

# L'Arria

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
SEATTLE  
*Opera Guild*

April 2020 • Volume 68 • Issue 4

## 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



Founded in 1970 after a meeting convened in Seattle by Glynn Ross, Seattle Opera's first General Director, OPERA America is a service organization that promotes operatic productions, audience development and education. Seattle Opera was a charter member of OPERA America; after several years, volunteers from U.S. operas organized as Opera Volunteers International (OVI). Guess who started that? The president of Seattle Opera Guild!

Next month Seattle Opera will host 750 opera professionals at the annual joint conference of the two organizations. You will be inspired to learn what other opera groups are accomplishing across the country. OVI grants promote creativity and innovation; as example, SOG benefitted from an OVI Award in 2017 to create our new website. The OVI Awards Luncheon is May 15 (12:30-2pm) at the Chihuly Garden and Glass--as SOG members, you will be invited.

SOG will need volunteers for flower arranging and check-in for the OVI Merit Award Presentation on May 14 (4:15-5:15pm). Learn more/register for the conference at: [operavolunteers.org](http://operavolunteers.org)

**NOTICE: OVI CANCELLED**

*Mayle Charlesworth*

## Review of Eugene Onegin Preview

By Judi Kalitzki

A world-weary Byronic hero who astonishes himself by truly falling in love. A wildly romantic young heroine who ultimately chooses to honor her marriage vows. Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* presents us with two characters who seem to embody the romantic era and yet undercut that ethos. In the preview, Seattle Opera Guild members and guests were lucky enough to experience soprano Allison Pohl and baritone Darrell J. (DJ) Jordan, who gloriously conveyed all these contradictory emotions in their highly accomplished singing and acting

As we learned at the preview, *Eugene Onegin* the opera was based on *Eugene Onegin* the novel-length poem by Pushkin, Russia's revered and seminal early 19th century author. In fact, Russian audiences who came to the opera would certainly have known the plot, characters, and even the lines sung by the singers, so well known was Pushkin's work, and so closely did Tchaikovsky follow the text of the poem. The opera is an intimate study of a few characters, something Tchaikovsky was aiming for after a tour of Europe listening to what he decided were the wildly overblown operas of Wagner (*The Ring*) and Verdi (*Aida*). An



Photo credits: Ann Mitam

L to R: Li-Tan Hsu, Darrell J. Jordan and Allison Pohl.

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# Charlie Parker's Yardbird

By Judi Kalitzki



L to R: Steven Luksan, Ellaina Lewis and Namarea Randolph-Yosea.

Jazz legend Miles Davis said, “You can tell the history of jazz in four words: Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker.” *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* attempts to distill the essence of one of those two jazz greats. It's not a documentary or a biography, but fictionalizes the period between Parker's death and the official identification of his body while it is lying in the Bellevue morgue. The librettist, Bridgette A. Wimberly, said she saw this setting as a kind of limbo or purgatory, where Bird explores his troubled life and tortured relationships, while hoping to write one last, great composition that will sum up his musical legacy.

What we see on stage are the women who played important roles in Parker's messy and complicated life, including various wives and girlfriends and, perhaps most importantly, his mother. We also see his closest friend, Dizzy Gillespie, the trumpeter with whom Bird created a new kind of post-WWII jazz, known as Bebop, music that sharpened up jazz's edge again after the pre-war swing era of the big bands.

*Charlie Parker's Yardbird* was originally commissioned by Philadelphia Opera to showcase the tenor Lawrence Brownlee (well known in Seattle, of course!). When the composer, Daniel Schnyder, first heard Brownlee's voice, he said its virtuosity reminded him of Parker's known virtuosity on the horn, so clearly a great match. Asked whether he considers *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* a jazz opera, Schnyder said he saw it as bridging the worlds of classical and jazz. In fact, he hoped that the score recreates Bird's own holistic attitude toward music: jazz, classical—it's one world, the world of music!

At our previews of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, we were lucky to have four talented artists to present five selections from the opera. Steven Luksan, pianist, composer, and music educator, admitted that he normally doesn't play jazz (Edvard Grieg is more his style), but he wowed the audience with his ability to play a brilliant score that is full of jazz and blues influences. Li-Tan Tsu performed with her usual expertise we so enjoy at our previews.

