

Portland Opera Guild Newsletter

the *Coloratura*

Mission: To stimulate interest and participation in opera for the benefit of cultural, educational and musical life in all of Oregon and to assist artists in the arts and aid in the production of opera

MONC Northwest Regional Auditions: January 10, 2016

Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle will be the site once again for the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council (MONC)'s Northwest Regional Auditions. The high-stakes Sunday afternoon competition, beginning at 1 pm, features 13 fortunate (and talented) singers who advanced from four regional competitions: the Washington, Oregon, Western (actually, all of) Canada, and Idaho/Montana Districts. One of the 13, soprano **Felicia Moore, a first-year Portland Opera Resident Artist**, captivated her PSU Lincoln Hall audience last October and was overwhelmingly selected *Audience Favorite* (see accompanying MONC story).

An experienced and distinguished panel of three judges: super star baritone **Samuel Ramey**, soprano and Master Teacher **Elizabeth Hynes**, and Met Director, **Gayletha Nichols**, will decide which, and how many, of the competitors advance to the National Semi-Finals in New York next March. Prize money and career-advancement are assured for the winners. Who knows, perhaps another Angela Meade, who advanced from the Oregon Auditions to the winner's circle in 2007, will be among the 13.

Concert tickets cost \$25 and a spot at the reception, honoring the judges and the finalists in the Norcliffe Founders Room in Benaroya Hall after the concert, is \$50.

A group bus/van from Portland to Seattle, and return, is planned again this year. The round-trip, with meals/snacks and concert ticket, and a bundle of good cheer and fellowship, is a great bargain at \$60.

Please contact our Events-Vice President Laura Newton at 971-704-2025 or at laurasnewton@gmail.com and let her know you'll join us.

The weekend of January 9-10 includes several exciting opera events at Seattle's Fairmont Olympic Hotel, including a roundtable discussion and Master Class given by Ms. Hynes. For up-to-date information, keep going to www.moncnw.org



Portland Opera Guild Luncheon: Friday, January 29, 2016

It's a winning event – a Portland Opera Guild luncheon at the wonderful Multnomah Athletic Club! Opera entertainment, beautiful surroundings, delicious cuisine, and good fellowship: *where can one get all that for just \$35?* Festivities begin at 12 noon on Friday, January 29th. Join us for this second luncheon of the Guild's opera season; the first one was a huge success. You can register and pay securely at the Guild's website, www.portlandoperaguild.org or call Doris Pascoe, 503-260-5854.

It's always a great pleasure to have **Christine Meadows** and her PSU opera students perform for us and it is the Guild's continuing honor to support this wonderful program. In addition, we will be further entertained with another edition of ***Triviata***, in the form of "Family Feud" and "Jeopardy." Two teams will vie for the title ***Opera Geek(s)***. What fun: you can put your own knowledge of opera to the test as you watch.

President's Message

Hello, and a most wonderful Season to you all!

In my previous communiqué, I had shared with you my amazement of how quickly our seasons pass by. Now, here we are with our treasured, and one of our most delightful seasons of the year, just around the corner. As you read this message, Thanksgiving will have passed, but nonetheless I would like to take a moment to share with you how truly thankful I am to be a part of this wonderful organization that we call the Portland Opera Guild.



As I continue to work with our talented and passionate Board of Directors and as we welcome new members on board: Ruth Dobson, Carol Taylor, Kyle Sturm and Bethany Goshorn, I reflect on the excitement and electricity that is conjured up in our gatherings.

To all our most delightful and wonderful Members, thank you for all your continued support and your participation in the Guild's many gatherings and events, like our "Opening Luncheon" held at the MAC on September 25th - what a great time we had, with the superb entertainment of Portland's Opera-On-Tap, a friendly game of "Opera Trivia," a delightful lunch, and yours truly being the MC and enjoying every minute of it!

And, again, "HURRAHS" to Jutta Allen's production of the Metropolitan Opera National Council (MONC) Auditions in October. The synergy in the audience, coupled with the stellar talent on stage was truly spine-tingling! As we sat on the edge of our seats in the theatre, we experienced a stage full of winners... the applause rang out over and over and we were moved to the pinnacle of appreciation for the performances by such (young) talent. To be a judge this year must have been a nearly overwhelming challenge. At intermission, we gathered in the foyer and shared our happy hearts together in the true spirit of what Opera is all about!

