

# OVERTURE

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## **Finding our Humanity—The Art and Activism of Storytelling - An Interview with Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj** *-By Diane McCullough*

Dear Mr. Maharaj, thank you so much for agreeing to this interview for OTSL's Guild newsletter, *Overture*. We are excited about the upcoming season and the major role you are playing in the artistic development of both the New Works Collective and the *Treemonisha* production.

Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj: It's a thrilling opportunity and I'm very grateful to have the platform.

Diane McCullough: You are an artistic activist as well as an artist who has influenced political organizations such as the NAACP particularly in Brooklyn. Please talk about how you convinced that organization to have a focus on activism through the arts.

RRM: Throughout the history of the NAACP, civil rights movements, and the current Black Lives Matter Movement, artists have always played a vital role in illuminating the movement. In creating the Brooklyn Equity in the Arts and Culture Committee, it was important to focus on seeking advocacy for BIPOC artists in the borough of Brooklyn, building bridges between funders and artists/arts organizations within the borough of Brooklyn, promoting and presenting events that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and the core mission values of the NAACP, celebrating artistic freedom for all people, creating educational opportunities that support arts learning, affirming and celebrating diverse cultural heritage, and extending our work to promote equal access to the arts in every community.

The connection between art and activism comes down to one word: Service. Storytelling is service.

DM: Your artistic biography reflects a wide range of themes and styles. In looking through pictures of your previous projects, it is impressive how you capture the nature of each piece. Whether set in Africa ("School Girls or the African Mean Girls Play") or in the mind of the protagonist and algo rhythm antagonist at the opening of "Indivisible, with...(aka the justice project)", a work that confronts injustice in our system throughout its history. Please talk about how your artistic

sense is able to embrace so much material and create a work of art as deep as "Indivisible, with...(aka the justice project)".

RRM: Throughout my childhood I was encouraged to foster my imagination by both my grandmother and her daughter, my mother. Throughout my entire life, Isabella Mayhenn, my Haitian/Bahamian grandmother and Naomi Elizabeth Basset, my mother, fostered within me the gift of creativity, imagination, and service. They taught me the power of words and the blessing of a vivid imagination to touch the human heart. My grandmother was a maid and my mother was a U.S. postal worker. While most days they were bone tired after working long hours in the kitchens of white employers and delivering

mail to white communities, they somehow were still able to muster up the energy to sit with me, look deep into the night sky and tell me epic tales of our people from all parts of the African, Caribbean, and South Asian Diaspora.

They would speak magical tales about our people who were courageous, noble, and helped give the world civilization. Though my grandmother and my mother have passed on and are now my own ancestors who continue to guide me, their fire for storytelling, diversity, inclusion, and theatricality continue to enrich my creative soul and my vision of theatre.

I see the empty space as an opportunity for social change and civilized discourse to occur. It remains one of the few sacred places left in a far too noisy, often divided world where people of different backgrounds, cultures, gender identities, and communities can still sit in the quiet dark together, think a while, and be awakened. It is a dwelling where one can gain a richer connection to the fragility of beauty and pain that exists in all art and life.

DM: You are a choreographer as well as a Playwright and stage director. How has dance played a part in your aesthetic?

RRM: Dance was the first language I learned at my grandmother and mother's knee. Being Indo-Afro-Caribbean, dance and music were at the center of my home and my entire world. Dance is a universal language that invokes the power of the human spirit. It crosses all borders, languages, religions, gen-



der identities, orientations and economic realities. Dance is life and life is a dance!

DM: You are the co-book writer for Will Liverman and DJ King Rico's groundbreaking *The Factotum* which will premiere at the Lyric Opera of Chicago this season. OTSL fans are big fans of Will's work as well. Can you tell us a little about working with him on that piece?

RRM: Will and King are not only geniuses, they are both two of the kindest, most passionate, open artists I have had the pleasure to collaborate with in my career. *The Factotum* is a new work inspired by Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* that has grown into a joyful, original piece all its own. Updating the action to a Black barbershop on Chicago's South Side, *The Factotum* blends diverse musical styles with boundless imagination to create a soul opera, moving from gospel and funk to rap, hip-hop, classic barbershop quartet, and R&B. Those styles connect brilliantly with classical singing in a very human comedy that redefines everything that opera can be.

### On the New Works Collective:

DM: The initial stated themes for the New Works Collective operas were Black Joy, Identity and Expression, and LGBTQIA+ issues. As the works develop, do these themes continue to be the focus?