The tenor Namarea Randolph-Yosea, a recent vocal performance graduate of WWU who's hoping to begin a Master's program in the fall of 2020, sang the demanding role of Charlie Parker. In solos and duets, he ranged from the man-child falling in love with his first wife (“You Are My Angel Glow”) to the defiant rebel insisting “No more sitting at the back of the bus” (“Jazzman—My Boy is King”), to a deliriously joyous celebration of his instrument in “My Horn.” Each selection added to the depth of our understanding of Charlie Parker's complicated character. But most of all, Randolph-Yosea's singing brought home the overwhelming importance of music to this tortured but brilliant musician.

Ellaina Lewis, an accomplished and versatile soprano, did a marvelous job of bringing to life both Parker's first wife, Chan, and Parker's mother, Addie. Lewis's strong, expressive voice and acting were riveting, whether expressing her attraction to the young Charlie as Chan, her despair as Addie at not being able to protect her rebellious boy (“It tain't easy to be a mother of a black man-child”), or her fierce pride when hearing her son on the radio for the first time (“I told you he was going to be great, my boy!”).

In his program notes, Jonathan Dean points out that the most difficult challenge for a new opera, after its initial debut, is to line up additional companies willing to stage it. That seems to be no problem for *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, since it's now been performed in multiple venues. At our preview we got a great sense of why this new work has been welcomed to Seattle Opera and seems destined to continued success.



Photo credits: Ann Milam

L to R: Fun at our Amici preview. L to R: Steven Luksan, Namarea Randolph-Yosea, Ellaina Lewis, Vicki Sessions and Sarah Henderson!



# Our Annual Holiday Luncheon

By Ann Milam

We celebrated the holiday season at our annual luncheon on “Lucky Friday,” December 13 at the Seattle Tennis Club. Maria Van Horn, our VP of Special Events, and Penny Wade, our VP of Administration, chaired the event. Guests were greeted by Maria, Penny and Joan Parker. Sylvia Young and Pee Chee McCammon sold raffle tickets for two colorful holiday baskets. Maria welcomed our guests and thanked all who had contributed to the luncheon. Our guests from Seattle Opera were Christina Schnepplmann, Allison Rabbitt, Alejandra Boyer and Alex Minami. This was General Director Christina’s first SOG holiday luncheon. She thanked the Guild for our long-time support of the Opera and expressed her desire to continue strong interactions between our two organizations.

Education VP Christine Szabadi introduced our “Super Soprano” performers: Yoojeong Cho, Priscilla Pizzichemi, Dora Barnes and Pianist Extraordinaire Lisa Bergman. Their program began with “Quando m’ en vo” from *La boheme* by Yoojeong, “Marietta’s Lied” from *Die tote Stadt* by Dora, and “Saper Vorreste” from *Un ballo in maschera* by Priscilla. After other enjoyable and animated solos, the three singers finished their program with a lively rendition of “Three Little Maids from School Are We!” from *The Mikado*. Lisa Bergman concluded the musical program with a delightful “Classical Christmas” rendition of five traditional carols performed in the styles of well-known composers, including Beethoven and Offenbach.

Our performers are this year’s recipients of SOG Singers’ Development Awards. We are very proud of our long tradition of SOG support for young singers and opera education. This wonderful performance reminded us of the importance of our fundraising activities to support all aspects of opera study and performance.

Lisa Bergman, Chair of Northwest Opera In Schools, Etcetera (NOISE) thanked SOG for our longtime support of its unique program. Now in its 35th year, NOISE has brought over 3000 live opera programs to Washington state schools, grades K through 6, plus three retirement communities. This year SOG donated \$1K

to NOISE, for a total of \$52K in donations since 1985! In addition to educating children and seniors about opera, NOISE provides valuable singing experiences for young singers, many of whom are still in training. More information about this unique program is available at: <http://noiseforkids.org>

Next on the agenda was the raffle drawing. The lucky recipient of a large gift basket was a very surprised Christina Schnepplmann and the wine basket was won by Judi Kalitzki. Many thanks to the organizers and donors for this highly successful and memorable Holiday Luncheon!



Maria Van Horn and Penny Wade.



Our Seattle Opera guests Christina Schnepplmann and Alejandra Boyer



Our performers (L to R): Dora Barnes, Yoojeong Cho, Priscilla Pizzichemi and accompanist Lisa Bergman.



Greeters Pee Chee McCammon and Sylvia Young.



A very surprised Christina Schnepplmann won a raffle basket!

Photo credits: Suzy Wakefield and Ann Milam.

