

Bel Canto

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

January 2026

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>



Membership Meeting

January 21, 2026

Coffee and Conversation at 10

Business Meeting at 10:30

Singer(s) at 11:00

Optional Lunch at 11:45

Menu:

Chicken milanese --parmesan encrusted chicken breast, olive oil & balsamic drizzle, baby arugula, tomato, served with potatoes au gratin and broccoli florets

Or

Caribbean salad --marinated jerk mahi mahi, mixed greens, mango, mandarin oranges, strawberries, sweet red bell peppers, toasted almonds, & mango vanilla vinaigrette

Dessert: Creme Brule -- gluten free

Reservations: Cathy Knobel, 787 Benjamin Franklin Drive #8, Sarasota, FL 34236, telephone: 941-706-2490 land 941-666-3253 cell Email: knobelwd@aol.com

Luncheon is \$35.00

Checks made out to MOG

**Reservations due by January 17, please.
Indicate your menu preference when reserving.**

Greetings and Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2026! I look forward to an interesting, fun, and fulfilling year for our Manatee Opera Guild and a healthy, happy, and hopeful year for all our members and friends.

Do you reassess things each new year? Do you make resolutions or catalog your hopes and wishes for the coming year? I do both, and often classify them as well – personal resolutions include items like “I will work out more often” while family related ones include things like “I won’t begrudge Rocco his afternoon nap even if I’d prefer to go biking...” The same is true for wishes. My global wishes include “world peace and an end to food insecurity for everyone,” and personal hopes are like “my grandson will be admitted to the college of his choice.” Along with these, I have a few wishes and resolutions for our opera guild.

Among my hopes for our Guild are two aspirations we can work together toward realizing:

- ❖ Record attendance at special events, beginning with *Stars of Tomorrow*.

The November on-stage Parisian evening was a huge success in that we couldn’t have accommodated another soul. Now let’s hustle to fill the seats of the Neel Performing Arts Center for the 2026 Stars of Tomorrow Concert. Click on this link and then select BUY TICKETS.

<https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/neel-performing-arts-center/68cc44f267fa020ffb745168/tickets#/productions-view>

Bring your neighbors and friends, encourage young acquaintances and family to attend (free with student ID), and tell everyone you see about this amazing, (continued on last page)



Susanna Prelude

a multi-media talk on *Susanna*, an opera by American composer Carlyle Floyd.d

Friday, January 23 at 10 AM in the Manor Auditorium. Continental breakfast at 9:30.

The talk is by dynamic stage director of the opera at Sarasota Opera, Martha Collins.

This opera is based on the 14th chapter of the Book of Daniel (Apocrypha). Susanna, a devout and faithful wife's life is put in danger when she won't succumb to the advances of two evil and lustful elders. A Bible story told in song and set in Tennessee...

\$5 at the door, no reservations needed

Sarasota Opera Studio Artists will appear in concert on January 25 at 4 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Bradenton, 603 11th Street West, Bradenton, 34205.

\$15 at the door No tickets or reservations.

Film on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 1:30 in the Manor Auditorium

The Manatee Opera Guild will show the Oscar winning movie, *Moonstruck*, starring Cher and Nicolas Cage. This movie is charming, very funny, and set to the music of Puccini's *La Bohème*. It also features a cameo performance by Martha Collins as Mimi. Martha Collins is the speaker at our talk on January 23.

Hear Martha at her appearance at the Cardiff Singer of the World Opera Competition in 1985 here:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/l0xajnYUFY4>

Another fun fact about this film is that Sarasota resident and world-famous jazz artist Dick Hyman provided the music for this film.

\$10 includes popcorn and treats



Please welcome new members:

Don Miller
908 Shaggy Dr
Apollo Beach, FL 33572
Cell: 404-219-0492
donaldmiller7a@gmail.com

Liz and Fred Smith
671 Argus Rd
Venice, FL 34293
813-777-6211 (cell)
lizsmith1123@yahoo.com

Nini and Jack Gobetti
5630 Aaron Court
Sarasota, FL 34232
734-730-1139 (cell)
nini2go@comcast.net

Valerie Shah
1533 4th Ave W #315
Bradenton, FL 34205
941-448-3663 (cell)
steamedpudding.shah@gmail.com

Thank you for joining our Guild, and thank you to the members who encouraged them to join.

HOW I CAME TO LOVE OPERA

(First in a series by Guild Members)

By Jeanne Yeagle

Neither I nor any of my four siblings, mother or father could carry a tune, or play an instrument. We were decidedly non-musical. Our music time was Saturday evening when my parents tuned into Lawrence Welk (when I conveniently found it necessary to complete homework in my room), hymns on Sunday morning, and Ed Sullivan on Sunday night. I have to admit that at the time, I was much more interested in Elvis Presley than in Franco Corelli, but looking back, I suppose that I was introduced to opera by Mr. Sullivan.

