
High Notes



A Periodic Newsletter for Portland Opera Volunteers January 2018

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this edition of *High Notes* to the memory of long-time volunteer Maria Conkle, who died on her 85th birthday on September 30, 2017. Maria and Leo, her husband of 56 years, have been dedicated and well-loved volunteers since 1990, doing anything needed with skill and unfailing good cheer. One example of Maria's commitment and grit is the time she helped check coats at a special event just one day after she was knocked down by a snow-boarder while skiing, sustaining three broken ribs! Maria always had a friendly smile that made people feel welcome. We will miss her presence, but cherish her memory and always be grateful for the time we had with her.



Happy New Year!

As we ring out the old and ring in the new, we look forward to a great 2018! We hope your 2017 was a good year and that 2018 is even better, filled with the beauty of opera! Portland Opera has an exciting year ahead, including changes to the volunteer program and welcoming three new resident artists. Read on to see what 2018 has in store for Portland Opera volunteers.

Winter Operatunities for 2018!

Don't want to wait for May to get your opera volunteer fix? Never fear, volunteer needs are coming up soon.

David Adam Moore, baritone and visual artist, performs *Winterreise*, Schubert's stunning song cycle based on 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller, with Nicholas Fox, Portland Opera Assistant Conductor, on piano. Performances are February 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17 at the Hampton Opera Center.

Big Night Concert on April 14 is a spectacular celebration of opera's biggest hits, with full orchestra, chorus and guest artists from the 2018 season.

As always, watch your email for the call for volunteers.

Changes Are in the Works

Changes will occur in 2018 in how new volunteers are brought on board. Details are still being defined. Current volunteers will not be affected. Please note, however, that you will not be able to ask anyone to volunteer with you who is not a Portland Opera volunteer receiving the volunteer signup emails.

In addition, Portland Opera will contact any current volunteers who do not yet have a volunteer application on file to ask them to complete one. All volunteers will also be asked to sign the Volunteer Responsibilities and Code of Conduct agreement if they have not already done so.

For the 2018 season, production volunteers (light walkers and backstage beverage service volunteers) will be able to see the show for which they volunteer. In the past, seat availability for the student dress rehearsals has been uncertain. Now, volunteers for both Keller and Newmark operas can attend either the student dress rehearsal or a specific performance that will be announced when the signup sheet is distributed.

Signing up early will help ensure you are able to select your preference. This is an exciting change that allows volunteers to plan ahead about seeing the opera. Thanks go to Sue Dixon, Director of External Affairs, for making this happen. (Read the article about Sue on pages 3-4 to learn more about her.)

Portland Opera Resident Artists

Portland Opera Resident Artists (PORA) for 2018 include returning mezzo-soprano, Kate Farrar (see article below), and three singers new to the program: soprano Helen Huang, tenor Thomas Cilluffo, and bass Shi Li. Beginning in January, these artists will join Portland Opera for a training program. Each will be featured in main-stage productions; perform an art song recital; and sing at season previews, production previews, and community events. For up-to-date information about PORA performances, check the Portland Opera website at <http://www.portlandopera.org/resident-artists-2018/>.

The PORA will be introduced in a concert at the Alberta Rose Theatre on February 21. Tickets can be purchased through the Alberta Rose website at <https://www.albertarosetheatre.com/calendar.html>. We hope to see you there!

2018 PORA Recital Schedule

March 13 – Kate Farrar

April 17 – Shi Li

June 6 – Helen Huang

August 1 – Thomas Cilluffo

All recitals take place in the Whitsell Auditorium at the Portland Art Museum and begin at 7 pm. There is no charge for admission; however, RSVPs are encouraged, and a suggested donation of \$20 will help support the resident artist program.

Kate Farrar: In Fighting Form

Portland Opera is happy to welcome back mezzo soprano Kate Farrar for her second year as a PORA!

