

L'Arria

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SEATTLE
Opera Guild

July 2024 • Volume 73 • Issue 2

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.

Outgoing President's Message



Marilyn Leck

It has been an honor to have served as your president for the past eighteen months. That our SOG survived as a nonprofit throughout the pandemic is admirable. With grit and determination, we followed successful and proven leadership board governance: strategy, financial stability, and working committees.

Currently, our loyal SOG members have expressed the wish for us to focus on our mission basics. That unique mission is to serve the greater Seattle community with live opera previews and hosting live auditions for young opera performers to compete for financial awards.

To this end, our Board of Directors has been a team committed to preserving our financial reserves, evolving our website, and stabilizing our membership. It was decided to consolidate our preview groups into one happy family, and to suspend our grants to other nonprofits for now. These committed Directors are not in it for income, rather for outcome.

During our Annual Meeting last month, Patricia Pavia (VP Special Events) delighted us as she reviewed three successful live performance events. Jonathan Gerson (VP Education) beamed at the successful Singer Development Auditions with seven accomplished participants. Bill Maschmeier (Finance Committee Chair) took us on the “road trip” of how we achieved financial stability. Stew Law (Nominating Committee Chair) introduced the 2024-25 SOG Slate of Officers that was met with member enthusiasm.

Brava Seattle Opera Guild!

The Seattle Opera Guild finishes its 67th year!

Suzu Mygatt Wakefield

The Seattle Opera Guild held its 67th annual business meeting, with entertainment, at the home of Barbara Stanton on Sunday, June 23, with about 20 attending. Barbara was a wonderful host, and guests were treated to a variety of delicious catered hors d'oeuvres and beverages.

The proposed slate of officers was elected unanimously by those present: President (acting) Judi Kalitzki; VP of Administration-vacant; VP of Membership Brenna Pink Pampera; VP of Education Regina Thomas; VP of Special Events Pam Johnson; VP of Communications and Marketing Sarah Heady; Secretary Judi Kalitzki, Treasurer (acting) Stuart Sechrest, and two Trustees: Stew Law and Patricia Derrig Pavia.



Outgoing Board: l to r: Jonathan Gerson, Zoe Erickson, Patricia Derrig Pavia, Judi Kalitzki, Stew Law, Marilyn Leck. Photo by Suzu Wakefield

continued on page 2

Annual Meeting

continued from page 1

Outgoing President Marilyn Leck gave an excellent history of the Guild which began in 1956 with study groups, and then continued in a meeting space in the old Seattle Opera House when Seattle Opera opened in 1963 before transitioning to separate guilds meeting at members' homes.

Marilyn reported that the Guild has a balanced budget, with 71 members. It is working to shore up its reserve to \$50,000. The Education Committee runs the Singers' Development Awards program in the spring with auditions in the Tagney Jones Hall at the Seattle Opera Center, under the guidance of Jonathan Gerson, who is stepping away from the Board after two years. Our thanks to Jonathan and to Zoe Erickson, Membership Chair, for their two years of service to the Guild. Our thanks also to Patricia Derrig Pavia, our remarkably creative VP of Special Events for the last two years. And thanks to Patricia and Stew Law for chairing the nominating committee.

There was a raffle for a gift basket with a very fine wine (donated by Judi Kalitzki's husband Bob Beekman) won by long time members Carol and Carl Corbin. Marilyn pointed out that the Corbins have loaned their



Photos by Suzy Wakefield

Mariana Sandoval

electronic keyboard to the Guild for many years. It was a most fitting turn of events and a way to thank them for their continuing generosity to the Guild.

The entertainment was amazing. Our two singers, both with extraordinarily powerful voices, were accompanied by pianist Jieun Kim who played the electronic piano expertly and with great feeling. Mariana Sandoval, mezzo soprano and staff member at Seattle Opera, sang the oft-sung "Habanera Song" from Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, as well as "Que te importa que no venga" (It doesn't matter that you don't show up), from *Los Claveles* by Jose Serrano Simeon. Also from *Carmen*, Zach sang "La fleur que tu m'avais jetée," as well as "Che gilida manina" from *La Bohème*. A highlight of their program was the two singers' duet, "How Could I Ever Know" from *The Secret Garden* by Lucy Simon.

In all, it was a marvelous event. We got a chance to visit with each other, renew friendships, and enjoy some beautifully sung arias. It is heartening that some friendships in the Guild seem to last a lifetime as we pull together to keep this intrepid Seattle Opera Guild going, especially when so many Guilds around the country have folded. We are committed to keeping our Guild alive!



