A Word from your President

Sacy Mygatt Wakefield

The question continues—“Where do we go from here?” Our mission stays the same, despite the pandemic. The Seattle Opera Guild, a non-profit organization, continues our commitment to supporting Seattle Opera, funding vocal scholarships, and providing opera education for all age groups to ensure future opera audiences.

Many of you subscribers were able to watch Seattle Opera’s recent production of Elise of Love, featuring David McAlmont and Liz Reimold each playing their own piano (in place of a full orchestra), and a panel dear friends with only the free mine characters playing music to sing their roles. One of the free, Tara Milman, whose sings Gismonda, was from a Seattle Opera Guild, and she appeared at one of our fundraisers. So encouraging to see a singer we helped appearing in Seattle Opera main stage productions! And to learning and exciting to see how cleverly the director and cast of this production managed to create a lively, funny, and moving opera even as the cast had to practice staying at least six feet apart from one another throughout the opera!

Message from Seattle Opera’s General Director, Christina Schepplemann

This year has certainly been a year unlike any other in recent history. What felt like a short intermission between scenes in early spring, has become a limbo from the theatre that none of us could have anticipated or even dreamed of experiencing.

But just as opera has endured over the past several centuries, when political instabilities and safety regulations forced us to cancel our operas, the Seattle Opera Guild has remained a steadfast supporter of our artists and our mission.

We took it as an opportunity to explore every possibility we could to serve our community and continue to bring our audiences the wonderful talent of our nearly 7,000 season subscribers, while expanding our offerings to our 60,000 season subscribers worldwide. For the first time, we were able to offer virtual versions of our original season, this past summer and early fall. We continued to offer the same digital education and community programming that our audiences have come to expect, and our team did prove to be incredibly resilient.

As we move through the process of creating a virtual production, we gained new skills and became more flexible using the technologies available to us, ensuring that our audiences could experience our performances in the best way possible.

We are excited to build upon these experiences and continue to offer a diverse range of educational programs for all ages, including virtual performances, workshops, and other community engagement initiatives.

The Seattle Opera Guild is committed to supporting the arts and providing access to opera education for all. We are grateful for your ongoing support and look forward to continuing to serve our community in the years to come.
Seattle Opera took on the role of becoming a part time opera company and part time film studio. For our virtual production of *Schepplemann*, you for your continued support. Productions that will reach you and impact you at home. You can rest assured that we are doing everything necessary to create a safe standards for our production of *Elixir of Love*. As our spring season carries on in 2021 with *Don Giovanni, Flight*, and *Elixir of Love*, Seattle Opera will continue to bring you excellent productions that will reach you and impact you at home. You can rest assured that we are doing everything necessary to create a safe environment for our artists and staff members who are involved in the productions. If we didn’t have the extraordinary support from you, our audiences, and our community, we likely wouldn’t have the same drive and determination to create such a special season. Thank you for your continued support.

**President**

**Membership Update**

- Gayle Charletworth, VP Membership

**Why should you renew your membership in the Seattle Opera Guild?**

- No string, no pressure! 
- As a result of our full membership drive, a significant number of members not only renewed but increased the level of their membership. However, it’s clear some have asked themselves the question above. So let me share what Seattle Opera has been doing lately.

- We had our auditions virtually, thanks to Seattle Opera, giving seven soprano singers a chance to advance their careers, and giving members the opportunity to watch live performances.
- We have our monthly Board meeting by Zoom, and they are surprisingly productive.
- We have a budget for this year that includes gifts to Seattle Opera, N.G.I.S.E., and MOH. Why? Because, like all arts organizations, their funding is severely reduced and SO would provide the first of the solution so they are prepared to perform again.
- We are compiling a directory and want YOU in it.
- We want to plan a big party and have opera previews again once it’s safe to do so. We need enthusiastic members like YOU to be a part of it.

- Please renew and just as we walk towards the light at the end of this tunnel hand in hand.

- To renew, go to our website to get the form, which you can fill out online or print out and send in. Cheers!

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**Graduate of the University of Washington, Seattle Opera’s first seven singers, with David McDade the accompanist.**

He spoke very highly of their enthusiasm and their talent.