You may have seen Kate perform last season in *Love and War*, *Man of La Mancha* (as Antonia and covering Aldonza), and *Così fan Tutte* (Dorabella). Kate says she enjoys singing a variety of different roles. This preference will certainly be fulfilled again in 2018, when she will be featured in the

Big Night on April 14 and in *Rigoletto* (as Giovanna), *Faust* (Siebel), and *La Cenerentola* (Angelina). Her PORA recital will be on March 13.

As a child in Hillsborough, North Carolina, Kate liked to skate and ride horseback. She started voice

at 12 or 13, with a preference for pop music. (“I was always really loud,” she notes.) She was also interested in musical theatre, playing the role of Rizzo in a school production of *Grease*. Kate hated opera until she fell in love with singing the aria “Caro Mio Ben.” She then became obsessed with opera in general and sang in the chorus of two local opera companies: Opera Company of North Carolina in Raleigh and the former Long Leaf Opera. Still, she claims she wasn’t really a very good singer until her junior year in college. “Most high school teachers told me to quit,” she says, “although one voice teacher (soprano Christine Weidinger) did encourage me. It takes a lot of time and patience for your voice to settle in.”



Kate earned her undergraduate degree in voice, with a French minor, from the University of North Carolina at Greensborough. She says that in the beginning, she did well academically, but was a poor musician and needed to develop her ear. As a sophomore, she won a National Association for Teachers of Singing (NATS) college competition at the regional level. Although she realized that her voice is much more suited to classical than pop, she didn’t give up pop entirely. While in college, she briefly sang with a metal band called “Life Grip” – three middle-aged guys she found on Craig’s List. They played locally for less than a year. “They were terrible, but they toughened me up.”

For two years after graduation, Kate taught, catered, and worked for HR Block. “I loved preparing tax returns,” she says. “There is a right answer.” She then earned her MA in voice performance from the University of North Carolina’s A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute. Following that, she lived in New York for 2½ years and participated in summer opera productions for Chautauqua Opera, Saratoga Opera, and Opera North in New Hampshire. Before joining Portland Opera for the 2017 season, Kate was an apprentice at Sarasota Opera in Florida.

Both of Kate's parents are microbiologists. Kate says that if she were not a singer, she would like to be a theoretical physicist, although she does not think she is talented enough in math to excel at that profession in the way she would want to. Kate's husband, Karl Hoglander, is a computer programmer based in North Carolina. The first time he and Kate met, he saw her perform the role of Mercedes in *Carmen*. "He wasn't sure which character I was for most of the opera," Kate notes.

In her spare time, Kate likes to bake, crochet, play board games, hike, and run. She also has a rather unusual pastime: heavy fighting. This involves helmets, armor, and medieval-type weapons such as the broad sword, long sword, and halberd. She started with the Society for Creative Anachronism in North Carolina and would love to get back into it in Portland. "I feel it ties in with the opera world," Kate says. "I just ask people not to hit me in the throat."

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

Portland Opera volunteers who served during 2016 and 2017 were guests at a luncheon held at the Hampton Opera Center on October 28, with delicious food catered by Pastini Pastaria and a variety of wine and soft beverages. Two volunteers were honored as volunteer of the year: Laurie Followell for 2016 and Craig Allen for 2017.

Laurie has served for the past few seasons as the lead for the backstage beverage service volunteers. Two volunteers previously filled this position, and Laurie has been doing it solo (although she would appreciate someone stepping up to act as a backup).

Ask Laurie if you want to learn more about this opportunity.

Craig has performed almost every volunteer job at Portland Opera, often doing double shifts for the productions. Both are true gems and greatly appreciated by Portland Opera staff and volunteers. Laurie and Crag will each be featured in a future volunteer newsletter.

Of course, as with any Portland Opera event, there was singing at the luncheon! Mezzo-soprano Hannah Penn, baritone Ryan Thorn (both former resident artists) and pianist David Saffert performed opera arias and show tunes to complete the afternoon. We all left with appetites satisfied and musically enriched!