Zachary Fitzgerald

UPCOMING SOG 2024-2025 EVENTS

- September 7, 2024 Concert / Recital
- February 6, 2025..... Preview of Mozart's Magic Flute
- April 24, 2025 Preview of Puccini's Tosca & Fundraiser for Singers' Development Awards
- May 30, 2025 Singers' Development Awards Auditions
- June 22, 2025 Annual Meeting

PLEASE SAVE THESE DATES: Invitations and details will be sent before the events.

Singers' Development Awards Final Auditions 2024

Christine Szabadi



On Friday, May 31, members of the Guild gathered to hear seven finalists who had been selected by the Education Committee. They anticipated some incredible singing, and were not disappointed. These wonderful young aspiring opera singers proved beyond a doubt that talent in this field is alive and well and living in Seattle!

There were three judges: Mitchell Kahn, Director of Pacific Northwest Opera, Susan Payne O'Brien, poet, performer and opera director, and Allison Pohl, soprano, winner of the Guild's 2016 competition. Accompanying the singers was the spectacular David McDade, principal coach and rehearsal pianist for Seattle Opera. The combination of all these accomplished musicians made for a very exciting afternoon.

After (longer than usual!) deliberations, the judges came to a decision. For the first time, they chose two first-place winners: Stephanie Pfundt, soprano, and Malinda Wagstaff, soprano. Third place was given to Rosamund Dyer, mezzo-soprano. The encouragement award went to Marissa Moultrie.

Our congratulations are extended to these winners. Guild members will have the opportunity to hear them in the near future and witness their progress as they follow their aspirations. Our thanks go to outgoing VP of Education, Jonathan Gerson, who has done a great job arranging the Singers' Development Awards these last two years.



2024 SDA Participants. left to right: Stephanie Pfundt, Amy van Mechelen, Veronica Deraleau, Rosamund Dyer, Marissa Moultrie, Rebecca Peterson, Malinda Wagstaff. Photo by Marianna Veress

Maryanne Tagney: A Seattle Opera Treasure

Judi Kalitzki

Since 2009, when Speight Jenkins first asked Maryanne Tagney to join the Seattle Opera Board, she has been an integral part of its governance. She was President from 2014-16, and has served as Chair since 2021. Supporting the successful functioning of a first-tier arts organization like Seattle Opera takes a lot of behind-the-scenes work on the part of its board, and as members of the Seattle Opera Guild, we are very appreciative of the work and support Maryanne has given Seattle Opera for so many years.

Maryanne grew up in Bristol, England in a family that appreciated music. Her father was a high school principal who believed in exposing his students to many kinds of music, including opera. Her first trip to the opera was to a performance of *Marriage of Figaro* along with her father's students. The music gene is strong in this family; all her siblings are musicians. When she and her husband David Jones moved to the Seattle area in 1981, they bought season's tickets to SO, and she's been a devoted fan ever since.

An important legacy Maryanne and her late husband David Jones gave Seattle Opera and the whole city is the Opera Center. They gave a major gift that made the Opera Center possible, and Maryanne is thrilled with the work of the architects NBBJ and the outstanding project manager, Ken Johnsen (a friend of hers), who made sure the design and all the Center's systems come together in a space that's both elegant and functional, welcoming and community-oriented.

When I asked Maryanne to reflect on the enormous changes Seattle Opera, like every other arts organization, has experienced over the past four and a half years since the Covid pandemic began, she underlined the significance of Seattle Opera's not being able to rely on its seasonal subscriptions as it did pre-pandemic. Although single ticket sales are up, subscriptions remain down. That means SO can't as easily project its budget for future seasons. However, Maryanne emphasized that Christina Scheppelmann is an outstanding financial shepherd, and the next two seasons are completely planned and budgeted.

Maryanne pointed out a recent positive change. New works like *Blue*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, have been very popular, bringing new audiences to McCaw Hall. In fact, when I asked her what some of her favorite recent operas were, she mentioned three relatively new works: *The Combat*, *As One*, and *Blue*. Maryanne sees that trend continuing, although there will always be a mix, she's convinced, of producing classic operas along with new works.