Another great chance for us to get together is just around the corner: the "Portland Opera Guild Holiday Party" will be held at Portland Piano and I hope to see you there again. We expect wonderful entertainment and refreshments as well as lots of Holiday Cheer and friendship! This event is our chance to say thank you for another glorious year!

As I have shared with you my friends... it is about you, our treasured members and supporters.

Best regards for a fabulous Holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Rodney V. Mazour

Super Sunday of Arias at the MONC Oregon Auditions

It was an opera-lover's dream day: nineteen singers, thirteen of them sopranos, three mezzo-sopranos, just two tenors, and a countertenor, singing 38 arias in a single afternoon. Whew, that is, indeed, a lot of singing! The occasion, of course, was the Metropolitan Opera National Council (MONC), Oregon Auditions, held at PSU's wonderful concert venue, the Lincoln Hall Auditorium on Sunday, October 11th.

These young performers sang before an expert panel of three judges: **Vera Calabria**, who brought over 30 years of professional experience as a stage director, dramatic coach, and arts administrator; **John Keene**, current Chorus Master at Seattle Opera where he has also been Assistant Conductor for Wagner's *Ring Cycle*; and **Valéry Ryvkin**, who has spent the last two decades conducting some of our nation's leading opera orchestras. Their major task, to select "winners" from among the competitors, is quite challenging. (What many audience members might not realize is that they take voluminous notes while listening to all the singers and meet with those performers in coaching sessions afterward). Moreover, it is they who request a specific (listed) second aria from each singer.

The judges deemed that two of the singers, **soprano Felicia Moore and tenor Daniel Ross**, were "best" and they will advance to the **MONC Northwest**



Felicia Moore and Daniel Ross

Regional Auditions in Seattle on Sunday, January 10, 2016. There, they will compete against other singers who will have advanced from different northwest regional competitions and (all of) Canada. Ms. Moore and Mr. Ross each netted \$1,100 in prize money. *Several Guild members plan to be in Seattle for the Auditions; why not join them (for details, see accompanying Coloratura article)?*

Felicia is a brand new **Portland Opera Resident Artist** and are we excited about being able to watch (and hear) her develop her amazing talent in our midst for the next two years! Her opening selection, ***Einsam in trüben Tagen (Lonely, in troubled days)***, often referred to as *Elsa's dream*, from Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*, literally blew the audience away: her magnificent timbre and the dramatic, glorious sound she produced were unforgettable! The judges requested that she sing ***Morrò, ma prima in grazia (I die, but allow me first to embrace my only child)***, a gut-wrenching and challenging aria from the third act of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. Again, the soprano delivered an amazing and moving performance. Felicia's two arias brought the audience to its feet and provided them with much to talk about during the intermission that followed her singing. It almost goes without saying that Ms. Moore was selected as **Audience Favorite**, which netted her an additional \$300.

One of the three tenors, **Daniel Ross**, from Salem, Oregon, was the other entrant selected to advance to the next stage of the competition. Mr. Ross began with the well known, enchanting aria that is sung early in Mozart's popular ***Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)***, ***Dies bildnes... (Oh image, angel-like and fair)***. His warm, melodious tenor offered a lovely rendition of Tamino's opening aria; the listener could tell that he had fallen in love (even if it was just with Pamina's portrait). He next sang ***Here I Stand*** from Stravinsky's ***The Rake's Progress***. Many may recall having seen this opera at the Keller this past season. Mr. Ross delivered a dramatic and stirring aria.

Four others were selected as recipients of **Encouragement Awards**, worth \$500 each: **sopranos Hannah Consenz, Ksenia Popova, Emily Skeen, and another of our newly arrived Portland Opera Resident Artists, mezzo Abigail Dock**. Ms. Dock offered two arias that were not listed in the program (as they were not originally on her submitted list

of five): ***Pensa alla patria*** from Rossini's ***L'Italiana in Algeri*** (you will be able to hear her sing that same aria next summer at the Newmark when Portland Opera presents that hilarious opus) and the moving ***Must the winter come so soon*** from Samuel Barber's ***Vanessa***. We in Portland have had the pleasure of knowing and hearing the fabulous voice of Ksenia Popova over the past few years.