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*To renew, go to our website to get the form, which you can fill out online or print out and send in. Cheers!*
My First Ring

Joel Kalinski

I have a complex relationship to Richard Wagner. My parents, great opera lovers, were German Jews. They were lucky to escape Germany with their immediate families before the started mass killing of Jews began. While I was growing up in California, my parents insisted on taking me to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts on Saturday nights on the radio. They had an extensive collection of operas on records that I heard when they played them on our stereo (we called it) day I ventured headway Wagner. So I knew nothing about him or his music growing up.

It was not until I took a class on opera at UCLA Berkeley that I was exposed to the expansive music of the “Liebestod” from Tristan and Isolde and the love duet between Siegfried and Sieglinde in the first act of Die Walkure. Although I occasionally managed across the room from Berkeley to San Francisco to attend the opera, never saw a Wagner. After graduating from UC Berkeley I moved to Seattle to attend graduate school at the University of Washington. That first year of grad school I was too busy to even think of attending the opera. But my first summer here (1975), Seattle Opera embarked on the incredibly audacious experiment of mounting the entire Ring cycle. A grad school friend who lived across campus convinced we simply must attend. It was all that I could hear to tell a friend of ours to bring along to a two-day (maybe this is more serious objection was a two-day event). I have learned not to overlook but to embrace the music flooding your ears seem not really human at one. Each leitmotif penetrates more deeply into your brain until (in Götterdämmerung), you are no longer self-conscious and sensitive to the music that a no more the ring and the music. Odysseus (my mom, sadly, had died just before I graduated from college), and he encouraged me to go, saying it was important to let the music speak for itself.

So I sat, and those of you who have experienced seeing the Ring within the space of a single week have the music is like a tidal wave that pushes you over, with each mounting opera building on top of the previous one. Each following performance moves more deeply into your brain until you (in Götterdämmerung), see it in familiar self and sensitive to the music that is the action of the ring and the music. The sung words are not really human at all, but something grander. As you can tell, I became a convert to the Ring. I have learned to overhaul but to separate the Wagner who wrote late fatal anti-Semitic essays from the musician who wrote such gorgeous music. I recognize that while Wagner’s operas were favorites of the Nazis, this should not stop music lovers from embracing these splendid operas.

Joan Falskovin Herald as Ortrud in Seattle’s First Ring

Joan Falskovin Herald

As one of the first seven sopranos hired by Glyn Ross for the new Seattle Opera, I have many happy memories during my sixteen years with the company. One of the most memorable was being cast as Ortrud in one of the first Ring cycles. This was a most interesting and rewarding time as a performing artist. The conductor was Henry Hedin, who knew the Ring so well that he conducted Wagner’s cycles, all four, in one week! He used the first week in German and then repeated the entire production the second week in English. I recall it was the first time the entire Ring was performed in both languages. The audience was comprised of attendees from a number of countries and from around the U.S. Some publicity shots were taken on the Monorail, and one with me in it was published in Newsweek. My performing name back then was Joan Falskovin,
Seattle Opera took on the role of becoming a part-time opera company and part-time film studio. For our virtual production of *Schepplemann* you for your continued support.

We created a new, cut-price, cut-down version of the original production for our audiences—both live and online. For our artists and staff members who are involved in the productions, if we didn’t have the extraordinary support from production and design teams, we wouldn’t be able to create and present these productions that engage and entertain you.

We understand that there is a certain risk in losing the magic of what makes opera special in a live setting. However, we have high standards for our production of *Elixir of Love*, *Don Giovanni*, *Flight*, and *Isolde*, and this entire process has been a balance in creativity, imagination, and innovation. As opera lovers, we appreciate the opportunity to enjoy live opera, albeit online, in our current environment.

The Seattle Opera Guild continues with almost 100 members, and we enjoyed a wonderful audition on August 4. We are fortunate that we can still enjoy live opera, albeit online, but we look forward to the day when we can return to performing live.

Why should you renew your membership in the Seattle Opera Guild?