When doing background research on Maryanne to prepare for this interview, I discovered that she is a woman of many passions in addition to opera. In 2019 she and David were awarded the Outstanding Philanthropists Award by the Association of Fundraising Professionals –AFP Advancement Northwest. When watching the video created to publicize this award, I became aware of the amazing breadth of Maryanne and David's interests and philanthropy: Seattle Rep, Forterra, MOHAI, Town Hall, Emerald City Music, Fred Hutch, and Woodland Park Zoo, in addition to Seattle Opera. How fortunate we are to have Maryanne as a member of our own Seattle Opera Guild.



DONATE NOW!



JOIN NOW!



2016 and 2017 Singers' Development Award Winner Rachelle Moss

Judi Kalitzki

Rachelle Moss was definitely not the archetypal young girl entranced with singing and dreaming of being an opera star. For one thing, growing up as she did in small towns in Kansas, opera was far from her immediate experience. For another, her original interest in a college major was zoology. But she always had an aptitude for singing, and her “big voice,” as she put it, made her stand out in her high school choir. And because she was always eager to try things that were challenging, she took singing lessons from the age of 15 to 18. Rachelle’s college major was musicology—that uses the analytical side of her brain. However, she also began performing, and ended up getting a Master’s degree in vocal performance, exploring a wide variety of repertoire.



Rachelle Moss

Rachelle is a contralto, and I confessed to her early in our interview that I didn’t know what a contralto was. She explained that it’s the lowest female voice type, ranging from F3 below middle C to F5, lower than a mezzo soprano. However, she said that like most contraltos she can sing some mezzo roles as well. She has sung many roles with opera companies in the Pacific Northwest, from Dritte Dame in *Die Zauberflöte* with Eugene Opera, to Meg Page in Verdi’s *Falstaff* and Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia* with Puget Sound Concert Opera. Recently Rachelle performed Mercedes in *Carmen* with Tacoma Opera and made her Vashon Opera debut as Giovanna in *Rigoletto*.

The pandemic posed a serious challenge to everyone trying to make a career in on-stage arts, and Rachelle was no exception. However, she decided to put her energies into a podcast called Opera Unbound that was aimed at introducing opera to a much wider audience than it traditionally has. That effort turned into a non-profit that creates modern adaptations of operas to show to non-traditional audiences in non-traditional spaces. As Rachelle explained, there are so many barriers for most people to see an opera in the opera house. Time, money, language, location: all prevent many from even attempting to see an opera. Rachelle and her Co-Founder, Mike Heitmann, are always eager to try challenging new experiences, so they worked together to produce a sixty-minute version of *Carmen* in English, and showed it to audiences at Seattle Drum School, on her deck, and at another private residence. Since she started this effort, Rachelle says she has met so many people who tell her “I never knew I liked opera,” or “I never knew I’d be welcomed.”



Rachelle as Bianca in *The Rape of Lucretia*.
Photo by Peter Serko

When I asked Rachelle how winning the SDA awards helped her career, she told me it made a real difference for her. She used the monetary awards to help her tour Germany, auditioning for agents at many of the state-supported opera houses around the country. She made good connections and is hoping to head back to Germany this or next fall to audition for roles.

In the meantime, along with her singing and her non-profit, Rachelle teaches both voice and guitar. She has 25 students who come to her in-home studio. She learned guitar from her dad and has been playing it since she was 15. She teaches both musical theater and opera in her voice studio.

SOG members are proud of helping singers launch their careers, and in Rachelle Moss we can also admire a singer who is eager to share her love of opera with those who normally would not be exposed to it. *Brava*, Rachelle!

SEATTLE *Opera Guild*

PO Box 5745
Lynnwood, WA 98046

Address service requested

Editorial Staff:

Editor:

Judi Kalitzki

Editorial Board:

Judi Kalitzki, Ann Milam, Joanne Sechrest,
Christine Szabadi and Suzy Wakefield

Web Manager: Josh deLacy

Graphics/Printing:

Spot-on Print & Design 425-558-7768

Submissions:

Send text and photographs to:

Judi Kalitzki: judikalitzki@aol.com

Photographs should include subjects' names
and 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.

June 2024-June 2025 SOG Officers

President (acting).....	Judi Kalitzki
VP Admin	TBA
VP Special Events	Pam Johnson
VP Communications.....	Sarah Heady
VP Education.....	Regina Thomas
VP Membership.....	Brenna Pink Pampena
Treasurer (acting)	Stuart Sechrest
Secretary	Judi Kalitzki
Trustee	Stew Law
Trustee	Patricia Derrig Pavia

Find SOG Online!

We're on the web: seattleoperaguild.org

Like us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/TheSeattleOperaGuild/