
High Notes



A Periodic Newsletter for Portland Opera Volunteers August 2018

A Notable End to 2017/18 Season

Portland Opera wrapped up another season with two wonderful productions at the intimate Newmark Theatre, where audiences are able to see facial expressions without opera glasses. Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* delighted audiences. *La Cenerentola* had clever humor with a touching ending, and even though the Cinderella tale is not new, it seemed fresh. Gluck's version of the Orpheus myth ended happily, with the final show of the season being **SOLD OUT!**

In addition to doing formal greeting, light walking, backstage beverage service, and student dress rehearsal monitoring, this season's volunteers helped at the will-call window and assisted lobby patrons with questions and directions at the Newmark.

In response to patron comments, Portland Opera is bringing back a fall opera in November. This means a short break between seasons this year for opera staff and volunteers. We hope you're ready!

And Welcome to 2018/19!

Portland Opera has announced an exciting 2018/19 season, featuring new stories and voices as well as beloved classics. The settings range from the glittering ballroom of *La Traviata* to the prison of *In the Penal Colony*; the stories encompass heartbreak, comedy, mischief, justice, love, and hope. Mark your calendars and look out for requests for volunteers for the operas listed in the next column; for more information about this inspiring season, check out <http://www.portlandopera.org/1819-season/>.



LA TRAVIATA/Giuseppe Verdi

November 2, 4m, 8, 10, 2018
Keller Auditorium



AS ONE/Laura Kaminsky

March 22, 24m, 26, 28, 30, 2019
Newmark Theatre



BIG NIGHT CONCERT

May 11, 2019
Keller Auditorium



IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA/ Gioachino Rossini

June 7, 9m, 13, 15, 2019
Keller Auditorium



LA FINTA GIARDINIERA/ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

July 12, 14m, 18, 20, 24, 27, 2019
Newmark Theatre



IN THE PENAL COLONY/ Philip Glass

July 26, 28m, 30, Aug 1, 3, 6, 8, 10
Hampton Opera Center

Volunteer Orientation

Portland Opera held two orientation sessions in April to give all volunteers, new and experienced, up-to-date information about volunteering. Sue Dixon, Director of External Affairs, greeted volunteers and introduced Brita Enflo, the staff member on Sue's team who has taken over all volunteer coordination. Sue thanked Marilyn Crilley for having served as the "volunteer volunteer coordinator" for the past seven years.

Volunteers received an updated volunteer handbook that outlines policies and procedures, and took part in a discussion about appropriate behavior and how to report problems when necessary. Everyone was asked to sign a form acknowledging receipt of the handbook, as well as a form affirming acceptance of the volunteer code of conduct. If you have not received the handbook and/or have not signed the forms, please contact Brita (benflo@portlandopera.org) so she can provide everything necessary to enable you to volunteer for the upcoming season.



Portland Opera is looking for new volunteers, especially during the summer months, so please encourage your friends to apply! A new procedure is that Brita will interview every new potential

volunteer to ensure there is a good fit, so make sure your friends fill out an application with enough time for an interview before signing on for any shifts. Remember: All production volunteers get a ticket to either the student dress rehearsal or the Thursday performance – another great benefit that Sue implemented this past season.

James Bartlett: White Glove Service

Portland Opera's box office has had a makeover! Last year, a separate box office was formed for the Broadway series, and the new position of Patron Services Manager was created to oversee and

enhance services specifically for opera patrons. In November 2017, James Bartlett joined Portland Opera to fill this new role.



The purpose of patron services is to provide a high, white-glove level of service by helping opera-goers with ticketing, seating, and other arrangements. James and his staff members each have a portfolio of season subscribers, allowing

them to build relationships, communicate easily, and provide personalized assistance. James can also be found at the ticket office or marketing table before and during each show to ensure that any needed assistance is close at hand. The aim is to treat subscribers and single-ticket holders alike as VIPs so they have the best possible experience while preparing for and attending the opera.