RRM: Absolutely! Not only have they anchored the New Works Collective, new themes have arisen such as community, empathy, and cultural parity. It's a groundbreaking program that will change the landscape of opera forever.

DM: What is the artistic process for you in developing these ideas?

RRM: The prolific James Baldwin once said, "All art is a kind of confession. All artists, if they are to survive, are forced to tell the whole story. Artists are here to disturb the peace, educate, uplift, and above all, tell the truth." His prophetic words sit at the heart of my answer to your question. As an artist, my first responsibility is to tell the truth! Next, it is to build a bridge between the creators and the audience. I'm passionate about creating a safe-space where BIPOC storytellers in particular can express their full humanity and know that they are seen, heard, and that their stories matter.

DM: Do the composer/librettist teams bring a fully worked out piece to the workshop?

RRM: Yes, they do bring their fully realized visions, however they are works-in-progress. Each of the pieces are twenty minutes in length and the workshop is the first time we get to hear them individually. It's very exciting because there is an opportunity after hearing them for myself, the OTSL staff, and the audience to share their thoughts which will inevitably inspire the creators to strengthen and continue to shape their operas.

DM: Your body of work brings together many art forms – literary,

music, dance – will this inclusive lens be brought to these new works as well?

RRM: Absolutely. We'll be using many different forms of storytelling including multi-media, poetry, and modern art to influence the evening. There is also a very strong community engagement component, which has been strongly embraced by the BIPOC and Queer community in St. Louis around this dynamic new program.

### On *Treemonisha*:

DM: The new OTSL concept for *Treemonisha* includes new music and new scenes created by Damien Sneed and Karen Chilton. Did you as director also have input into the new concept, especially in terms of design concept?

RRM: Yes. Damien and Karen are brilliant storytellers and two of the most open, kind, and inspiring artists that I've connected with over the past few years. Their ability to capture the spirit



of Joplin, both as a Black man and artist is so inspiring to me. Their work is sophisticated, naked and universal in its themes. They are a tour de force and this version of *Treemonisha* is so universal and inspirational in its exploration of African American love and how timeless, durable, and endless it truly is. I'm so proud to be one of the voices that get to help

bring this soul-stirring, magnificent, new adaptation to the world.

DM: There is magic as well as dance in the *Treemonisha* story. Will you be doing the choreography and, if so, what are your thoughts on dance in the magic scenes as well as the dance scenes?

RRM: I will not be doing the choreography. I'm excited to collaborate with a choreographer who, like myself, embraces imagination, magic, as well as African and Caribbean history / folklore and storytelling methods which will all be vital elements in our production.

DM: Have you worked with the OTSL cast before?

RRM: I had the pleasure of working with Justin Austin last year at the Metropolitan Opera House where I was the assistant director for *Fire Shut Up In My Bones*. Justin was Will Liverman's understudy for that production. Justin is a brilliant artist and I look forward to collaborating with him as he brings Scott Joplin to life for a whole new generation to witness.

DM: The original storyline of *Treemonisha* is concerned with the importance of education over superstition and reflects the social justice concerns of its time. In this new production does the issue of white racism come into play? In the prologue and epilogue is the fact that Scott Joplin could not get the opera performed in full addressed in any way?

RRM: White supremacy then and now continues to surround Black art and Black narratives. *Treemonisha* is a celebration of Black women, Black men, Black love in America, so inherently because it is an American story, white supremacy and the fight

## Finding Our Humanity—Cont'd

-By Diane McCullough

for African Americans to be seen as fully realized human beings and express their love for one another is always somehow present against the often-complex backdrop of American history, white privilege in pursuit of that ongoing, often illusive experiment we all call democracy.

At the center of my work is the search for American Identity. This search is a continuing exploration and an antidote to what appears to be a country in cultural fragments. I am a very curious person by nature. My curiosity is a major force that drives me in my craft. The North Star that I always follow is to find empathy and common ground by putting myself in other people's shoes. I aim to share the idea that if one story could hold so many different points of view in the course of an evening at the opera yet lead to a universal truth, perhaps, when confronted with divisive issues, we could hold at least more than one point of view in mind.

Through my vision and years of experience as a storyteller I continue to grow in my understanding of the complexity of humankind. This serves as a powerful psychological balm that has not only opened my mind, but my heart to the power of

celebrating difference. In my career, I've come to realize that we are not all the same.

