



Serenata: It's On... and It'll Be Fabulous.

By Cathy Collins & Jack Reeves

Serenata 2021 is, at this time, a go! The annual Serenata Wine Dinner and Auction hosted by the Austin Opera Guild is scheduled for May 15, 2021 at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin and will honor Austin Philanthropists Sarah and Ernest Butler.

While many details have yet to be finalized, the Committee has been holding Zoom meetings and is planning for a mostly outdoor event at the Four Seasons. There, we'll have the lawn, as well as the terrace and foyer — and the reports are that the outdoor space is simply magical.

The realities of event planning during a pandemic will require us to be flexible and we will ensure we are following the latest safety recommendations as the date of the dinner approaches. And yes, there may be face masks – perhaps bedazzled! But the happy note is that, as of this moment, we are working towards a fabulous live event.

## Welcome New Members!

You have “seen” some new faces on our Zoom meetings. We sat down with Cathy Collins, who served on the nominating committee, to hear her thoughts on a few:

- Bill Wallace (President): “Bill has forgotten more about opera than I will ever know. I thought he would be the perfect candidate for President.”
- Bruno Brunner (President Elect): “He’s run luxury hotels all over the world, I’m sure he can handle this. What a wonderful man he is.”
- Marni Robinson (Support Services): “An opera lover but had not ever joined the guild. With a bit of arm twisting, I got her to join.”
- JL Baralt (Education & Community Engagement): “I called him and felt he would be a great asset—he agreed to work with the education committee.”



Please say hi to these new members on our next call!

President’s Letter

By Bill Wallace

Dear Fellow Guild Members,

While acknowledging the challenges we face in these times, the Guild Board has been hard at work to make your membership exciting and meaningful. Now, more than ever, Austin Opera needs our support and continued involvement.



Our opera company has been working tirelessly to develop a fun and stimulating program for the fall and early winter months, while carefully adhering to pandemic safety guidelines. The Guild will provide support and enthusiasm for these performances through virtual enrichment sessions.

One step we are taking is establishing an opera study group, for which we are working out the details. For now, at least, the study group will happen online. It will be organized much like a book club. Each month, the leader will select a topic, with suggestions for performances to listen to or watch online. These topics could be as narrow as a single opera... or as broad as the work of a composer, or the legacy of a great singer. Members will research background topics and present their findings to the group, followed by an online discussion.

Another initiative will be a monthly opera quiz. Those Guild members who choose to participate will receive a series of questions involving all aspects of opera and ranging from easy to challenging. Each correct answer will earn points. At the end of the season the participant with the most points will receive fulsome praise, recognition, and a prize to be determined.

While we all will miss the conviviality and fun of seeing each other at our parties and enrichment events, let us continue to work together in our support for our wonderful Austin Opera. I look forward to being with you through the marvels of the Internet. See you soon!

Bill Wallace  
President, Austin Opera Guild

A promotional banner for Austin Opera. It features five distinct sections: 1) The Austin Opera logo with the text 'Coming Soon in 2020-2021'. 2) A graphic for 'Opera ATX + Blue Starline MINI URBAN DRIVE-IN'. 3) A scene from 'An All-Star Concert' with a large building in the background. 4) A scene from the opera 'Tosca' with performers on stage. 5) A yellow box with text: 'NEW EPISODES LIVE FROM Judy Turman SPECIAL GUEST ARTISTS PRESENTED BY AUSTIN OPERA INGP @ SAVIDIA'. At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the text 'Find out more at austinopera.org'.

## Opera in the Time of Plague

By Jack Reeves

Epidemics and plagues were far more common throughout history than they are today — and, consequently, diseases make many appearances in opera history. Here are just a few moments that remind us food delivery and Zoom meetings may not be so bad, in context...

- 1665 — A bubonic plague outbreak in London shuts down all theaters, including opera-lover Samuel Pepys's favorite haunt: the Duke's House in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Among other innovations, the opera house had the world's first proscenium arch, and first moveable scenery.
- 1767 — A severe smallpox outbreak in Vienna sickens an eleven-year-old Mozart. Already the author of two (2!) operatic works, the wunderkind was blinded for nine days— and bedridden for weeks—but returned to composing and performing soon after.
- 1870 — In Buenos Aires, construction of the Teatro Opera is delayed due to a yellow fever epidemic. Happily, it was eventually built in 1872, and stands today as a compelling rival to the more famous Teatro Colón.
- 1896 — Puccini's *La bohème* premieres in Turin. Mimi is overcome with tuberculosis — but apparently still capable of singing through four acts and several arias.
- 1901 — Russian composer César Cui's "A Feast in Time of Plague" has its first performance. Based on a Pushkin story, the festive piece follows a group of friends dining while funerals are being carried out around them. We hope they wore their masks.
- 1917 — His performance ambitions on hold due to the Spanish Flu outbreak, Prokofiev bides his quarantine by writing the satirical *The Love for Three Oranges*, which premiered (initially to mixed reviews) at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago.

