

THE VOICE OF



THE AUSTIN OPERA GUILD



Serenata 2019 – SAVE THE DATE by Suzanne Breitbach

The 2018-2019 Opera Season is about to begin and the Guild committees are hard at work to make the February 16, 2019 Serenata Wine Dinner & Auction the most unique and expansive evening ever created.

We invite you to join us at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin for a stroll through the streets of *La bohème's* Paris in the 1840's and celebrate *L'amour Infini*. As you walk through a French market, you will view many one-of-a kind silent auction items that will set the stage for the live auction inside the ballroom.

Celebrating love and support of Austin Opera, we are proud to honor **Andrew and Mary Ann Heller**, long-time opera patrons and philanthropists during the

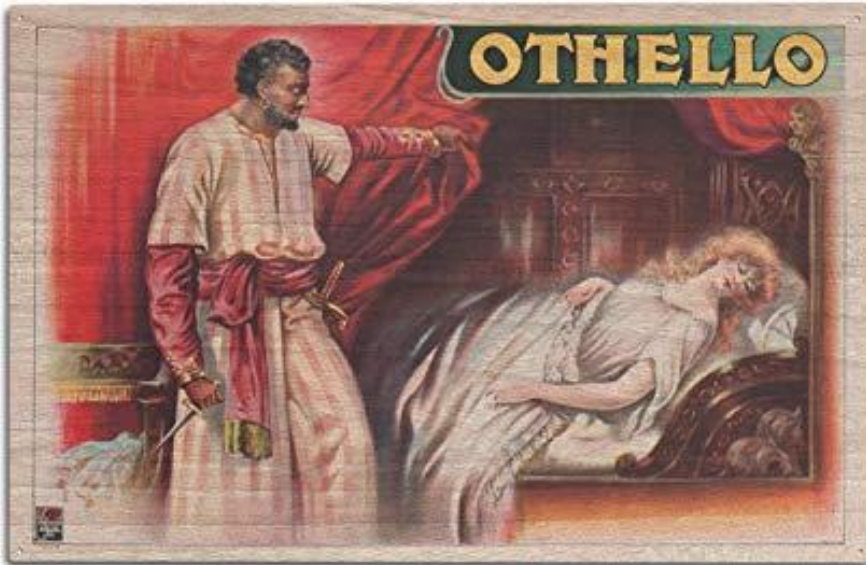


evening. A sumptuous four-course, all French dinner and wine pairings by Twin Liquor is being planned as well as a tremendous live auction of items to tempt the most discerning supporter of the arts. Top off the evening with dancing to live music by Reunion Band. Please join us for this magical evening to celebrate love, life and Austin Opera!

Please contact Suzanne Breitbach (suzanne.breitbach@halo.com), Michael Garza (ausmykl@yahoo.com) or Roger Kahlbau (roger@2303designs.com) to volunteer your talents to this major event!

You can earn donations for Austin Opera when you shop at Amazon.com. Simply go to smile.amazon.com and use your Amazon log-in. Once you log-in, select Austin Opera as the charity you want to support and 0.5% of your total will go to Austin Opera as a donation. There's no difference in shopping at smile.amazon.com versus amazon.com and there is no additional cost to you!

Othello, Venice, and Otherness! by Lissa Anderson



Austin Opera patrons know that Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*, opening November 10, is based on William Shakespeare's *Othello*. But where did Shakespeare get the idea for his play? And how was it that a North African was a military officer for the Republic of Venice? What's the story behind the story? Let's dig.

The source for Shakespeare's play was probably the story *Un Capitano Moro* ("A Moorish Captain") published in 1565 by Cinthio, a disciple of Italian

writer Boccaccio. That story may have been based on an actual incident in Venice's history. *Othello* also bears some semblance to "The Three Apples," another tale of deceit and murderous jealousy, from *The Thousand and One Nights*. Building on those possible literary foundations was fascination with North Africa; an official Moroccan delegation attracted public attention when it visited the court of Queen Elizabeth I in about 1600. In addition, a book by geographer Leo Africanus, *Description of Africa* (published in 1550), had caused a sensation with its vivid depiction of the Barbary Coast—now Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

How does Venice fit into the picture? From the 8th century to the 18th, Venice exerted increasing power in the eastern Mediterranean, based on its control of trade between the East and the West. That power had to be defended by military force, but the Republic of Venice didn't have a large native population from which to draw troops. What it did have was money—lots of money. Therefore, Venice hired foreign mercenaries to fight its wars. It may even have required by law that its military leaders be foreigners. Here, then, is where the possibility of a black man commanding troops becomes apparent. However, although Venice certainly included people of many ethnicities, due to its widespread commercial reach, it was not free of prejudice. In fact, Venice was the first city to require its Jewish citizens to live in a ghetto.