- We are compiling a directory and want you in it.
- We have our monthly Board meeting by Zoom, and they are prepared.
- We had our auditions virtually, thanks to Seattle Opera, giving young singers that terrific experience of being on a professional stage.
- We are preparing to run our annual summer production, a new website, which will be up and running soon. Please check it out and like us on Facebook.

To renew, go to our website to see the options. Why?

- We are prepared, with almost 100 members not only renewed but increased the level of their support to SOG.

I have a complex relationship to Richard Wagner. My parents, great opera lovers, were German Jews. They were lucky to escape Germany. I have learned not to overlook but to separate the Wagner who wrote hate-filled anti-Semitic music from the Wagner who composed great music. I recognize that while Wagner’s operas were favorites of Meinestadt, this should not keep music lovers from hearing the music. I have a good friend who is a devoted Wagner lover. He spoke very highly of their enthusiasm and their talent. However, he has never heard any Wagner. So I knew nothing about him or his music growing up.

I was dubious: first of all, it was a lot of money for someone living on a TA’s salary. But maybe a more serious objection was a sense of belonging—could I, the US Navy, be asking Wagner? But behind the scenes, awakened by what was happening overseas, SOG had not lost sight of its mission to support and present opera in part through financial support of Seattle Opera. An SOG member knows this, as well, that the music flooding your ears seem not really human at all until you understand its context. This is where it comes from, and the oboe has received rave reviews in *The Ring*. We are so sad that we can’t perform again.

Our 35 Guild members and guests really enjoyed themselves, plus we actually raised some money and made the most of that other hard time in our country’s history!

Marlene Holbrook.

Ann Milam

*Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?*

The Seattle Opera Guild! The Seattle Opera Guild! The Seattle Opera Guild! The Seattle Opera Guild!
Our Magnolia/Queen Anne Preview Group

By Ann Milan

The Magnolia Group began in ~1975 with a handful of energetic members, chaired by immediate past SOG President Leta Autry. It went on to grow to about 30 members who met in their homes and listened to tapes to learn more about opera. As the group grew, Seattle Opera provided singers and speakers for their previews. This group has always loved to party and with the Mercer Island group, co-hosted a Russian fundraiser at the Mt. Rainier Theatre (now the Russian Community Center).

The group grew to over 50 members and was renamed Magnolia/Queen Anne (MQA) in ~2006, meeting first at home and Bertil Lundh’s Porcelain Gallery in Magnolia, then in the party room at 111 West Highland Drive hosted by Sy Iffert and Casey Carlson Iffert, and currently in the Court of Queen Anne Retirement Community hosted by Florence Rose-Thompson. Current members have fond memories of their group’s events. Florence Rose-Thompson comments, “I’ve enjoyed the camaraderie among our members, our social events to help young singers and the opportunity to meet interesting new people and introduce them to opera.” Frank and Sue Gregory agree. “It’s a great opportunity to meet new and very interesting people and to learn the stories and some of the music before we attend an opera. It’s really an eye-opening experience to hear exciting young and experienced performers.”

The Highland Drive venue was ideal for annual summer fundraisers including “A Classy Event: A Classy View” in 2012 with Corinna Judkins, Tony Kalil and Glenda Williams. MQA was eager to help Tony with his studies in the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Program and raised funds in 2012 with “A Tea with Tony Kalil” featuring Tony and Glenda Williams in Ann Milam’s Broadmoor home. “Summertime,” on Froh and Bess preview/fundraiser in 2018 was held with three Seattle Opera mainstage performers, Cheryse McLeod Lewis, Rohan Olijhofer and Dierre Lopez, accompanied by Lu-Tan Hsu.

The MQA preview group has a distinguished history of featuring the Seattle Opera and assisting young singers by enlisting them to perform in fundraisers. Most of all, the group has been and continues to be very successful in featuring outstanding opera previews and fundraisers!

Two of our performers, Dierre Lopez and Cheryse McLeod Lewis, were models for Seattle Opera’s production of Froh and Bess. They were featured all over town, on the sides of buses, lamppost posters, refrigerator magnets and in the opera program!
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Seattle Opera mainstage performers, Cheryse

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By Ann Milam

Porgy and Bess

By Ann Milam

Summertime” Porgy and Bess performers (L to R): Li-Tan Hsu, Cheryse