My path has shown me that the solution is not to search for sameness or even that which we have in common. I celebrate and uplift in my mission as a BIPOC storyteller 'difference' as part of the soul of our shared humanity and nation. The celebration and acknowledgement of our differences provide the common ground for the opera industry to have the difficult, but necessary conversations around equity, inclusion, parity, cultural competence, compassion resilience, and the pursuit of reconciliation.

I'm very passionate about making the "broad jump towards the other," seeking to close the gap between the strange and the familiar. More than ever, we need opportunities like The New Works Collective and *Treemonisha* to achieve this goal.

DM: Thank you again for your work and for this interview.

RRM: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about my process, work, and journey as an artist and activist.

## Letter from the President

As the leaves fall and temperatures drop, the Guild gets back to work. We adapt to changes in our makeup—catching up since closing night in June, welcoming new members, and bidding farewell to those who are leaving the Guild. We prepare for the season ahead.

The most exciting bit of catching up is certainly the July 8<sup>th</sup> birth and the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Potluck appearance of Caleb Jorgensen Stuart-Smith. Congratulations to new parents Andrew Jorgensen and Mark Stuart-Smith. Many thanks to Sara Fabick, outgoing Guild President, for her excellent leadership during the last three years. Her term was anything but normal with Covid interruptions, but she didn't miss a beat. I will strive to do as well in my new role as Guild President.

The annual Volunteer Thank You Party at Tilles Park was a great success in spite of threatening weather. Catered by Ces and Judy's, food and drink were delicious and abundant. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to socialize, getting to know one another better. Andrew stopped by for the express purpose of thanking Sara Fabick for her outstanding work as Guild President and to thank the Guild for all the work we do to support OTSL. I doubt that every Director would do so. It's just one more way we know that we are truly valued.

Now we start to do the actual work for which we volunteer. Our first Guild Board meeting featured updates on OTSL programs, events, personnel, and the Guild's budget. The Docents are preparing their most excellent presentations and will deliver those beginning in March. Other committees will become active at various times doing the buying, selling, writing, light walking, advertising, greeting, entertaining, gardening, transporting, and more. The preparation is significant, and the work starts early. This is real work that's necessary to support OTSL's mission. For that we say **Thank You.**

It is an honor to become your Guild President. I look forward to another great Festival Season working with all of you. If you know someone who might be interested in becoming an OTSL Volunteer, tell me. Let me know what I can do to help you do your OTSL job. That's *my* job.

Linda Seibert  
OTSL Guild President



Current Guild President, Linda Seibert (left) and Immediate Past President, Sara Fabick (right)

## From the Desk of the General Director

Dear Guild Members,

As the beautiful fall weather ushers us into an exciting season ahead, I want to take a moment to once again celebrate our joyous and long-awaited return to our beloved theater last season. Opera Theatre volunteers rose to the occasion with an incredibly warm welcome for our artists, staff, and audiences. I am grateful to all of you.

The Gerdine Young Artists Audition Tour is full steam ahead this November. We had over 1,100 applicants for the second year in a row. We are traveling all the way from Los Angeles to New York City scouting for the next stars to emerge from Opera Theatre. Joining Patricia Racette and Yvette Loynaz on tour is also our new Manager of Artistic Planning, Alexis Aimé, who will be starting her first days with Opera Theatre on tour!

We are also seeing great enthusiasm for the Bayer Fund Artists-in-Training program, with the highest number of students auditioning for that program in recent years. The 25 talented students selected for this year's cohort will begin their winter residency in January with Katherine Jolly. Katherine is a great friend of OTSL, and we are so thrilled to have her working with our students again. The students will showcase all their progress with a recital in January.

Last year, we announced to the opera world the first-ever commission process led by a community council, our very own New Works Collective. After receiving applications from more than 130 artists, a panel of ten diverse St. Louis community leaders selected three talented artistic teams to create operas that challenge traditional definitions of genre. Now, we are thrilled to present their original 20-minute works as one suite of performances this spring. Our community partners are already buzzing with excitement and anticipation for these world premieres, which will be performed March 16th through 18th at the Catherine B. Berges Theatre at COCA.

We have four wonderful productions in motion for the 2023 Festival Season: two beloved classics *Tosca* and *Così fan tutte*, another classic by an American composer, *Susannah*, and the world premiere of Damien Sneed's re-imagined edition of *Tree-monisha*. Mark your calendars for Opening Night on Saturday, May 20!

I am thrilled to welcome you to another year of fantastic programs and events, the success of which, would not be possible without your continued dedication. We at Opera Theatre are deeply grateful for your support and community.