Othello's actual racial identity is unclear, even in the early sources. Perhaps his creators saw him as a sub-Saharan African, perhaps a Berber, perhaps an Arab. What is clearer is that Shakespeare and his contemporary audience saw him as "other"—not a member of mainstream "polite society." Thus, they could more easily ascribe unflattering qualities to him, including gullibility, jealousy, and violence. So, although assigning emotions to people who lived four centuries ago is dicey, it's not hard to imagine that some of those audience members were cheering for Iago.

Wanted: The Next Generation of Opera Lovers by Education and Community Outreach Committee



Those who care about the future of the greatest of all art forms, Opera, constantly worry about the fact that most opera audiences consist of, ahem, shall we say, people of a certain maturity. Who will be filling those seats in 25 years? Who will be writing the checks that allow this art form to continue to exist?

It is part of the mission of Austin Opera and The Opera Guild to cultivate this new audience and it is one of the specific charges of the Education and Community Outreach Committee to

actualize this goal. Working with the Opera's Director of Education, Debra Erck, the committee assists in a number of ways.

For the very young students we provide Opera Treasure Chests to their teachers. These colorful footlockers contain all kinds of playful goodies including puppets, costumes, a CD of music, etc., all designed to gently open young minds to the concept of opera. Our committee maintains and refreshes these chests.

For older students we work with Access Opera to introduce 5th graders and up to the actual experience of opera. Students and their teacher are invited to the final dress rehearsal of each production. They prove to be the most enthusiastic of all audiences, wildly cheering the soprano and heartily booing the villain. If requested our committee sends out docents to introduce the students to the opera they will be seeing.



Docents are invited to two training sessions, a three hour introduction and study of the opera and a two hour training session on the Power Point study plan. Docents describe their sessions with the students as great fun and often moving. One docent recounted that when she asked the class what happens in opera the kids all replied "people fall in love and someone dies." Not far off!

Our committee is always looking for volunteers to assist with these and our other tasks. For information on how you can get involved, contact Debra Erck, Director of Education at derck@austinopera.org

The Jeanette Nassour Opening Night Dinner Series: Join Us! by Marcia Toprac

Austin Opera strives to make attendance at each opera performance a highly enjoyable, fulFILLING experience. That's why a dining option is offered prior to each performance. For our Saturday Opening Night performances the Austin Opera Guild hosts a theme-based dinner before the opera and opportunities to mingle with the artists and sample desserts right afterward, while raising money for the opera.

The dinner theme for the final production of last season, *La traviata*, was, of course, French. The dinner featured an entré of Duck L'Orange, Potato Daughinoise and haricot vert, along with delicious passed hor d'oeuvres, a salad course, and a trio of French desserts.

The first Jeanette Nassour Opening Night Dinner for the 2018 – 2019 Season, associated with the November 10 production of Verdi's *Otello*, will have a Mediterranean theme as the story primarily takes place in Cyprus (though there are links to Venice and North Africa, too). While the menu has not yet been confirmed, the buzz is that Sterling Event's chef will be preparing marinated lamb chops with saffron-scented rice along with grilled squash and asparagus for the main course. There is always a theme-based, equally delicious vegetarian option, too. You can expect Mediterranean-influenced appetizers, salad course and desserts, as well as décor that evokes the crystal blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. As always, Twin Liquors' wine specialists will select some wonderful wines to complement our menu.

If you are coming to the *Otello* performance on November 10, we hope you'll choose to join us for this fundraising event. Call Rhanda Luna at 737-228-1442 for reservations.

