



High Notes

A Periodic Newsletter for Portland Opera Volunteers April 2018

What's New for Volunteers!

Marilyn Crilley has stepped down as the volunteer Volunteer Coordinator for Portland Opera. She has filled this role for the past seven years to help staff bring new volunteers on-board, coordinate volunteer activities, and respond to volunteers' questions. Brita Enflo, Portland Opera Development Associate, will now handle these activities. Many of you may know Brita (see photo below, with Marilyn), who since April 2016 has been the volunteer staff liaison and the person Marilyn reported to. You may have noticed that the recent calls for volunteers have a new look, since they now come from Brita.

Marilyn thanks all of you volunteers for the great support and kindness you have shown her. "My volunteer coordinator role has been rewarding and enjoyable," she says, "particularly because I was



able to get to know the wonderful people who volunteer for Portland Opera!" Marilyn will continue to be a regular Portland Opera volunteer and looks forward to seeing you at future opera activities.

On another note, volunteer orientation sessions have been scheduled for Sunday, April 22, and Tuesday, April 24 (both at 10:00 am at the Hampton Opera Center, 211 SE Caruthers). All volunteers are asked to participate in order to review volunteer procedures and safety issues. Please respond to your email invitation to indicate which session you will attend.

Laurie Followell at Your Service

Laurie Followell was invited by a friend to help with the backstage beverage service at a Portland Opera performance in 2008. She has volunteered every season since and became the lead for backstage beverage volunteers in 2014. In recognition of her contributions, Laurie was honored as the Portland Opera volunteer of the year for 2016 (shown below with General Director Chris Mattaliano).

Laurie came to opera in an unusual way: She began to read librettos after one caught her eye in the music section of a public library. She likes the stories, especially those that are humorous. It was years before she actually attended an opera, but she now tries to see every Portland Opera



production. Besides the humor, she particularly enjoys the creativity of the sets and costumes. She loved the combination of all three of these elements in the 2016 production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*.

Originally from North Bend, Oregon, Laurie moved to Portland in 1980 to attend business and travel agent school. She worked as a travel agent for five years, but realized that she prefers to be in the service industry. She started working in care management at Good Samaritan Hospital 21 years ago and is now a resource specialist, helping to connect clinic patients and their families with advocacy, housing, and community and financial assistance.

In her spare time, Laurie likes to garden, cook, and travel. She participated in modern dance in high school, but now dances “only when no one is looking.” She has a grown son, Eric, who also lives in Portland.

“I really enjoy the people I work with doing backstage beverage service,” Laurie says. “I find them to be active and incredibly interesting.” Laurie’s hard work in coordinating and leading this team of volunteers is greatly appreciated by the staff, orchestra, and cast members who benefit from this invaluable service.

A Mezzo Recital

Kate Farrar, mezzo-soprano, is in her second year as a Portland Opera resident artist. She and Nicholas Fox, piano, entertained the audience with a recital of beautiful and emotional art song on March 13 at Portland Art Museum’s Whitsell Auditorium.

The recital showcased Kate’s rich voice, vocal range, and versatility. She sang works in French (Henri Duparc), Russian (Sergey Prokofiev), German (Robert Schumann), and English (Libby Larsen). As if that were not feat enough for one evening, she also provided the written translation of one of the Duparc songs, *Chanson Triste*.

Nick provided his always-enlightening look into the music and lives of the evening’s composers. In addition, he played two solo piano pieces from Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* op. 75. How special it was to hear and see his special gift on the piano!



Another unique aspect of this recital was the projection of a segment of Sergei Eisenstein’s 1938 silent film, *Alexander Nevsky*, which was scored by Prokofiev. As the film showed the aftermath of an historic 13th century battle, Kate and Nick performed *The Field of the*

Dead, a haunting song that accompanies the dramatic scene of citizens searching for survivors among the dead and dying.

Even after this full program, Kate came back for an encore of her favorite song, *Zueignung* (by Richard Strauss), which she dedicated to her husband, Karl, in the audience. What a delightful evening it was!

Shi Li: Going Deep

Portland Opera’s Resident Artist program has encompassed sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, tenors, and baritones over the years. This season, the program extends its range in welcoming Shi Li as the first bass participant.

Shi grew up in northeast China in the city of Harbin, which he understates as being “very cold.”

