

# L'Arria

## 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.*

## A Word from your President

*Suzy Mygatt Wakefield*



I want you to know that despite COVID, we are continuing to provide gatherings and entertainment for Guild members and their guests. We have a dozen board members who not only are dedicated to the Seattle Opera Guild but are fun-loving and deeply enjoy music. They are quite creative and have come up with several ways to reach out to you, all the while supporting the COVID protocols for safety.

### Guild-wide Preview of Puccini's *La Bohème*

Our first guild-wide preview (as Seattle Opera is no longer supporting our previews) was held at Cogir of Queen Anne on Sunday afternoon, October 10, and 38 attended (40 was the maximum allowed). We were able to enjoy our own preview in the privacy of the Cogir of Queen Anne facility, and to have the kind of "up close and personal experience" with our performers we have grown so accustomed to through our preview groups of the Seattle Opera Guild.

This site worked well as it is near Seattle Opera, has good parking below the building on a Sunday afternoon, and they provide free appetizers and beverages to patrons. The main event was the preview itself in their dining room which has a high ceiling that works well with operatic voices. Patricia Pavia was our event planner (VP of Special Events); she began the program around 2 PM, with Marilyn Leck, Chair of the Mercer Island Preview Group, serving as emcee. Suzy honored our host, Florence Rose-Thompson, with a silver SOG pin for her many years of service to the Guild. We were asked to keep our masks on during the performance, and we had to show proof of vaccination on arrival.

The singers performed three arias for 25 minutes, with Li Tan Hsu at the piano. Andrew Etherington, a competitor in our Singers Development Fund auditions in September, sang the role of Rudolfo, with his extraordinary tenor voice. The sopranos were Marissa Moultrie (Mimi) and Yoojeong Cho (Musetta). Andrew, whom several of us heard again in *La Traviata* at the Pacific Northwest Opera in Mt. Vernon in November, gave an interesting narration of *La Bohème*. Afterwards, we adjourned across the street to the other building, where we enjoyed appetizers and donated wine, and had a great opportunity to visit and enjoy each other's company. Patricia Pavia made the whole event flow so easily. Also, Katie McCormick hosted a vintage opera book auction, donated by the family of Mary Ruth Ryan.

### Annual Holiday Luncheon

Our annual Holiday Luncheon, which we missed last year due to COVID, was at the beautiful Seattle Tennis Club which, as always, had exquisite holiday decorations. We had a professional recording company, Mirror Sound, recording our performers, and Jay Wakefield, my husband, is arranging to have 100 CDs and 100 DVDs available for free after this event. (Members will be able to request getting a free copy sent to them.) Jay is doing this to encourage membership in the Seattle Opera Guild.

65 members and guests attended, almost the most recent pre-



Photo: Suzy Wakefield

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*Katie McCormick and Gail Kessler*

# President *continued from page 1*

COVID numbers. We dined on chicken piccata, roasted vegetable tower, or roasted chicken with rice and vegetables—with plated desserts of lemon bars, blueberries and strawberries. Gift baskets, put together by our event coordinator, Patricia Pavia, were won by Paul Maffeo (the fruit basket) and Laura Superville of the Seattle Opera staff who won the wine basket, worth \$150 with three bottles of wine, a cheese tray, and a corkscrew. Christina Scheppelmann, General Director of Seattle Opera, won one of the Amazon gift cards worth \$100, and Emily Hartley won the other. (Ann Milam and Sally Buckingham donated the \$100 Amazon gift cards.)

The program started with introductions by Patricia Pavia, followed by Suzy who introduced Lesley Chapin Wykoff, President of the Seattle Opera Board of Trustees. Then Christina Scheppelmann gave us an update on upcoming operas. Other staff members who joined us and sat with preview groups were Jane Repensek, CFO and CEO of Seattle Opera, Alejandra Valarino Boyer, Director of Programs and Partnerships, and Lauren Superville, Individual Giving Manager. Suzy also introduced our sponsor at the Seattle Tennis Club, Mark Metcalf.