Interested in the arts since childhood, James first wanted to be a playwright and director, but then discovered music in his teens. He plays guitar, bass, and some keys, and after high school toured the country in rock bands for many years. Born and raised in San Jose, he started his career there as box office account manager for the American Musical Theatre of San Jose. After moving to Portland in 2009, he worked for Oregon Ballet Theatre for six years, first in the box office and then as audience services manager. He then served as patron services manager for Cappella Romana before joining Portland Opera. James brings a combination of organizational and people skills to his position. "When it comes to the arts, dealing with people who are interested and involved is very satisfying to me," he says.

James and his partner, Katie Clope, both work at the Hampton Center, where she is a supervisor at the Broadway box office. Their seven-year-old son, Luca, already attends and enjoys the opera. "He is very vocal," James notes, "and possibly could be a singer someday." James also loves cats and once had

a cat-centric Instagram account with a few thousand followers. He currently has a tuxedo cat named Joe, and the family is considering adopting two orange kittens.

Between work and family, spare time is limited, but James does still play classical guitar and reads a lot, especially science fiction. He also collects rocks and was pleased to receive a rock tumbler for Father's Day. Another fun fact is that he is a self-proclaimed purveyor of terrible Dad jokes. "I embrace it," he says. "I think I am a natural. Most of the time after I tell Luca a joke, though, he just kind of looks at me blankly."

Another valuable resource for patrons is Portland Opera's concierge and main receptionist, Samuel Murry-Hawkins. Samuel is the go-to person for dining options, directions, opera history, parking, or information about specialty opera-inspired cocktails in the neighborhood. A former tour guide for Portland Spirit river cruises, Samuel knows his way around town and can help answer questions from "attire" to "Zeffirelli." You can talk with him in person at the Hampton Center front desk or by calling 503-241-1407.

Thomas Cilluffo Is High on Opera

We are happy to report that Thomas Cilluffo, one of Portland Opera's resident artists, will be returning for the 2018/19 season. Tom describes himself as "a lyric tenor with leggiero tendencies." (*Leggiero*, or *tenore di grazia*, can be defined as a light, graceful, agile, and exciting voice, somewhat comparable to a male version of a *coloratura soprano*.) He has a vocal range that extends to a high F sharp. Some of these exhilarating vocal characteristics were on display during Tom's recent recital on August 1 (see article on next page.) He also performed a wonderful comic turn as Matteo Borsa in Portland Opera's 2017 *Rigoletto*.

Tom comes from a musical family and began acting and singing at an early age in his hometown of Traverse City, Michigan. On a dare, he auditioned for, and was accepted by, the local Old Town Playhouse in the fourth grade, going on to perform numerous roles in productions such as *Carousel* and *Rent* for the next eight years. He was also a member of his high school chorus and participated in their

musicals and vocal competitions. When Tom entered the University of Michigan, he was mainly interested in musicals and film. In a serendipitous twist of fate, however, his application for the musical theatre program was lost, and he ended up in voice performance. By his sophomore year, he realized that opera was a good fit for him, and he went on to earn a master of music in vocal performance in 2017. That summer, he performed with the Pittsburgh Festival Opera before coming to Portland in September to sing the role of Tamino in the Portland Opera to Go (POGO) production of *The Magic Flute*, after which he joined the resident artist program.



Tom is a versatile fellow with many pastimes. He plays the bagpipes. He learned blacksmithing as a boy scout and still has a forge, which he has used to make knives, daggers, swords, and all sorts of metal work. "As an opera singer, I need to be careful of the forge because of the coal smoke," he notes. He also loves wood carving and learned to use a lathe to make and sell Harry Potter wands as a young boy. Using those skills, he has gone on to fashion beautiful conducting batons. "They are essentially a grown-up version of a Harry Potter wand," he says. "You wave one around, say magic words, and things happen." Among the lucky recipients is Wynton Marsalis, for whom Tom made a gift baton.

Starting this fall, Tom will again perform with POGO, singing the role of Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*. He will also appear as Belfiore in the mainstage production of Mozart's *La Finta Giardinier* next summer. We will keep you posted on other opportunities to hear this talented tenor!

If he weren't an opera singer, Tom says he would probably be a biological/mechanical engineer, working on robots or remotely operated vehicles for use under water or in space.

Bass, Soprano, Tenor, and Pianist!