# A Special Recital “Loving Opera!”

By Christine Szabadi

Love was definitely in the air in the Norcliffe Studio at the Seattle Opera Center on Thursday, February 13! About twenty of us were treated to a spectacular recital by tenor Brett Sprague, accompanied by Elisabeth Ellis. Brett was the 2018 winner of our SOG Singers’ Development Award. Soon after those final auditions, he moved to Germany, where his career blossomed and engagements were numerous. This was the first time he had returned home long enough for our Guild to engage him for a recital!

The program of love songs and arias from the opera and Broadway repertoires was performed with a mutual understanding of the music and its content. Brett is a true tenor, singing the high notes with ease, as well as a rich, beautiful tone. His characterization is impeccable, drawing in the audience. A particularly poignant moment in the concert was when he sang two of the songs directly to his mother and his girlfriend, who were there, completely surprising both of them. Elisabeth accompanied Brett with elegance, style and a superior musicality, completing the experience of this marvelous duo. It was hard to believe they had only met once for rehearsal! We eagerly await a repeat performance the next time Brett visits Seattle.

The whole experience confirms that SOG is making a difference with our Singers’ Development Award. We are truly helping the future of opera by supporting these aspiring singers!



Photo credits: Suzy Wakefield

Elisabeth Ellis



Elisabeth Ellis and  
Brett Sprague.

## MONC NW Regional Finals Competition

SOG has been a long-time supporter of the Metropolitan Opera National Council NW. Judges of the Competition held January 12 in Benaroya Hall were Paul Hopper, Christina Scheppelmann and Brian Speck. Winners of the competition were first place, Soprano Cara Gabrielson; second place, tenor Alec Carlson; and third place, mezzo Siena Lichtenstein Miller. Cara advanced to the Semi-Final Competition on February 24 at the Metropolitan Opera House in NYC. Unfortunately, she was not one of the winners who advanced to the Grand Finals Concert on March 1.



Photo credit: Glenda Williams

Winners of the Regional Competition (L to R):  
Cara Gabrielson, Alec Carlson and Siena Lichtenstein Miller.

### UPCOMING SOG EVENTS

#### **Bellini/Vivace Fundraiser**

**April 19, 2020**

Inglewood Country Club  
6505 Inglewood Road NE, Kenmore, WA 98028

#### **SOG Annual Meeting**

**June 11, 2020**

Seattle Yacht Club  
1807 East Hamlin Street, Seattle, WA 98112



# La Bohème *by Giacomo Puccini*

## Preview Schedules

**Saturday, April 18, 2020**

### Amici

Skyline (SkyClub Room)  
725 9th Ave (Valet Parking)  
Seattle, WA 98104  
\*206.407.1700 (Skyline Front Desk)  
Arrival: 5:00pm  
Program: 5:30pm  
Dinner & Auction: Following Program  
Contact: Maria Van Horn,  
206.354.9132, mcvho4@yahoo.com  
Penny Wade, 206.938.5949  
penny.wade@comcast.net

**April 18, 2020**

### Magnolia/Queen Anne

Queen Anne Retirement Center  
(formerly Brookdale)  
805 4th Ave N.  
Seattle, WA 98109  
\*206.284.0055  
Arrival: 6:00pm  
Program: 8:00pm  
Contact: Florence Rose Thompson  
206.915.7829 m, 206.285.6510 h  
ffrose@comcast.net

**Sunday, April 19, 2020**

### Bellini

Inglewood Golf Club  
6505 Inglewood Road NE  
Kenmore, WA 98028  
\*425.293.4510  
Arrival: 3:45pm  
Program: 5:00pm  
Grand Buffet: 6:00pm  
Contacts: Sally Buckingham,  
425.293.4510  
sally.buckingham21@gmail.com  
Suzy Welford, 425.828.1886  
myattwelford@comcast.net

**Sunday, April 19, 2020**

### Wade

Inglewood Golf Club  
6505 Inglewood Road NE  
Kenmore, WA 98028  
\*425.486.5036  
Arrival: 3:45pm  
Program: 5:00pm  
Grand Buffet: 6:00pm  
Contacts: Emily Bennett, 425.486.5036  
epbennett@msn.com  
Mary Scott, 425.770.2199  
marysuz@aol.com

**Saturday, April 25, 2020**

### Parties & Previews

Host: Gabriela Sirbu & Cris Strava  
11641 E 4th St  
Bellevue, WA 98006  
\*206.499.4411  
Arrival: 6:00pm  
Dinner: 6:45pm  
Program: 8:00pm  
Contacts: Paris Sakas, 206.818.9273  
paris@theparisgroupnw.com  
Brenna Pink, 206.697-7189  
partiesandpreviews@gmail.com