### A message from our partners at Freestyle



**Lunch & Learn: Free Language Workshops! Thurs., Oct. 29th 12 - 1 pm CST**

Take a 'virtual trip' with Freestyle Language! Learn and practice speaking about travel-related themes that are not only useful for travel (post COVID?) but for connecting in everyday language no matter where you live. RSVP [here for Spanish](#), [here for Italian](#), and [here for French](#).

While this 100% online & interactive workshop is free, Freestyle Language is proud to offer Austin Opera community members 10% off the cost of language classes, with an additional 10% of your registration donated to Austin Opera \*with code opera10. \*Email [info@freestylelanguagecenter.com](mailto:info@freestylelanguagecenter.com) for the code!

---

## Artist Profile: Kat Grumley

### By Opera Staff

Austin Opera has created a Re-Opening Task Force of Trustees and advisors with medical and public health expertise to guide the development of new safety protocols and procedures to ensure the safety of both artists and audience members when we return to the Long Center in January 2021. A new member of this task force is Kathryn Grumley, serving as the task force's Special Advisor.



Kathryn is a registered nurse who has been working on the frontlines of the pandemic, taking crisis ER and ICU COVID-19 assignments in Austin, Houston, Arizona, and Aruba. In addition to her career as an RN, Kathryn (or Kat as she is known at Austin Opera) is a professional opera singer! Kat's talent for singing and interest in science and medicine during her childhood led her to explore both careers. She remembers being introduced to opera in second grade when her choir teacher played a video of Papageno and Papagena's duet from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. She was mesmerized and continued to develop her love of singing, eventually beginning voice lessons in eighth grade and has never stopped.

Kat has been involved with Austin Opera since 2013 when she attended the *Serenata Wine Dinner & Auction* and won voice lessons with then General Director Joseph Spector in the auction. Thanks to her winning bid, she secured a role in *The Manchurian Candidate* as the *Nominee's Wife*. She has since performed in *Madame Butterfly* (Kate Pinkerton, 2017) and *La traviata* (Annina, 2018) and has covered the roles of Anna Sorensøn and Mimì in 2019's *Silent Night* and *La bohème* respectively. Kat will return to the Long Center stage again in November 2021 as *Barbarina* in *The Marriage of Figaro*. She has also been a featured performer in many Austin Opera community events including at *La Noche de Opera* and *Opera Previews at Chez Zee*.

"Working as a nurse I interact with all types of people from all walks of life. I'm able to pull from these experiences to better understand the nuances of the roles I sing and to portray a more authentic character. Having a dual career, I am able to connect with and help people in different ways," says Kat.

We are thrilled and grateful to have someone with Kat's dual skillset as a part of the Re-Opening Task Force. Her experience as a performer and expertise in today's best practices in health and safety will be extremely helpful in developing a plan that keeps artists and audiences safe as we return to rehearsals, performances, and large gatherings.

## ECE: Onward Through the Viral Fog

By Lissa Anderson

What public speaker doesn't relish earning gasps from an audience? That was the reaction I got from a room full of middle-schoolers when I displayed the bewigged papier maché head that Donnie Ray Albert had created for the post-decapitation version of his *Salome* character, Jochanaan. This was just one of countless marvelous in-person encounters that Austin Opera Guild docents have enjoyed with Central Texas kids. While moments like these can no longer happen in-person (alas!), the outreach continues. Thanks largely to Debra Erck, Director of Education for Austin Opera, Education and Community Engagement will virtually enrich the lives of Central Texas students, teachers, and families.

Debra has developed a wide range of online resources for youngsters of all ages. Among them are Animated Listening Maps, which use animation to teach opera classics; Opera Mail, which invites students to ask questions about opera; and Opera Brain Break, fun and quick videos with activities for engaging young children through movement, the creative arts, and mindfulness.

Educators can tap into additional resources such as Opera on the Spot, Musicians Masterclass, Career Q&As, and so much more. For more information on these opportunities check out the Education tab on the Austin Opera website. <https://austinopera.org/education/>

Just how Opera Guild members will participate in these initiatives is uncertain. But when educators reach out to Debra, we will be ready! I, my new Co-VP J.L. Baralt, and Guild President Bill Wallace will continue to work with Debra to keep opera alive for Central Texas youth.