AUSTIN OPERA GUILD

Invites you to dinner prior to

Otello

A festive staged concert event

by Giuseppe Verdi

The Jeanette Nassour Opening Night Dinner

Saturday, November 10, 2018

The Long Center for the Performing Arts

5:30 p.m. Champagne Reception
Mezzanine Level

6:00 p.m. Seated Dinner
Kodosky Lounge

Following the performance, join the cast for dessert on the H-E-B Terrace.
To make reservations please use the enclosed reply card, call 512-472-5992,
or visit austinopera.org/opening-night-dinner by October 31.

Black Tie Optional

TWIN LIQUORS
FINE WINE & SPIRITS

Sterling
EVENTS

Volunteer Coordination by Mack Lindsey

The Austin Opera Guild has various needs for short-term assistance, in addition to the larger tasks and permanent positions that some of our members take on. Here are a few things you can do to aid the Guild and the Opera. First, we always need help for our Guild parties. We regularly have three main parties during the year. After you RSVP, you may be asked to take on a small job at the party or in connection with it. The request will include roles and time slots. Your help will be appreciated at Guild socials.

The Opera also occasionally needs help at the administrative offices. If you have some time and would like to be considered, get in touch with Patricia Rosen at pmrosen5@gmail.com. Also, for any further information about volunteering, please contact Mack Lindsey at mclindsey75@gmail.com.

Guild Officers 2018-2019

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Cathy Collins
President-Elect

Marcy Melanson
Past President

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Bloomberg Philanthropies

Austin Opera is honored to be selected as a recipient of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Arts Innovation and Management (AIM) program. With Bloomberg Philanthropies' generous support, Austin Opera looks forward to expanding its contributions to civic life in Austin through bold new programming, exciting collaborations and reaching new audiences. This historic grant is the largest in company history and will allow Austin Opera to forge ahead in an exciting path for opera in Austin.

Opera Essentials: A Quick Guide to *Otello*

CHARACTERS OF THE OPERA

- Otello (oh-TELL-oh): A Moor, general of the Venetian army, who is passionately in love with and jealous of his wife.
- Desdemona (dez-DAY-moh-nah): Otello's Venetian wife, an innocent victim of Iago's evil plot.
- Iago (YAH-goh): An ensign in Otello's army, who carries out his evil plan to ensure the destruction of both Otello and Cassio.
- Cassio (KAH-see-oh): Otello's Venetian captain, an honest young soldier who has no idea of the passions swirling around him.
- Emilia (eh-MEEL-yah): Iago's wife and Desdemona's maid, who is torn between loyalty to her evil husband and her mistress.
- Lodovico (loh-doh-VEE-koh): An ambassador of the Venetian Republic.
- Montano (mohn-TAHN-oh): Otello's predecessor as Governor of Cyprus.
- Roderigo (roh-deh-REE-goh): A Venetian gentleman.
- Araldo (ah-RAHL-do): A herald

A SHOWCASE FOR GREAT MUSICIANS

An Opera is not a play; our art lives by elements unknown to spoken tragedy. An atmosphere that has been destroyed can be created all over again. Eight bars are enough to restore a sentiment to life; a rhythm can re-establish a character; music is the most omnipotent of all the arts – it has a logic all its own – both freer and more rapid than the logic of spoken thought, and much more eloquent.

-Boito in a letter to Verdi, October 1880, during work on the libretto for *Otello*.

- Demands a large orchestral force to perform this big romantic score, with its depth of emotion, sensuality, and its sonic thunderbolts.
- The role of Otello is notorious for being one of the most difficult roles in opera. It requires a dramatic tenor with a heavy, heroic sound, strong top notes, great stamina, and impressive acting ability.
- Desdemona is a great lyric soprano part that needs a beautiful voice. Desdemona is innocence incarnate, the singer must convey warmth, purity, dignity, desolation, and complete devotion to her husband.
- Iago is a big sing as well and a fabulous acting role. It takes a real actor to make this character more than one-dimensional. He must be smart and nimble yet reveal darkness and hypocrisy.

