

Bel Canto

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

March 2026

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

MEMBERSHIP MEETING, MARCH 18 SPRING FLING AND AWARDS LUNCHEON

Menu:

Salmon Nicoise: Grilled salmon over baby greens, boiled egg, French green beans, Kalamata olives, new potatoes, dijon vinaigrette

Or

Vegetarian Napoleon: Layered Vegetables

Dessert: Berry Panna Cotta (Gluten Free)

To make reservations for lunch, please call, write or email Cathy Knobel at:

787 Ben Franklin Drive #8

Sarasota, FL 34236

knobelwd@aol.com

941-706-2490 or 941-666-3253 (cell)

Luncheon is \$35 per person. Please indicate your choice of entrée when making your reservation.

Reservations must be received by March 13!



Helen Jepson Deller, MOG founder and soprano with Metropolitan Opera, NY



Deane Allyn, former Executive Director, Sarasota Opera

FROM PRESIDENT ELIZABETH AVERSA

Greetings MOG members & friends,

WOW! The past month as flown by with so many opera activities. Two special Guild events in one month, along with our annual Sweetheart Luncheon – just WOW. I'm taking this opportunity to thank the members of our group who worked so diligently to make these events so successful.

The Stars of Tomorrow (SOT) Concert was a beautiful occasion orchestrated by **Valerie Giuliani** who arranged for the venue, served as liaison with the managers at the Neel Performing Arts Center at State College of Florida, developed publicity materials for marketing the event, arranged for debutants and escorts to serve as greeters, and planned and organized a team of shoppers, cooks, and servers, to provide lunch to the singers and staff. Among the SOT team members were **Angela Korsmo, Jeannie Scacchetti, Marilyn Carmino, Brenda Ianaro, Linda Buchhart, Bev McRae, Gretchen Littlefield, Sandy Rath, Rich DeGennaro, Cathy Knobel, Kristine Ryan, Syble DiGirolamo, Sandy Romley, Maryanne Hazen, and Terry Davis.** **Rich DeGennaro**, who organized and managed the concert for many years past, provided historical perspectives and helpful advice. Valerie also thanks MOG Board members **Meg Weinberg**, who paid the bills and managed the finances, and **Jeanne Yeagle**, who added publicity to the monthly *Bel Canto*. Of course, we all are grateful to our sponsors, including long-time underwriter **The Elzer Advisory Group**, Merrill Lynch, and Guild member platinum sponsors. The apprentice artists gave an enjoyable program with leadership and direction from staff members Martha Collins and Arthur Bosarge. After several

years of declining audience numbers, once again ticket sale totals were substantially fewer than we had hoped, with only 24 MOG members purchasing tickets for the concert. Approximately 140 people attended the concert and many enjoyed meeting the singers and the debutants and escorts afterwards. Despite the limited attendance and the Super Bowl conflict, it was another MOG special event to remember.

The annual MOG Fashion Show, as always, was a hit with 200 seats filled! Organizer and special events V.P. **Syble DiGirolamo** put the whole thing together with her usual efficiency, class, and infectious enthusiasm. Syble notes that it does take a Guild to hold such an event, and many participated. Thanks go to Sarasota Opera Studio Artists Alex Wiebe, Riley Findley, Evan K. Brown and Brian McCann for the music; **June Seaton** for 20s themed centerpieces and table decorations; **Maria Smith** for handling reservations; **Sandy Rath and Elizabeth Aversa** for arranging and scheduling models; **Marlene Kitchell** and **Marilyn Carminio** for greeting and **Carolyn Doyle, Kathy Ulman, Bev McRae, Eileen Buzzard, Valerie Guiliani** for hospitality. **Linda Buchhart, Angela Korsmo, and Maryanne Hazen** are to be thanked for their work on the baskets and drawings; and for check-in thanks to **Maryanne Hazen, Maria Hazen, and Carolyn Keegan**. Too many members to mention contributed to the record number of baskets, and their generosity is appreciated. In no small feat, MOG Treasurer **Meg Weinberg** managed incoming checks and balanced the books on the event.