Suzy then honored five past presidents, who have given so much support to the Guild over the past many years, with a special gift: Gayle Charlesworth (2017-2020), Christine Szabadi (2015-2017), Florence Rose-Thompson (2011-2013), Marlene Holbrook (2009-2011) and Betty Carter (2002-2003). Some of these past Board presidents have served the Guild for 20 years or more! Sally Buckingham was again honored for her Award of Distinction.

Our singers were Grace Skinner, mezzo-soprano, winner of the Guild’s Singers Development Fund auditions in September 2021, and Ivy Zhou, soprano, finalist from the year before. Elisabeth Ellis accompanied them on the piano. They performed opera favorites: “Caro nome” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, *Belle Nuit* from *Les Contes d’Hoffman* by Offenbach, and “O Zittre Nacht” from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart. They also treated us to festive music of the season. Both singers displayed great stage presence. This was a high energy luncheon program; we even sang Happy Birthday to Emily Hartley, with Elisabeth Ellis accompanying us on the piano!

We certainly hope to see you in 2022 as we continue to share our talented young singers and plan special events for you. We feel so fortunate to be helping our aspiring young singers, some of whom will go on to compete in local, regional and national competitions. It is an awesome opportunity to be with them at this point in their careers, and to be able to say some day, “We knew them when...”



Photo: Jay Wakefield

*Honoring past presidents: left to right: Suzy Wakefield, Betty Carter, Florence Rose Thompson, Gayle Charlesworth, Christine Szabadi*



Photo: Suzy Wakefield

*Lesley Chapin Wykoff*



Photo: Jay Wakefield

*Left to right: Ivy Zhou, Christine Szabadi, Grace Skinner, Elisabeth Ellis*



Photo: Suzy Wakefield

*Zoe Erickson and Jonathan Gerson*



Photo: Suzy Wakefield

*Winner of the fruit basket, Paul Maffeo*

# Recipe For Success

*Christine Szabadi*

Take nine angelic singers, add three discerning judges and mix together with one incredible pianist. Put the mixture in a beautiful and resonant location, and what do you get? A sublime musical performance, a treat for the ears! Special thanks go to our accompanist, David McDade, who played 18 accompaniments flawlessly with virtually no rehearsal time with the singers.

On September 16, 2021 this is what transpired when the Guild's own Singers' Development Award final auditions took place at the Seattle Opera Center in the Tagney-Jones Hall. The standard of singing was superb and the judges, Lisa Bergman, Michael Delos and Regina Thomas, had a hard time selecting the winners. In the end, they chose Grace Skinner, mezzo-soprano, first place; Aria Manning, soprano, second place; and Austin Allen, bass-baritone, third place. Encouragement Awards, generously underwritten by Jonathan Gerson and Cheryl Lundgren went to sopranos Lauren Kulesa and Sophia Emanuel.



*The view from high up in Tagney-Jones Hall*

Seattle Opera Guild should be justly proud of this program, which has given so many aspiring opera singers a jumpstart to their careers. I personally find it fascinating to follow them as they progress and blossom and find their pathway in the world of opera. It is important that we continue, so we'll gladly accept your donations to the Singer's Development Fund, either directly or through the Memorials and Tributes fund.

Last, but not least - thanks go to Seattle Opera for their ongoing support. They offered us the use of their fantastic facilities, in spite of the restrictions due to Covid. Everyone was so cooperative with following the protocol, which made it an afternoon well spent! We are already beginning to think about next year's auditions, and are hoping to return to our traditional date in the spring of 2022.

