (soprano), along with well-known baritone Charles Robert Stephens.

The musical program featured operatic arias and show tunes based on well-known stories by the Bard. As noted by Glenda, most of Shakespeare's plays feature a song and many well-known songs are based on different stories in his canon. Ksenia amazed the group with "The Poison Aria" from Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. She spoke movingly about how her SOG awards enabled her to attend auditions in NYC and obtain further training. Ibidunni wowed us with Nala's song about her brother Simba, who returns to kill the wicked Uncle Scar in *The Lion King*, a story based on *Hamlet* (who among us knew that?). Ibidunni's lively back-up singers in this animated presentation were Ksenia, Charles and Rachelle. Ibidunni also thanked SOG for her training grant award, which enabled her to gain more exposure, take lessons and launch a new website.

Straying from the Shakespeare theme, Rachelle entered from the back of the room, vamping her way among the tables costumed as Carmen, with Ibidunni and Ksenia as her back-up chorus. She also thanked SOG for her training awards, which enabled her to travel to NYC and San Francisco and to take an upcoming trip to Germany for auditions. Rachelle was also our featured singer at our Annual Meeting. Charles, who is originally from the east coast, credited the Sullivan Foundation for helping

him with his early days of performing opera. Sticking with the Shakespeare theme, Charles performed *Kiss Me Kate*, which is based on *Taming of the Shrew*, in a duet with Ksenia.

The event was attended by ~30 guild members and guests who enjoyed delicious *hors d'oeuvres* and wine. Many thanks to co-chairs Sandra Boyd and Lynda Galvagno (who designed the clever invitations), and committee members Sally Buckingham, Suzy Wakefield, and Alan and Tanya Waggoner. Event helpers included Mary Beth Marx, Mary Ellen Mullen and Bo Woronowicz. Generous underwriters included Gayle Charlesworth, Judy King, Thomas McQuaid, Sarah Navarre, Giff Thomas, Suzy Wakefield, Glenda Williams and Sandra Boyd. Sally sold raffle tickets for a picnic basket donated by Sandra and won by Jay Wakefield. In the words of the immortal bard, "And let's away, to part the glories of this happy day!"



(L to R): Glenda Williams, Rachelle Moss, Ibidunni Ojikutu, Ksenia Popova and Charles Robert Stephens.



BREAKING NEWS!

Former SOG trainee Anthony (Tony) Kalil will sing Rodolfo in Vashon Opera's *La Bohème* on Sept. 14 and 18. Tickets: <https://www.vashonopera.org/2018-2019-season/la-boheme>

SEATTLE Opera Guild

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