Who could ask for anything more? The Portland Opera resident artist recitals are a highlight of the opera season, and the three latest programs continue to showcase the remarkable talents that we are so fortunate to have perform for us. (Mezzo-soprano Kate Farrar's recital was described in our May newsletter.).

The Bass – Shi Li

Chinese-born bass Shi Li's April 17th recital could be dubbed "Around the World in 80 minutes." He presented songs from the 17th to late 20th centuries in six languages: Italian, French, Russian, Chinese, German, and English. Shi's rich, resonant bass moved easily from one genre and language to another. His selections were new to most of the audience and included several Chinese art songs. Shi sang these beautiful and unusual melodies with great passion and obvious love for his native country's music.

The Soprano – Helen Zhibing Huang

Soprano Helen Zhibing Huang was born in China, but has lived in the United States for half of her life. Her June 5th recital included art songs by composers Richard Strauss, Thomas Ades, Gustav Mahler, and Lili Boulanger, as well as Chinese composers Zi Huang, Qing Yin, and Tingjiang Hu. Helen's program was challenging and wonderful, with a large part of her singing at the high end of the vocal range. She handled the very high range and fast pace of *Cape Ann* by Thomas Ades with ease, and infused the fourth movement of Mahler's Symphony no. 4 with great joy. Helen packs a lot of punch in a small package!

The Tenor – Thomas Cilluffo

Tenor Thomas Cilluffo's August 1st recital was the final recital of the 2018 season. His program featured song cycles by Ludwig von Beethoven, Gerald Finzi, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, plus selected songs by Francesco Paolo Tosti. Song cycles tend to have heavy themes, and Tom presented these with appropriate solemnity, singing mostly in his lower range. The Tosti selections were of a lighter nature and exercised the high tenor range, which Tom excels at. It was very special to go out literally and figuratively on a high note!

The Pianist – Nicholas Fox

Nicholas Fox, Portland Opera's chorus master and assistant conductor, is the pianist at all resident artist recitals. Nick often plays a solo piano selection during a recital and always gives insight about a composer or the music being presented. The knowledge he imparts is a gift to the audience.

We encourage our volunteers to attend these evenings of beautiful art songs. 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 there is a suggested donation of \$20 to help support the Portland Opera Resident Artist program. Dates for the 2019 recitals will be posted on the Portland Opera website.



Helen Huang and Nick Fox

Remembering Craig Allen

We are sorry to report that Portland Opera volunteer Craig Allen died on July 31 of this year. Craig was named volunteer of the year in 2017, in recognition of his three-year immersion in virtually every volunteer opportunity available, including light walking, greeting, beverage service, mailings, ushering, and cleaning up after board meetings. Marilyn Crilley (former “volunteer volunteer coordinator”) notes that “There was nothing Craig wouldn’t do. Every time we called him, he said yes.”



Craig’s interest in classical music and opera went a long way back. He studied music at Portland State University and worked as a stage hand there starting in 1967. He intended to be a theatre arts major, but, as he put it, life intervened and he left college to work at various jobs. He eventually settled in at

Rodgers Organ Company as what he called a “musically related electronics engineer,” a good fit because he both played the organ and knew electronics. In that capacity, he constructed, delivered, and installed organs in churches and venues across the country. He toured with the noted organist Virgil Fox and was responsible for setting up Fox’s touring organ at each concert. Craig liked to say that he had even played at Carnegie Hall, since at one point he voiced an organ at that location.

Craig was also a writer, having published five books in his series of Devon McHenry adventure mystery/thrillers. He was working on a sixth, as well as a new historical fiction series set in Berlin. While conducting research for the Berlin series, Craig spent several summers in that city and was invited to teach opera classes as an adjunct professor at the University of Berlin. A composer as well, Craig was working on a five-part requiem mass that had been a labor of love over many years.

Craig came to Portland Opera via All Classical Portland, where he was a long-time volunteer. Since the two groups share the Hampton Center building, Craig said he “just kind of started hanging out and thought he’d give the opera a try.” He was proud that his is the only name on both organizations’ plaques that identify their volunteers of the year. “It was an opportunity to give back to the community,” he said. “It has been a bunch of fun.”

We appreciate all Craig did for Portland Opera, and we will miss him.

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!

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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.