## Winners of the 2021 Singer Development Awards



*Left to right:  
Lauren Kulesa,  
Sophia Emanuel,  
Christine Szabadi*



*Left to right:  
Grace Skinner,  
Aria Manning,  
Austin Allen*

*Photos: Judi Kalitzki*

# *SOG Grant Recipients Featured on Classical King FM 98.1*

*Regina Thomas*



Fridays on Classical King FM 98.1, Sean MacLean hosts Northwest Focus Live, an hour-long, featured broadcast of special guests performing live in KING FM's studio. Sean's engaging interviews of artists and the live performances give listeners the pleasure of meeting a variety of local musicians personally. Here's a link to learn more about NW Focus Live: <https://www.king.org/nw-focus-live/>

On September 10, 2021, four SOG winners were interviewed by Sean MacLean and performed arias on NW Focus Live. For those of you who didn't hear the show live, here are bios and links to music performed by these talented young singers. ENJOY!



**Celeste Fraser, soprano  
(2020 grant recipient)**

Listen here:

[www.sopranocelstefraser.com/music](http://www.sopranocelstefraser.com/music)

A recipient of the Phyllis Curtin Scholarship (Boston Opera Institute), Celeste won top honors in the 2018 LYRA competition and the 2016 Berlin for the Pustina International Competition. Recent performances include Vitellia (*La Clemenza di Tito*)

with Opera in the Heights, Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) with Hudson Opera and *Suor Angelica* with MetroWest Opera. In concert, Celeste has performed soprano solos in Verdi's *Requiem*, Britten's *War Requiem*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. She is a frequent performer with Boston Lyric Opera and has been an apprentice with The Boston Opera Institute, Des Moines Metro Opera, Victoria Opera, and Opera North.



**Jonah Spool, baritone  
(2019 grant recipient)**

Listen here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGNBfZAQ5Xo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGNBfZAQ5Xo)

Jonah Spool is an experienced performer of many musical styles. While opera is his forté, he has also performed in award winning vocal jazz ensembles and loves to sing musical theater. In addition to performing throughout his native Northwest, Jonah's career has

taken him to Portland, Boston, and Greensboro, as well as abroad to Salzburg, Austria and Montreux, Switzerland. His favorite roles include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Major General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and the title role in *Don Giovanni*. Currently, Jonah is a member of the Seattle Opera Associate chorus, and studies with Marianne Weltmann.



**Lauren Kulesa, soprano  
(2020 Encouragement Award)**

Listen here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w17qYctBPE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w17qYctBPE)

A District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2019, Lauren Kulesa has a Master's degree in Voice Performance from the University of Washington, where she studied with Dr. Kari Ragan. While at the UW, she performed Le Feu (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*), the soprano

solo in *Hydrogen Jukebox* by Philip Glass, and toured China with the UW Wind Ensemble. Lauren has continued in her operatic career with performances as Mrs. Fiorentino (*Street Scene*) with Pacific Lutheran University and Sister Genevieve (*Suor Angelica*) with Lyric Opera Northwest.



**Rachelle Moss, contralto  
(2016 & 2017 grant recipient)**

Listen here: [rachellemoss.com/media](http://rachellemoss.com/media)  
Following Rachelle's memorable performance at the SOG Annual Meeting in 2018, Ann Milam declared that "Rachelle entertained us with her hilarious impression of Julia Child" in the L'Aria newsletter. Rachelle's favorite roles include Kate Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Bianca (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Orsini (Lucrezia Borgia.)

La Zia Principessa (*Suor Angelica*), Mrs. Lovett (*Sweeney Todd*) and Effie (*The Ballad of Baby Doe*). In concert, Rachelle has performed alto solos in Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and Mozart's *Coronation Mass*. She is the recipient of numerous honors, including a Sarasota Opera Apprenticeship, Metropolitan Opera National Council Encouragement Award, Sarasota Opera Guild's Mary Cook Memorial Award for Outstanding Apprentice Artist and the Stuart R. Silver Scholarship from Sarasota Opera. In 2022, she returns to the live stage as Meg Page in Verdi's *Falstaff* with Puget Sound Concert Opera.

