



High Notes

A Periodic Newsletter for Portland Opera Volunteers September 2019

Looking to the Future

This July, Portland Opera announced an executive leadership transition, with General Director Christopher Mattaliano stepping down after 16 years of leadership. Chris will serve as Artistic Consultant beginning with the 2019/20 season. Sue Dixon will serve as Interim General Director. Sue joined the company in May 2014 as Director of Development and became Director of External of Affairs in 2017.

“The Board of Directors is exceedingly grateful to Christopher Mattaliano for his 16 years of leadership and vision at Portland Opera,” says President of the Board of Directors, Curtis T. Thompson, MD.

“Chris has led our company through a period of artistic excellence during his tenure, and created wonderful community programs and unforgettable productions. We are looking forward to building upon his work with this next chapter for Portland Opera, and with Sue Dixon’s leadership, vision, and commitment to community.”

Portland Opera has also developed a five-year Strategic Plan (2020-2024) to guide the company’s next chapter. The planning process included input and feedback from artists, musicians, donors, patrons, subscribers, members, peers, fans, and other cultural leaders. The plan is a roadmap, not a finished product. While some of the work has already begun, the next phases will continue to involve the community to figure out exactly how to achieve the identified goals and strategies.

One clear message heard during creation of the plan was the preference for an autumn-to-spring schedule. As a result, starting in 2020/21, Portland Opera’s season will run from September to May. The productions will continue to include both the classic opera repertory and contemporary work and to be performed in a variety of venues. While some things change, Portland Opera’s commitment to, and love for, the art of opera remains constant, and the future looks promising!

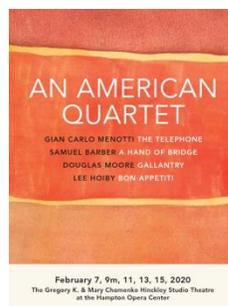
[Learn more about the strategic plan.](#)

Four Centuries in One Season

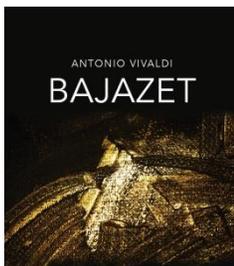
Portland Opera’s 2019/20 season is about to begin! Its eclectic productions allow us to witness the art of opera from four different centuries, ranging from Vivaldi’s *Bajazet*, composed in 1735, to Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*, which premiered in 2008. Mark your calendars and look out for requests for volunteers for these productions. For more information about this inspiring season, check out <https://portlandopera.org/production/2019-20-season/>



MADAMA BUTTERFLY/Giacomo Puccini
October 25, 27m, 31, November 2, 2019
Keller Auditorium
One of the most powerful operas of all time.



AN AMERICAN QUARTET
Gian Carlo Menotti, Samuel Barber, Douglas Moore, Lee Hoiby
February 7, 9m, 11, 13, 15, 2020
The Hampton Opera Center
Four American one-act operas—and cake!



BAJAZET/Antonio Vivaldi
 March 20, 22m, 24, 26, 28, 2020
 Newmark Theatre
A collaboration with Portland Baroque Orchestra.

March 20, 22m, 24, 26, 28, 2020
 Newmark Theatre



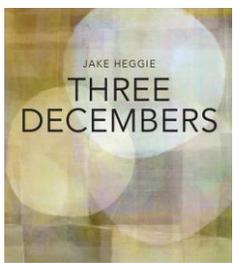
BIG NIGHT CONCERT
 May 9, 2020
 Keller Auditorium
Celebrate opera's masterpieces.

May 9, 2020
 Keller Auditorium



PAGLIACCI/Ruggero Leoncavallo
 June 5, 7m, 11, 13, 2020
 Keller Auditorium
The enduring classic drama.

June 5, 7m, 11, 13, 2020
 Keller Auditorium



THREE DECEMBERS/Jake Heggie
 July 17, 19m, 22, 23, 25, 2020 |
 Newmark Theatre
The Portland Opera premiere of composer Jake Heggie.

July 17, 19m, 22, 23, 25, 2020
 Newmark Theatre

Ann Pedersen: Serving Us Well

Ann Pedersen has a long and varied history with Portland Opera. In 2018, she marked **40 years** of participation, both as an employee and a volunteer. In recognition of her volunteer contributions, Portland Opera recognized Ann as the Volunteer of the Year for 2018.

It all started in the 1978-79 opera season, when Ann answered a newspaper ad for opera makeup training. It seemed like a good fit: She has been an opera fan from childhood (influenced by her mother, who loved hearing opera music in old movies), had worked in public relations for the Seattle Opera in the 1970s, and has an artistic bent. “I had so much fun learning to do it,” she remembers. After she completed the course, she worked as a makeup artist for Portland Opera productions until the early 1990s. She mostly worked on chorus members, where the challenge was moving through a lot of people fast. She also did makeup for summer opera productions in Washington Park and was a kids’ face painter at the opera’s annual summer fund raiser held at a contributor’s horse farm. “I was the only one who could paint a decent horse’s head,” Ann notes.



Ann started volunteering for the backstage beverage service several years ago and works multiple shifts for each show. “It’s a good way to remain active with the opera, and it’s interesting to talk with the singers and orchestra members. It’s not glamorous, but it is rewarding; people really appreciate it. And the most that can go wrong is that you spill water on yourself or get dishpan hands.”