My first concert experience came when I was in college when the Pittsburgh Symphony performed Beethoven's 7th, and all of a sudden, I was in love with classical music, especially Beethoven, then Mozart, followed by so many others.

I saw my first opera on my return from my Peace Corps stint in Africa when I was invited to see *Aida* in Rome's Baths of Caracalla, but am ashamed to say that all I can remember of the experience are the camels and elephant on the stage. I saw *Benvenuto Cellini*, on July 14, 1972 at the Paris Opera Garnier (free admission!) and was astounded at the theatrics of the production, but of the singing, I remember little. My third, and Dave's first experience came when someone gave Dave and me tickets to a concert performance of *Orpheus and Euridice* in Philadelphia. I can remember trying to follow along with the libretto on my lap. Not easy. Thank heavens for supertitles!

Dave and I would not have become opera fans if he hadn't tuned in one night to a documentary in which Leonard Bernstein was shown directing Kiri Te Kanawa and Jose Carreras in a recording of *West Side Story*. Not only was the documentary mesmerizing, Dave fell in love with Kiri Te Kanawa! He decided then and there that we were going to become season ticket holders at the Opera Company of Philadelphia.



Our first opera at the Academy of Music was Handel's *Ariodante*, at four hours long, hardly the opera for novices who were in the audience on a Friday evening after a full week's work. But then we hit gold with the next production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and then so many other beautiful works. Persistence had paid off. We had some really thrilling moments there --- meeting Richard Troxell, Denyce Graves as Carmen, and the Pavarotti competition, to mention just a few.

We chose to move to this area because of the beach, the weather, theaters and especially Sarasota Opera. I have not been disappointed in any of our choices, and love Sarasota Opera and my opera family!

The Stars of Tomorrow Concert is a dazzling musical offering of 24 singers with enchanting voices. They are the upcoming generation of the finest opera stars. They sparkle from across the globe. As the singers begin their professional operatic careers, they have been carefully chosen from hundreds of candidates to be Apprentice Artists with the world-renowned Sarasota Opera. The brilliant musical experience they will gain from singing at Sarasota Opera will most likely be a launching pad for them for additional national and international opera companies. Even more special is that this is a glowing year for Sarasota Opera. It celebrates 100 years of presenting fine opera to Sarasota and to surrounding communities. The Apprentice Artists appear in the 2025-2026 Sarasota Opera performances.

The Manatee Opera Guild sponsors this event to bring opera to Manatee County in a concert style instead of a fully staged opera. You will be captivated by their voices as they sing solo arias and various ensembles from the operatic repertoire, and the singers will be accompanied by stellar pianists. The concert duration is roughly 60-90 minutes.

We look forward to seeing you at this showcase of award-winning voices. The singers will be available to meet and greet the audience members after the concert in the lobby.

Please, come, wish upon a star, and purchase your tickets now to reserve your spot. You may even consider giving tickets as holiday gifts. We hope to see you there!

General Admission Tickets: \$30 / Student General Admission: Complimentary @ Box Office with student id.

The Stars of Tomorrow concert has been generously underwritten by: The ELZER ADVISORY GROUP Merrill Lynch

Tickets:<https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/neel-performing-arts-center/68cc44f267fa020ffb745168/tickets#/select-tickets>



(President's message continued)

affordable, and worthy event. Need details? Contact Valerie at divavg@comcast.net

❖ Twenty-six for 2026.

Our membership roll now lists just over 80 members. **Let's enroll 26 new members in 2026, so that our members will number over 100.** A membership form is available on the MOG website at <https://manateeoperaguild.org/> We have fun, we enjoy great music, we have lively events, and we work for a great cause. Who wouldn't want to join? For more information, contact Jeanne at jeannescacchetti@gmail.com

I have a few resolutions related to MOG, but they are really "in the weeds," like "I will submit my material for *Bel Canto* on time." I won't bore you with those since I have been accused of "overthinking." As a professor for 30+ years I was paid to do just that and old habits die slowly!

Meanwhile, happy 2026 to everyone. Resolve to attend all the upcoming meetings so we'll see you at Palm Aire on January 21!

Elizabeth Aversa



MOG Fashion Show and Luncheon

Get your pearls ready for our annual fashion show.

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 11 AM

**Lakewood Ranch Country Club
7650 Legacy Boulevard
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202s**

Featuring fashions from Evelyn and Arthur

Look for your invitations in the mail.