(Editor’s note:

Harbin is famed as the “Ice City,” with winter temperatures dropping as low as -36 F. It is home to

the spectacular Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival each year.)



Shi started singing in middle school and, on the advice of his music teacher, soon started private lessons. He has been studying ever since. At the Shanghai Conservatory, he earned an undergraduate degree in vocal performance and was then offered a place in the three-year master’s program (equivalent to a doctorate). After finishing all of those courses in just one year, he had only one recital and a thesis to complete, so decided to continue his education abroad. With an almost full scholarship, he earned his master’s degree at the Manhattan School of Music in 2015, followed by a post-master professional study degree in 2016. Returning to Shanghai in 2017, he finished that master’s degree in two weeks. (Editor’s note #2: Whew.)

In addition to his academic studies, Shi has gained performance experience by participating in summer programs in Germany (Schleswich-Holstein chorister program), Italy (Riva del Garda and Greve in Chianti), and Aspen. He also worked one season in the Metropolitan Opera’s extra chorus for large productions such as Wagner.

Shi met his wife, Yan Cai, at Shanghai University, where she majored in piano education. She also studied at the Manhattan School of Music. Their daughter, Jessica Cai Li, was born in New York in December 2016. Because Yan teaches and plays in recitals in New York, she and Jessica will remain there during Shi's time in Portland.

Shi has always felt that music is the only thing to do with his life. When asked what he would do if he were not an opera singer, his answer is "I never think about that."

For his voice type, Shi's dream roles are Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and (when he is older) the bass roles in Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. He loves Puccini (although there are not many bass roles), Verdi, and Wagner. This season with Portland Opera, he will sing the role of Count Ceprano and cover Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, sing the role of Wagner and cover Mephistopheles in *Faust*.

Shi's **Resident Artist recital on April 17** will include art songs and, as an extra treat, a group of Chinese songs (7:00 pm at Whitsell Auditorium in the Portland Art Museum).

Alexis Hamilton: So Much to Learn!

Want to learn more about opera? You would do well to talk with Alexis Hamilton, Portland Opera's Manager of Education and Outreach. Alexis is responsible for providing information and insight to people of all ages, from preschool children to seniors. She oversees Portland Opera to Go (POGO), gives talks and lectures, and provides written materials, including the excellent study guides she prepares for each production.

Alexis was born in Mississippi and has also lived in Indiana, England, Alabama, Washington, DC, and California. As a child, she played piano and flute, and she first stated singing in her high school choir. Initially, however, she was more interested in painting and drawing than music. She attended the California State Summer School for the Arts on the basis of her art portfolio, but found herself hanging out with the music and drama kids. Thinking "I can do that," she asked soprano/instructor Evelyn de La Rosa to hear her sing and was invited to join the

music classes. "That was a turning point," Alexis notes. "It inspired me to pursue singing and to consider music as an option."

At the University of Montana, Alexis planned to major in both music and art. Because "both pursuits want your soul, and I could only devote myself to one," she decided to focus on music. She studied in Vienna for four months and sang in European cities, including Florence and Budapest. "At first I was intimidated by the thought of European singers, but then realized that American singers are really well trained," she says. She then moved to Portland to study with Ruth Dobson, finishing her degree at PSU.

Alexis, a mezzo soprano, sang in the Portland Opera Chorus for four seasons, starting in 1993. She also sang in opera previews and outreach and was the alto section leader at Trinity Episcopal Church. She became Portland Opera's full-time education assistant and tour manager in 2000 and moved into her current position as manager in 2003.

Alexis lives with her film-maker husband, Greg, and 14-year-old son, Greer. She still likes to draw, and



she knits children's toys. She serves on the board of her church and teaches Sunday school. Alexis has also volunteered at Greer's school, including

designing sets for a musical, reviewing curriculum, and coordinating the art fair. Like Greer, she loves basketball and is a huge Portland Trail Blazers fan.

To sum Alexis up: Energy, talent, hard work, and fun!

Alexis has performed solo work, appeared in roles with Portland Opera, and had roles in Mocks Crest productions at the University of Portland. This spring, she will sing in the world premiere of John Virgin's song cycle for tenor and mezzo, Eleonora Andreevna, (May 20, 7 pm at Reed College).

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
- 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!

High Notes editors: Marilyn Crilley and Nancy Jerrick

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.