Introducing the NEW Director of Audience Experience Julie Fiore



A purveyor of opera in Austin, Julie founded One Ounce Opera in 2012, an independent company focused on re-imagining opera in unexpected spaces. As CEO, Julie won contracts to create memorable guest experiences for municipal, corporate, nonprofit, and private clients. She collaborated with local creative artists of varied genres and techniques, and partnered with over 40 distinct venues and businesses for productions and events aimed at creating comfort, connection, and a memorable audience experience.

Prior to One Ounce Opera, Julie served as the Directors' Assistant and Program Administrator for Taos Opera Institute during the summer program's first five seasons. In Taos, she helped discover impactful spaces for concerts and events, strategically collaborating with local businesses and artists. Julie also advocated for the needs of the singing-artists and the faculty to create an efficient, effective, and enjoyable on-site experience for all participants and guests. Julie was the Co-Director for Amarillo Opera's OperaCamps for two summers, and currently nurtures a respected private voice studio in Austin, where she is on the Program Committee for "Kids In a New Groove", a non-profit organization which provides no-cost music lessons to foster children.

Julie Fiore is originally from Amarillo, Texas. She received a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of North Texas, pursued additional studies at Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, and earned a Master of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Denver Lamont School of Music.

Upcoming Events

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Saturday, November 10	Jeanette Nassour Opening Night Dinner for <i>Otello</i>	5:30 PM	Kodosky Lounge, Long Center
	<i>Otello</i> Performance/Volunteers Needed	5:00 PM	Long Center
Tuesday, November 13	Guild Board Meeting	11:15 AM	Buca di Beppo
Tuesday, November 13	<i>Otello</i> Masterclass with Issachah Savage	6:30 PM	Austin Opera Offices
Thursday, November 15	<i>Otello</i> Performance/Volunteers Needed	6:00 PM	Long Center
Sunday, November 18	<i>Otello</i> Performance/Volunteers Needed	12:30 PM	Long Center
Saturday, December 1	Guild Holiday Party	7:00 PM	Home of Cornelia & John Wood
Tuesday, December 11	Guild Board Meeting	11:15 AM	Buca di Beppo
Monday, January 7	<i>Silent Night</i> OLLI/SAGE event	TBD	University of Texas
Tuesday, January 8	Guild Board Meeting	11:15 AM	Buca di Beppo
Wednesday, January 16	Guild Enrichment: <i>Silent Night</i>	6:30 PM	Home of Sharon & David Sneed

Letter from Rosy Moore, Guild President 2018-2019

Dear Guild Members and Opera Lovers:

The 32nd season of Austin Opera will offer classical favorites, an exciting new opera and surprising innovations for lovers of opera in Austin. The 2018-2019 Season begins in November with Verdi's *Otello*, which will be in the form of a festive concert. Next comes the Austin premiere of Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* beginning in January 2019. These operas will be followed by the launch of Opera ATX, a bold new artistic initiative. Opera ATX will be the Central Texas premiere of an innovative multimedia work, *Soldier Songs*, by composer David T. Little in April 2019. The Season will close with the beloved Puccini's *La bohème* beginning at the end of April 2019.



The Austin Opera Guild through its volunteer efforts is called upon to help with various activities and events that support the Austin Opera. Guild Membership offers the opportunity to learn more about opera through Enrichment Events held at the homes of Guild Members; to meet the performers of the operas; to learn from the opera directors; and to attend many festive parties.

Volunteers will be needed for all the events sponsored by the Guild. Volunteer opportunities include Enrichment Events, Jeanette Nassour Opening Night Dinners, other Guild parties, and the Serenata Wine Dinner and Auction. Volunteers may be called upon to assist Austin Opera staff and to pick up artists at the airport and welcome them to Austin.

The highlight of the Guild season is the annual Serenata Wine Dinner and Auction at the newly renovated Four Seasons Hotel on Saturday, February 16, 2019. The event includes dinner with live and silent auctions for the benefit of Austin Opera. The evening will conclude with dancing to the beat of Reunion Band.

The Guild is especially proud of its role in the Austin Opera's Education and Community Engagement program, which reaches several thousand children each year to bring them the joy and appreciation of opera. Several school districts in the Austin area are involved in the program.

I look forward to sharing this exciting season with you.

Rosy Moore
President, Austin Opera Guild