Models who took the time to select outfits, to be fitted, and to “work the event “were **Terry Brennan Davis, Ann Ferraro, Cathy Knobel, Kristine Ryan, Janice Sladzinski, Clara Steffan, Meg Weinberg,** and **Kathryn De Young**. Serving as escorts were **Rocco Aversa, Richard DeGennaro, and Gary Weinberg**.

We gratefully acknowledge Producing Sponsor **Peter Ferentinos**.

Pianist for the Luncheon and Fashion Show was Eddie Tobin. Fashions were provided by Evelyn & Arthur, 1480 Main Street, Sarasota. Store Manager Jenna Hanselman moved the show along with

excellent commentary as the models strutted around the room.

It took the Guild to put it together, and Syble, on behalf of the Guild, thanks everyone who helped make this event a success!

Our third special event in February was the annual Sweetheart Luncheon which honored **Linda Buchhart**. Linda received a basket of Valentine’s cards from Guild members and guests. With a table full of friends, Linda enjoyed the luncheon and music chosen for the occasion. Our appreciation goes to **Jeanne Yeagle** for the beautiful programs, **Brenda Ianaro** for the interview with our sweetheart, apprentice artists and Arthur Bosarge for the music, and **Maryanne Hazen** for the informative and entertaining video. As always, **Cathy Knobel** seamlessly arranged the event, saw to it that everyone had their chosen menu, and, with **Jeannie Scacchetti**, provided hospitality at the check-in desk. Another Sweetheart Luncheon, enjoyed by all, is in the books!

With February behind us, we can now look forward to a month of operas – enjoy *La Boheme*, *The Merry Widow*, *Il Trovatore*, and *Susannah*. We’ll discuss our opinions of the performances when we meet again at the membership luncheon on March 18! See you then!

HOW I CAME TO LOVE OPERA by Rich DeGennaro

How I Came to Love Opera

I grew up in an Italian household that loved to listen to music. We had a wind-up Victrola and a collection of 78 RPM records with selections from operas and sung, as I recall, mostly by Caruso. We did not attend operas, and I don’t recall there being much of it in New Haven, Conn.

What we did have was a lot of Neapolitan music. New Haven had a very large Italian population and most of it was from Campania, the region that includes Napoli (Naples). At our holiday celebrations, the family would gather around the piano, usually played by my older cousin Ralph, and

sing Neapolitan songs. Hew Haven had many festivals, often sponsored by churches, where there were performances of popular opera selections, and of course Neapolitan songs.

Fast forward several years. I moved to Philadelphia and started to take Italian lessons at the America Italy Society. My first teacher was a language coach at the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA), a world famous Opera school in Philly, and I started to attend their performances. I wanted more, so I subscribed to Opera Philadelphia, but I found that I actually preferred the singers at the AVA, so I became very active with that organization.

When I retired and decided to move to Florida, I was influenced by my Aunt Mary Jane DeGennaro to move to Sarasota because of the arts here. She lived in downtown Sarasota, and was a music teacher with a PHD from Columbia, and was very involved with Sarasota Opera.

One thing she insisted on was that I had to buy a subscription to the Opera and join the Sarasota Opera Guild before I moved here. After a couple of years, I met many of the people at the Bradenton Opera Guild (as it was known then) and found that I preferred that organization. It was known to most as the "friendly guild".

I have continued to love Opera, and have attended opera several times in Italy at La Fenice, San Carlo (Napoli), Florence, Verona, and Rome, but, alas, I have not had an opportunity to go to La Scala.



Take a moment to listen to Helen Jepson on these un-remastered recordings, made in

the 1930's.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKI9ukG7Xq0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX9cZ8dKA0Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6H4Lcybu3Y>

MEMBER NEWS

Please change email for nini and Jack Gobetti to nini2go@gmail.com

Please Welcome New Members

David Goldrich
7910 Sloane Gardens Court
University Park, FL 34201
914-924-9350 (cell)
petsdad@aol.com

Maria Smith
3819 Little Country Rd
Parrish, FL 34219
252-489-3500
mariasmith930@gmail.com

TRIBUTES

Many thanks to ALL who helped with the baskets. (Donating, selling, and of course buying tickets) We had a GREAT return.

