

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

September 2026

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Welcome Back!

Palm Aire Country Club

Thursday, September 24, 2026

10:00: coffee and conversation

10:30: meeting, followed by

**Martha Collins and Rootabaga Country, Youth
Opera Presentation**

11:45: optional lunch

Menu:

Chicken Crepes – Chicken Breast, Wild Mushroom,
Green Onion, Mornay Sauce, Cranberry Sauce with
Roasted Seasonal Vegetables

Vegetarian -- Wild Mushroom Ravioli Alfredo

Dessert -- Key Lime Pie

Reservations To: Maryanne Hazen, 3637 Wilderness
Blvd. West, Parrish, FL. 34219,
mhazen@tampabay.rr.com, phone: 941-776-5546,
941-744-7074 cell

Checks Payable To Manatee Opera Guild (MOG) In
the Amount Of \$35.00

Name(s): _____

Phone Number: _____

Number of Reservations @\$35 per person: _____

Reservations are due on September 19

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings, MOG members and friends,



And, just like that, summer
winded down and a new year
for MOG began! Welcome to
MOG, Version 2026-2027. I
am hoping everyone is well
and looking forward to opera,
opera, opera!

Later in this issue you'll see
the calendar for the coming year, and it is a full one
indeed. In addition to our monthly membership
luncheon meetings, we have an impressive line-up
of social, educational, and operatic experiences.

This month we'll combine our luncheon meeting on
September 24th at Palm Aire Country Club with the
Prelude lecture for September. We will be fortunate
to hear from Martha Collins, Sarasota Opera's
Director of Education, who will speak on
Rootabaga Country, the opera that will be
performed this fall by Youth Opera. You won't want
to miss this popular speaker, a delicious luncheon,
and reconnecting with other MOG members.

A community event in September is the annual Food
& Wine Festival at the Opera House. This takes
place on September 26th at 1:00 p.m. and provides
support for the Youth Opera. The festival features a
variety of eateries with food samples and wine
tastings. Learn more at
<https://tickets.sarasotaopera.org/8571/8572> and
consider carpooling with MOG friends!

Finally, if you are inclined to study upcoming
operas before attending, it's time to start with
Hansel and Gretel. Composer Engelbert
Humperdinck and librettist Adelheid Wette, the
composer's sister, move the Grimms' fairy tale to

the performance stage. Beautiful music and a familiar story will entertain all who attend. First performed in Germany in 1893, Hansel and Gretel is an opera for everyone, so don't think it's just for children. Tickets are available online or at the box office.

That's all for now, and I'll be packing up to return to Florida in no time. See you there!

Elizabeth



How I Came to Love Opera

By

Sarah Meg Weinberg

I was raised in San Angelo, Texas, which is an oil and ranching city in West Texas on the edge of the Permian Basin. Needless to say, I did not hear any opera in my childhood. I did hear a lot of country and western music especially when we went to rodeos, but my parents did not play it in our home. The first time I remember being exposed to opera was when Beverly Sills was a co-host for a week on the Mike Douglas show in March, 1971. I normally did not watch this show, but it happened to broadcast when I was feeding my baby son (now 56), and I was hooked for the week. Ms. Sills was absolutely fascinating and on the last day, she sang "Italian Street Song."

Twenty plus years flew by, and I happened to begin working with two women who were absolutely crazy about opera. They both talked about attending the National Opera at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. and the Baltimore Opera at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore MD. Their enthusiasm rekindled

my interest, and when the New York City Opera was scheduled to present "La traviata" at the Wolf Trap Performing Arts Center on 30 June 1995, Gary and I decided to go. This was our very first opera and both of us loved it.