Ann is retired now, following a diverse working life. After earning degrees in English and communications from the University of Washington, she worked for a radio station and a small public relations agency before taking her job with the Seattle Opera (where she was also a supernumerary for one year). She headed north for a public relations job in Anchorage for a year, then travelled around the U.S. At a workshop in New York City that focused on working for symphony orchestras, she met someone from the Oregon Symphony and moved to Portland for a job in ticketing. This was followed by a position with a private company in Portland and, finally, employment at Rejuvenation Hardware for about eight years.

In addition to her volunteer work at the opera, Ann helps serve meals once a week at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, where she also attends services. She continues to cultivate her artistic side by taking art classes, focusing on water colors and card making. She has also helped out with a fund-raising run conducted by a foundation for cancer research.

Portland Opera is fortunate indeed to have benefitted from Ann's remarkable energy and dedication throughout her long tenure.

Music has been a part of Ann's life since childhood. She grew up in the small town of Raymond, Washington. Although her school was small, it had the advantage of an excellent music teacher. The school had a 150-student enrollment and a 70-piece marching band. (Ann played the flute.) Who played football? Anyone who couldn't get into the band.

A Female Perspective

On July 29, Portland Opera resident artist Camille Sherman (mezzo-soprano) and pianist Nicholas Fox presented an evening of song inspired by women. This recital had to be rescheduled from its original June date, but it was certainly worth the wait!

Ms. Sherman started with an aria from the opera *Bajazet* by Antonio Vivaldi. The aria, *Sposa son disprezzata* (*I am a Scorned Wife*), was emotional, moving and powerful – truly exquisite.

Portland Opera will be presenting this little-known opera this coming season; judging from the aria, *Bajazet* is definitely a production to look forward to seeing.

Three songs composed by Claude Debussy, *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*, were next. These songs were adapted from the ancient Greek by poet Pierre Louys. They showcased Ms. Sherman's versatility, with her rendition easily flowing from delicate to forceful and thoughtful.



The final set was the song cycle *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, written by composer Jake Heggie to texts of Gene Scheer. Camille Claudel, a sculptor, was Auguste Rodin's student and lover. This moving song cycle allowed us to hear the nimble piano playing of Nick Fox and the fluid range of Ms.

Sherman's singing, which was subtly nuanced and emotional. She moved from hopeful, thoughtful, and vulnerable to dramatic and strong. This was truly a tour de force and left the audience both satisfied and emotionally exhausted.

Ms. Sherman is returning for her second year as a resident artist this season, and we are already anticipating her next recital!

Geoffrey Schellenberg Will Return!

Geoffrey Schellenberg has always loved music, but did not consider it as a career option until he was already enrolled at the University of British Columbia as a science student. Fortunately, he realized that science was not for him, and that opera is. He is now well on his way in his opera career, and Portland Opera will welcome him back as a second-year Resident Artist in the 2019/20 season.



Originally from St. Paul, Minnesota, Geoffrey has lived in Vancouver, B.C. for the last decade and holds dual U.S./Canadian citizenship. (His father is Canadian.) He was exposed to classical music from an early age; his father holds a PhD in music education, and the family frequently attended symphony

performances. In high school, Geoffrey sang in the choir and played the cello. “My first love in music was chamber music,” he says. “I attended a chamber music camp for four years during high school.”

During his first year at university, Geoffrey was on track for a major in chemistry, but was also immersed in extracurricular music as a choir and orchestra member. “I found myself spending up to six hours a day in the music building,” he remembers. He auditioned for the top choir and started voice lessons. After a year, and with the encouragement of faculty members, he realized he could pursue this as a career choice. He was accepted into the faculty of music and started over again. “I was lucky that I happened to have chosen a school with a fantastic opera program,” he notes.

*The first opera Geoffrey ever saw was the premiere of *The Grapes of Wrath* at Minnesota Opera when he was 16. “I didn’t have the ear for it at the time,” he says, “and it didn’t awaken the opera in me. That didn’t happen until I started singing it and realized how glorious it is.”*

After completing his undergraduate degree in opera performance, Geoffrey went on to complete a master’s degree in opera performance in 2017. He then participated in the Calgary Opera’s Emerging Artist Development Program in 2017/18 before coming to Portland as a Resident Artist in 2018/19. During that season, he sang the roles of the Marquis in Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville*, Nardo in *La Finta Giardiniera*; was a soloist in the Big Night concert; and gave a recital. In addition, he sang the role of Schaunard in *La Boheme* for Vancouver Opera in February 2019.

Geoffrey is a high baritone and says that bel canto roles suit his voice. He loves to sing “bubbly Italian operas,” and some of his dream roles include Figaro in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, Malatesta in Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*, and Belcore in Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love*. But he also excels in a range of other styles and periods, and we will have the chance to hear him in more contemporary roles in *An American Quartet* and *Three Decembers* in 2020. We also look forward to another recital, which will be announced later in the season.

Fun Facts about Geoffrey:

- He has an identical twin brother, Jon, who recently graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a PhD in economics. Geoffrey is the older of the two, by one minute.
- In his spare time, he enjoys board games, some video games, hiking, and cooking.
- “The only thing I won’t eat on this green earth is pickles.”

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.