Many thanks to Maryanne especially while injured.

Should you have something during the year that you think "oh that would be good for next FEB. 24th baskets " just call me and I'll come and get it so you won't have to give it another thought!!

Again. Heartfelt thanks. Linda Buchhart



All smiles as the Guild President Elizabeth Aversa gifts Sarasota Opera \$5,000 via Arthur Bosarge, Artistic Administrator

Sarasota Opera

La Bohème

March 3, 7:30PM, March 6, 7:30PM, March 11, 7:30PM,
March 20, 1:30 PM, March 26, 7:30PM, March 28,
7:30PM

Puccini's most beloved opera and one of the most performed in the repertoire, *La bohème* takes us through the streets of the Latin Quarter in 19th century Paris when the poor embroideress Mimì has a fateful chance encounter with the poet Rodolfo. Laugh and cry as a group of friends struggle and celebrate through the Bohemian lifestyle and experience the heartbreak of a lover's impending demise.

Merry Widow

March 4, 7:30PM, March 8, 1:30PM
March 13, 7:30PM, March 21, 7:30PM,
March 27, 1:30PM

Wealthy widow Hanna Glawari is descended upon by an array of willing suitors from Parisian society. But plans go awry when Hanna's past paramour enters the ballroom. One of the most successful romantic operettas, *The Merry Widow* is the perfect blend of comedy, dance and unforgettable music.

Marriage of Figaro

March 7, 7:30 PM, March 12, 7:30PM, March 15
1:30PM, March 21, 7:30 PM, March 28, 1:30PM,
March 31, 7:30PM, March 31, 1:30 PM

One of Verdi's most popular works, *Il trovatore* unfolds with the telling of a fiery execution that takes place during Count de Luna's childhood, an event that sets him in vengeful pursuit of the gypsy woman, Azucena. Unrequited love for the noblewoman Leonora and hatred for her lover, the troubadour Manrico, drive him to murderous passions. The story comes full circle, ending with another tragic execution, in this sprawling medieval melodrama.

Susannah

March 14, 7:30PM, March 17, 7:30PM
March 19, 7:30PM, March 22, 1:30PM
March 25, 7:30PM, March 28, 1:30PM

Sin, a loss of innocence, and repentance in the 1950s rural Tennessee.

A re-telling of the Book of *Susannah*, the story follows a pretty, innocent young woman as she falls under the jealous scrutiny of her rural Appalachian community. When the Reverend Blich appears at her door offering redemption, tragic events unfold that force *Susannah* to take a stand for her dignity. Honoring the 100th anniversary of Carlisle Floyd's birth and in the state of its premiere, *Susannah* is a timeless, gripping tale and one of the most popular American op

Special Events



Salute to the Stars

Be surrounded by the celebration and sounds of Sarasota Opera's most outstanding Apprentice and Studio Artists being honored. Enjoy a gourmet lunch with performances by the awardees. Awards are presented through the generosity of visionary individuals as well as the Sarasota and **Manatee Opera Guilds**.

Monday, March 9
Sarasota Yacht Club
Per Person Levels \$85 and \$150 12 PM

Program and Performances by Award Winners
12:30 PM, Luncheon



Annual Membership Application

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

New Member Renewing Member

I (we) can help the Manatee Opera Guild in these ways (please check all appropriate boxes)

Literature design

Event planning

Fundraising

Greeting

Developing membership

Photography

Writing

Hosting parties

Hospitality

Publicity

Refreshments

Serving on the Board

Soliciting advertising and gifts

Telephoning

Editing (newsletters, brochures, letters)

Setting up/cleaning up

Modeling at fashion show

Other talent

Membership Level:

Single Regular Membership \$40

Single Sustaining Membership \$50

Couple Regular Membership \$60

Couple Sustaining Membership \$70

Send application and payment to:

Make checks payable to **Manatee Opera Guild**
or MOG, and send to:

Babs Noah

4635 Runabout Way

Bradenton, FL 34203