**Sunday, April 26, 2020**

### Allegro

– combined Preview with Mercer Island  
Contact: Gayle Charlesworth  
253.639.1423, gaylewings@gmail.com

**Sunday, April 26, 2020**

### Mercer Island

Barrels Wine Bar  
7605 SE 27th Street, Mercer Island, WA  
98040  
Arrival: 2pm  
Program: 3pm  
Contacts:  
Mercer Island: Nancy English,  
206.409.9361  
nenglish232@comcast.net  
Allegro: Gayle Charlesworth,  
206.434.5960, gaylewings@gmail.com  
Suggested Donation: \$60

\*Host phone numbers are provided for last minute driving directions.  
Please call listed contacts for all other enquiries.  
Reservations please for all Preview Groups.

## UPCOMING OPERA EVENTS IN OUR AREA

**April 16-19, 2020**

*Iolanthe*  
Tacoma Opera at Rialto Theater  
www.tacomaopera.com 253-591-5893

**May 1-10, 2020**

*Don Pasquale*  
Pacific Northwest Opera at McIntyre Hall  
2501 East College Way Mount Vernon, WA  
360.416.7727 Ex. 2  
www.mcintyrehall.org

**May 2-19, 2020**

*La Bohème*  
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall  
206-389-7676  
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

**May 17, 2020**

*For a Look or a Touch*  
Music of Remembrance  
Nordstrom Recital Hall  
Benaroya Hall  
200 University Street Seattle, WA 98101  
206-365-7770  
www.musicofremembrance.org

**May 22 & 24, 2020**

*Pastoral Rhapsodies & Cavalleria Rusticana*  
Vashon Opera  
Vashon Center for the Arts  
www.vashonopera.org 206-388-2926

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# Onegin

opera Tchaikovsky heard and admired was Bizet’s *Carmen*, which focused on the lives of “ordinary” people, something he was hoping to emulate in this opera.

Although Tchaikovsky used Pushkin’s poetry almost verbatim, he pared the original work down to seven scenes, skipping right to the “good stuff.” Our preview gave us a wonderful overview of the love interest between Tatyana and Onegin, beginning with an excerpt of the very famous “letter scene.” Tatyana sings of her budding love for Onegin, portraying emotions that run the gamut from infatuation to desolation to determination. Pohl’s strong and lovely soprano was complemented by vivid facial expressions that helped convey Tatyana’s hopes and fears.

In the next scene, we heard Onegin’s response: a crushing rejection of Tatyana’s love letter, and even worse, condescending

advice to control her emotions. What a contrast, then, to hear the aria from the beginning of Act III, “Is this the very same Tatyana?” Here, returning to Russia after some years of self-imposed exile, Onegin meets a much-changed Tatyana: no longer the impetuous young girl, but a maturely beautiful, elegant, and, alas, married woman. Jordan’s expressive, full baritone was equally impressive, conveying the self-important, cold Onegin of the first act and the passionate, headstrong Onegin of the third act.

We were also treated to the final scene of the opera, in which Onegin presses his love for Tatyana, while she both admits her own love and rejects his plea to run off with him. I know I wasn’t the only person who had tears in my eyes as we heard the passionate despair of the doomed couple being gloriously sung by Pohl and Jordan.

It’s hard to imagine a harder job for a pianist than to be the accompanist for a Tchaikovsky opera, but Li-Tan Hsu managed to create a veritable orchestra out of the piano. We are so lucky to have such a talented pianist for our previews!

## Find SOG Online!

We’re on the web: [seattleoperaguild.org](http://seattleoperaguild.org)

Like us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/TheSeattleOperaGuild/](https://www.facebook.com/TheSeattleOperaGuild/)

## Ways to Support Seattle Opera Guild!

By Sally Buckingham

### Benevity:

(In partnership with Microsoft and other corporations)  
[www.causes.benevity.org](http://www.causes.benevity.org)

### Boeing Gift Match Program:

[www.doublethedonation.com /forms/boeing-guidelines](http://www.doublethedonation.com/forms/boeing-guidelines)

### AmazonSmile:

[www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)

## Editorial Staff:

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Mail to: 725 9th Ave, Apt. 1206, Seattle, WA 98104

*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 July, 2020 issue of *L’Aria*:** June 1, 2020

## SOG Officers

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