Sue Dixon Does It All

Sue Dixon's energy and enthusiasm for Portland Opera are apparent whenever she is in the room. Many volunteers have probably met her at various activities, where she is simultaneously taking care of business and warmly interacting with fellow opera lovers in her role as Director of External Affairs. This is a relatively new position for Sue; she was previously Development Director for four years. In her new capacity, she oversees all external affairs, including development (fund-raising and relations with foundations and donors), marketing, and sales.

"I love this job so much," Sue says. "I have a very strong team of people working with me who can juggle multiple jobs and are so good at what they do." She says that in hiring, she looks for "scrappy" people with a can-do attitude. Her motto is "Work hard and be nice to people," as evidenced by a poster displayed in her office. Sue also focuses on looking at the big picture of where Portland Opera needs to be in 5 or 10 years, with an emphasis on mentoring and fostering the next generation of both staff and opera goers.

Sue has a colorful background. As a child in Santa Monica, California, she was home schooled for the early part of her life and traveled extensively around the world with her family. Her first formal education began in high school. Sue attended school in Texas, majored in art history and studio painting, and upon

graduation backpacked throughout Europe with a childhood friend, supporting herself with odd jobs along the way.



Upon returning from Europe, Sue decided to move to New York City. “I envisioned it as a magical place,” she says, “and I was searching for who I was.” Her work comprised a variety of places and personalities;

the stock exchange, an ad firm, an entertainment public relations firm (including casting and scouting for locations), Doctors without Borders, the Humane Society, an interior design firm, and as a personal assistant to Martha Stewart, which was a very short-lived job! She also took grad classes at The New School in art, painting, and non-profit management.

From this experience, Sue realized that her strengths lie in being able to quickly assess different backgrounds, gather information, manage, and organize. She was easy with a variety of people and cultures. It was also important for her work to feed her soul. After volunteering with Harlem Cares, an inner-city organization for kids, she realized that her niche is to work with non-profits that have a purpose beyond making money. As a next step, she decided to work for herself and founded a small visual arts theatre called “Dancing Moon Playhouse,” a place for artists, musicians, and theatre people to gather. She did that for 15 years, calling it a wonderful experience, but a sometimes lonely one because she missed being part of a collaborative team process.

In the meantime, Sue had met her husband, Bob, and they had a daughter, Julia, now 18. Over time, the family started to feel the need to leave New York City. They decided to move to Portland (based on a *New Yorker* article that described the city), sold or donated everything they owned except what fit into their Subaru, and drove cross country. Along the way, Sue and Bob sent resumes and did Skype interviews with potential employers. By the time they arrived, Sue had a job as the annual fund/major gifts officer with the Portland Japanese Garden, where she was part of the initial two-person team laying the groundwork for their capital campaign. She then worked as development director at the Portland Children’s Museum for three years, where she led a capital campaign for their outdoor exhibit. She joined Portland Opera in May 2014. “I want this to be the job I have until I retire,” Sue says.

Sue and her family have no regrets about moving to Portland. They love the outdoors, the food, and the ambience. “I don’t feel we gave up much to come here,” Sue remarks. “We are able to have a culturally rich life here without the stress of New York City.”

Sue loves to tap dance. She sometimes joins other dancers at a drop-in dance center, and she also has a dedicated space in her house where she puts on old movies and tries to mimic the steps. Her favorite? Shirley Temple.

Portland Opera’s Mission

Portland Opera exists to inspire, challenge and uplift our audiences by creating productions of high artistic quality that celebrate the beauty and breadth of opera.

Join the Conversation!

You can find out more about the subjects in these articles, as well as much more, at:

- Portland Opera website: www.portlandopera.org
- Volunteer information: www.portlandopera.org/volunteer
- Marilyn Crilley (volunteer coordinator): mcrilley@portlandopera.org
- Brita Enflo (staff volunteer liaison): benflo@portlandopera.org

You can also share your thoughts with other opera lovers on our Facebook page:

[Facebook.com/PortlandOperaAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/PortlandOperaAssociation) and follow us on [Twitter@PortlandOpera](https://twitter.com/PortlandOpera). Join the conversation and share your own posts!