I am very fortunate because Gary loves music, and he likes the opera as much as I do. (He also has a much better ear.) Then one of my opera friends gave us tickets to the Baltimore opera for a production of "The Merry Widow", and soon enough, Gary and I had season tickets to both the National Opera at the Kennedy Center and the Baltimore Opera (BOC). I have so many great memories of the years we were BOC subscribers. Both *Tannhauser* and *Tales of Hoffman* particularly stand out in my mind. I remember Elizabeth Aversa mentioned in her "How I came to love opera" article that she heard Rosa Ponselle perform live in Baltimore. By the time we had season tickets, Rosa Ponselle was gone, but she was still remembered in Baltimore. In 1996, the Baltimore Opera dedicated its 1996-1997 production of *La Gioconda* to her memory in honor of the centennial of her birth. (Apparently, she was considered the greatest *Gioconda* of her generation when she was at the Met.) Another opera memory was attending the Met to see the *Barber of Seville*. The tickets were expensive and the production well done, but I missed the intimacy of the Lyric. Our season tickets in the National Opera coincided with Placido Domingo being artistic director and then general Director of NOC, but I don't recall ever seeing him when we attended. Unfortunately, in December 2008, the Baltimore Opera folded in the middle of the season leaving us subscribers with unusable tickets, and Gary and I drifted away from opera. (As aside, when I was researching for this article, AI noted "it sounds like you got to experience the BOC at the absolute height of its grand, historic staging era," which I think was very true and why it was particularly devastating when it folded.)

In spring of 2017, Gary and I began spending winters in Florida. Soon afterward, we met Sybil, who, upon hearing that we liked opera, made it her mission to bring us back to opera (which she did) and both of us enjoy the Sarasota Opera so very much. Sybil also encouraged us to join the Manatee Opera Guild, which has been a wonderful experience and introduced us to many remarkable people. Our kudos to Sybil!

MOG MEETINGS 2026-2027

Membership meetings this year will generally be held on **Thursday**, with two exceptions: November 20 (Friday) and December 7 (Monday).

Meetings are held at 10:30 at Palm Aire Country Club, 5601 Country Club Way, Sarasota 34202. Coffee and conversation begin at 10. Meetings are followed by an optional lunch. Details are available in this publication at the beginning of the month, and on our website <https://manateecoperaguild.org>

- Thursday, September 24
- Thursday, October 29
- Friday, November 20
- Monday, December 7
- Thursday, January 21
- Thursday, February 18
- Thursday, March 18 (at Westminster Manor)
- Thursday, April 15

Preludes (Multimedia educational talks on the upcoming Sarasota Opera presentations)

Preludes are held on Friday mornings at 10 a.m. at Westminster Manor auditorium, 1700 21st Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205. A continental breakfast is available at 9:30.

- ***Hansel and Gretel*** October 23 at Sarasota Opera House. Maestro Anthony Barrese, Conductor of the opera, will speak to the Manatee and Sarasota Guilds in a combined meeting.
- ***La traviata*** December 4
- ***H.M.S. Pinafore*** January 22
- ***Ariadne auf Naxos*** February 5
- ***Jenùfa*** February 26

Special Events

OnStage Concert

Wednesday, November 11, 5 – 8 p.m. at the Sarasota Opera House, 61 N. Pineapple Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34236

MOG Holiday Party (for MOG members only and their spouses)

Sunday, December 20, 3 – 5 p.m. at the home of Maryanne Hazen, 3637 Wilderness Blvd. West, Parrish, FL 34219

Opera Movie Special – La rondine

Friday, January 8, 2 p.m. at Westminster Manor auditorium, 1700 21st Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205

Afternoon Tea and Concert

Monday, January 25, 2 – 4 p.m., at the Kiwanis Ballroom, Manatee Performing Arts Center, 502 3rd Avenue, Bradenton, FL 34205

Fashion Show and Luncheon

Wednesday, February 24 at 11:30 a.m.

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

Take the ZigZag Railroad to Rootabaga Country with Youth Opera's Martha Collins at our September Meeting





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**

Rich DeGennaro

4932 Mahogany Run

Sarasota, FL 34241

215-740-9017

richdege@me.com