Enough praise cannot be offered to the piano accompanists without whom the program would not go on. ***Celebrating his 25th year as the official accompanist for the Oregon District MONC Auditions***, the incomparable **Rodney Menn** was at the keyboard for most singers. A coach and accompanist for classical singers for more than 40 years, Mr. Menn has performed almost everywhere in the United States, and in Europe. **Portland Opera's Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master, Nicholas Fox**, who has a key role in training our Resident Artists, accompanied all three of them on Sunday. One of the three, tenor **Aaron Short**, sang beautifully but was not chosen to advance after Sunday.

Oregon District Director of MONC, our own Jutta Allen, a former Guild President, and active Arts participant and supporter in the community, once again took charge and commanded a flawless afternoon. Jutta had lots of help: **Janet Day** again served efficiently and graciously as Mistress of Ceremonies, a number of Guild members served as ushers, while still others manned tables in the lobby that provided punch and candies and displayed Guild materials. **Guild President, Rodney Mazour and his lovely wife, Cathleen** laid out a table of tasty tidbits for audience members.

As if the day was not full enough, but **"Julia Child," with whisk in hand**, came forward to have a few words with Janet Day at the podium while the judges were deliberating after the concert. She praised the Opera Department at PSU for its fine work and noted that the school was to present two One Act operas in December (please see those details elsewhere in the Coloratura). Of course, "Ms. Child" is none other than **Christine Meadows, PSU's Opera Program Director**, who will sing that role in *Bon Appetit*, one of the two operas.

Finally, it must be said that the Portland Opera Guild is an ardent supporter, financially and otherwise, of both the MONC and the PSU Opera program. Both are undertakings that are very dear to our hearts.



Norma Leszt and Bob Weiss: Opera Guild Stalwarts

(Robert L.) Bob Weiss, a decorated World War II hero with a 50-year legal career in Portland, passed away at the age of 92 in late summer and was interred, with full honors, at Arlington National Cemetery. Family and many of his friends memorialized Bob at the Old Church, one of his favorite cultural venues in the Rose City, during September.

He was committed to the city, donating time, money, and energy to any number of Portland Arts organizations but only mildly interested in opera, until he met the love-of-his-life, Norma Leszt. Once he gifted her membership in the Portland Opera Guild, the couple became a fixture at Portland Opera productions, where they enjoyed Director Chris Mattaliano's post-opera talks, and Guild luncheons, and together they became avid supporters of Portland SummerFest, CMNW, MONC, All Classical Radio and other Arts organizations. They also enjoyed attending the Metropolitan Opera in HD at local cinemas. Indeed, Bob noted that his favorite opera experience was viewing Ambrose Thomas's *Hamlet*, with baritone Simon Keenleyside in the title role, at one such cinematic broadcast. Bob "just loved the idea that an opera based on a Shakespeare play was written," remembers Norma.

A memorable "opera moment" for Bob was going out to an Italian restaurant after sitting through the last of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, the six-hour production of *Götterdämmerung*, in Seattle. It happened that renowned mezzo-soprano, Stephanie Blythe, who had sung the role of Waltraute in the opera, came into the same restaurant, her favorite, for dinner. Bob managed to have a photo taken with Ms. Blythe that evening; what a great day that was!

Norma has a home in California, which she and Bob resided in part of the year, but plans to visit the Rose City from time to time, take in an opera now and then. And, she promises to retain ties with the Portland Opera Guild.



PSU's Gourmet Opera Menu

Here's a most pleasant way to spend a couple of hours in Portland in December: see two One Act operas and then, *have your cake and eat it too!* Portland State University's Opera Director, **Professor Christine Meadows**, who also happens to possess a luscious mezzo-soprano voice, will sing the role of Julia Child, who teaches the recipe for a classic French chocolate cake in ***Bon Appetit***. After the show, audience members get to eat that cake.

On the program, too, is Bizet's one act operetta, ***Dr. Miracle***, composed when he was 18 years old. This hilarious work features the mouth-watering *Omelet Quartet*.

You can be assured that there will be nothing tastier in Portland during the second week in December. Performances will take place nightly at 7:30 pm, December 9-12 and at 2 pm on the 13th in PSU's Lincoln Hall Studio Theater. For tickets, call the Box Office at 503-725-3307 or get them online at www.pdx.edu/boxoffice.

The Portland Opera Guild is a proud supporter of the PSU Opera Program.

The Coloratura Editor

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