## Upcoming Austin Opera &amp; Guild Events

Upcoming Events			
Friday, October 30	<a href="#">Live from Indy Terrace</a>	3:00 p.m.	Facebook/YouTube
Friday, November 6	<a href="#">Live from Indy Terrace</a>	3:00 p.m.	Facebook/YouTube
Sunday, November 8	<i>The Finch Opera (Vinkensport)</i>	7:30 p.m.	Blue Starlite Drive-In
Tuesday, November 10	Board Meeting	11:15 a.m.	Zoom
Wednesday, November 11	<i>The Finch Opera (Vinkensport)</i>	7:30 p.m.	Blue Starlite Drive-In
Friday, November 20	<a href="#">Live from Indy Terrace</a>	3:00 p.m.	Facebook/YouTube
Saturday, November 21	Virtual Fundraiser with Kendra Scott	TBA	Online
Friday, December 4	<a href="#">Live from Indy Terrace</a>	3:00 p.m.	Facebook/YouTube
Sunday, December 6	<a href="#">Impresario / Bon Appetit!</a>	7:30 p.m.	Blue Starlite Drive-In
Tuesday, December 8	Board Meeting	11:15 a.m.	Zoom
Wednesday, December 9	<a href="#">Impresario / Bon Appetit!</a>	7:30 p.m.	Blue Starlite Drive-In
Friday, December 11	<a href="#">Live from Indy Terrace</a>	3:00 p.m.	Facebook/YouTube

**Winterreise**: A Lonely Poet's Winter Journey

By Zoltan Trizna



While Schubert was known for his piano pieces and chamber music, he is considered groundbreaking in the genre of songs ("Lieder"). It was only years after his death when the entire scope of his work became known. His manuscripts were found in boxes and cabinets kept by his family, friends and even his publishers.

Schubert composed *Winterreise* (*Winter Journey*) in two parts in 1827. This song cycle is based on the poems of Wilhelm Müller who died at age 32 in 1827. There is a lot of speculation as to why Schubert composed these songs. Was it an allegorical journey toward his own death? The images of the cold and savage winter certainly suggest that he suspected his life was about to end soon. He himself called these songs a "Zyklus schauerlicher Lieder" which can be translated as a cycle of "gruesome" or "eerie" songs. He was still correcting the proofs of the second part of the *Winterreise* in November 1828, a month before his death.

The wandering poet starts his journey after losing his love: "I must find my own way through this darkness." The 24 songs show increasing despair, disappointment, longing for love and losing his illusions. His tears drop in the snow, and the stream would carry them to his sweetheart's house. "I have to walk on a road which no one came back on." Toward the gloomy end, he finds a graveyard— but even there, he cannot find rest. Finally, he meets another lonesome soul - a hurdy-gurdy player whose music no one listens to. The wanderer asks him if the player would accompany his songs by the music of the hurdy-gurdy. The poet and the composer leave us with this ambiguous ending.

Though Schubert composed the *Winterreise* for a tenor, it is sung in vocal ranges from bass-baritone to mezzo-soprano.

**Guild Officers 2020-2021**

President

**Bill Wallace**

President-Elect

**Bruno Brunner**

Past President

**Cathy Collins**

Secretary

**Kathy Trizna**

Treasurer

**Rosy Moore**

Parliamentarian

**Brenda Wendel**

Communication

**Jack Reeves**, Newsletter

**Josep Rota**, Photographer

Guild Enrichment

**Stacy Brunson**

**Steven Tyler**

Membership

**Patrick Landrum**

**Nathan Idais**

**Tina Barrett, Ph.D.**, Directory & List Stewardship

**Patricia Rosen**, Nametags

Support Services

**Ariane Vokes Arth**

**Marni Roberson**

**Mary Jo Benton**, Gift Bags

Volunteer Coordination

**Bruno Brunner**

**Pat Rosen**, Volunteer Liaison

Education and Community Engagement

**Lissa Anderson**

**JL Baralt**

OVI Representative

**Rose Betty Williams**

Wine Dinner Co-Chairs

**Cathy Collins**

**Sharon Sneed**

Pre-Opera Dinner Co-Chairs

**Patrick Landrum**

**Nathan Idais**

Advisors-at-Large

**Paula Damore**

**Diane Ingram**

**Ida Jeppesen**

**Craig Kuglen**

**Carol Logan**

**Jo Carol Snowden**

**Marcia Toprac**

**Gretchen Woellner**

You can earn donations for Austin Opera when you shop at Amazon.com. Simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://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](https://smile.amazon.com) versus amazon.com and there is no additional cost to you!