# *SOG Previews: The Early Days*

*Marilyn Leck*

After the Seattle Opera Guild (SOG) was incorporated in 1956, it played an integral role in bringing Verdi's *Aida* to the 1963 Seattle World's Fair. Seattle Opera (SO) was founded in 1964, with the financial support of many Seattle residents and SOG neighborhood opera study groups. Let's take a look at some memories of those earlier SOG years.

The common thread throughout these past 65 SOG years has been the camaraderie of people gathering in private homes for social interaction, wine, cuisine, and opera-related entertainment. The entertainment has varied over the years; however the socializing, wine, and cuisine have remained constant, creating an atmosphere of preview group loyalty.

For a couple of decades, SOG and SO worked in tandem to improve this local art form. Most of the members of the SO Board of Trustees were also SOG members. Study group gatherings were entertained and educated by their members researching operas, composers, locating aria recordings, and other related topics. On several occasions, as an example, Gio Solimene Ross entertained the SOG study groups with costuming successes and disasters. Mrs. Ross, wife of SO founding director Glynn Ross and an Italian educated artist, painted scenery, chose accessories, and designed and fitted costumes for SO.

Some SOG groups met during the day while others met in the evening. By 1980, there were 24 geographic SOG preview groups throughout the greater Seattle area with a solid reach into the professional community. Upon the arrival of Speight Jenkins as SO director in 1983, came a series of SO education staff, Hans Wolfe, Michael Mitchell, Gordon Grant and Perry Lorenzo, who auditioned singers for previews, and produced an in-depth study guide for the preview narrator including maps, pictures, biographies, and period politics explaining the current opera's backstory. As SOG migrated from recordings to live singers, we saw the birth of the SOG Singers' Development Program, which grants cash awards to competition performers to this day. SOG for many years has provided young singers with opportunities across many venues to perform!

Lisa Bergman, member of Lakeside now Magnolia/Queen Ann preview group, recalls joining a narrator and singer as the piano accompanist. On one occasion, they traveled to the Kent/Auburn area to present a preview at the home of a new-to-opera hostess for the opera *The Seagull* by Thomas Pasatieri. Upon arrival, the hostess graciously offered Lisa their beautiful antique (out of tune) harmonium with toggle foot pedals. The show must go on, so Lisa gallantly attempted to play the harmonium during the entire preview. Lisa said the evening was a wreck! The hostess commented, "If this is opera, it truly does sound weird!"

Sandy Boyd, Parties & Previews member since the 1970's, recalls gathering with members to play outdoor volleyball games prior to their dinner and previews. Parties & Previews, she says, has always had a broad reach and a reputation for fun, attracting more guests than members to their previews!

My husband, Vernon, and I joined our first preview group, Opera Eve, in 1984. Our fondest memories were the friendliness of the members, the social, wine, and *hors d'oeuvres* time upon arrival, and then the depth of knowledge the narrators delivered. For our earliest previews, we had a narrator and aria recordings. Archie Drake, SO resident singer, lived on Queen Anne in Seattle. He was known by several Opera Eve members, and was often our fantastic preview narrator!

Evette Glauber, member of Amici since 1986, recalls her involvement with organizing the SOG previews. It was a joint venture between the SOG Student Ticket Subsidy Program and the SO Education Department, collaborating and auditioning singers to support our previews and SO outreach programs. Evette recalled a trip to a local high school with one preview singer to prepare students for their Opera House performance. They asked the students "what is "opera?" To which one student quickly replied "My mom watches Oprah every morning on TV!"

Nancy English, a member of the Mercer Island preview group since the 1970's, recalls members who were parents of small children gathering with like-minded parents who saw opera as fun! Meetings were creative! Yes, Mrs. Ross was a regular, as was Hans Wolfe, who later became director of Tacoma Opera. Hans provided valuable in-depth narration along with aria recordings.

In closing, I invite SOG members to take the opportunity to mingle with our long time members for more memories!



*Best wishes for a musical 2022 from your  
Seattle Opera Guild Board!*

# SEATTLE Opera Guild

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

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## 2021-2022 SOG Officers

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
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