Sincerely,  
Andrew Jorgensen



## Call for Volunteers— Housing and Historian

-By Jane Brader

Although we are several months away from opening night, the 2023 Festival Season stirs and bubbles into being, and volunteers are invited to consider two more exciting opportunities.

After a short hiatus due to COVID-19, the residential housing program will resume this year. The Housing Committee seeks volunteers who might be able to host artists, either short or long term, who will join the company from mid-April through the end of June. Those who have housed artists in previous seasons have enjoyed an "up close and personal" view into the process of opera making, and many develop lasting friendships with their singers.

Also, the 50th Anniversary of OTSL will be celebrated in a few short years, and because it's never too early to start planning for a Golden Jubilee, Historian Committee co-chairs Patricia Codden and Casey Gardonio-Foat invite opera history buffs to help with digitizing mountains of photographs, press releases, programs, and memorabilia gathered over four and a half decades of OTSL operations. Imagine the treasures to be discovered in that wealth of material! If you're not sure what 'digitizing' means, rest assured that training will be given, and you'll be playing an essential part in preserving the history of this beloved company!

If you are interested in participating in either of these opportunities, please contact Tyler McKenzie, Volunteer Coordinator, at [tmckenzie@opera-stl.org](mailto:tmckenzie@opera-stl.org).

As always, many thanks for your outstanding contributions to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

# Guild Board Leadership Changes

- By Cay Sullivan

The Opera Theatre of Saint Louis Volunteer Guild carries out a never-ending churn of behind-the-scenes activities. Each year there is a new group of enthusiastic and qualified volunteers secured through the tireless work of the Nominating Committee. Here is a summary of the changes made as we begin our new Fiscal Year:

### Executive Committee

Linda Seibert - Incoming President  
Sara Fabick - Immediate Past President and Chair of Nominating Committee  
Gailya Barker - Advisor

### Incoming Chairpersons

Kellie Mandry - Boutique Operations  
Casey Gardonio-Foat - Historian  
Connie Emge - Met Auditions  
Ellen and Jan Richter - Libretti  
Jane Brader, Deanna Stevenson - Newsletter  
Steve Seele - Transportation

The Guild's Executive Committee has combined the Mailing and Office/Phone Coverage teams into one that will be called Office Support. If you are interested in leading the new Office Support Committee, or if you'd like to be considered for any chair position in the future, please get in touch with Cay Sullivan, VP for Membership, caysullivan@att.net, or Tyler McKenzie, Volunteer Coordinator, tmckenzie@opera-stl.org. As a committee chair you become a member of the Guild's Board of Directors - an oppor-

tunity to have a voice in decisions regarding the Guild, to hear interesting insights about OTSL, and to get to know your fellow volunteers - gaining connections and support in the course of your volunteer work.

### Chairpersons Stepping Down

Ann Fischer - Newsletter  
Ursula Moeller - Historian  
Linda Seibert - Transportation  
Inge Jackson - Mailing  
Rowena Van Dyke - Office/Phone Coverage  
Janet Hoyne - Met Auditions

We are thankful for your years of thoughtful and dedicated leadership with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis Guild.

In addition, Tani Wolff, who served as co-chair of both the Overture and Libretti committees, passed away earlier this year. She gave so much to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and the Volunteer Guild for decades and is sorely missed by the many people who worked with her. We offer our sincere thanks to Tani for her dedication and contributions to the Guild and OTSL and our deepest condolences to her family.

A final shout-out and thank you to all who have served, are serving, and are about to serve as the Guild's leaders. Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Guild, and our leaders help make our contributions all the more effective!

## GUILD BOARD Executive Committee

### President

Linda Seibert

### Immediate Past President

Sara Fabick

### Secretary

Pat Codden

### Treasurer

Gerry Frankenfeld

### Advisors

Gailya Barker  
Ann Fusz  
Ellen Fusz  
Janet Hoyne  
Mary Susman  
Peggy Walter Symes  
Bob Wagoner

### VP Community Engagement

Beverly Whittington

### VP Membership

Cay Sullivan

### VP Artistic Support

Janice Seele

## From the Office of The Opera Doc

## American Opera Composers

- By Robert M. Feibel



Part of the mission of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis is to present operas by American composers. Since its founding in 1976, OTSL has produced operas by about 27 American composers. During the last season, we enjoyed two operas by American composers, Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk* and Tobias Picker's *Awakenings*. In the upcoming 2023 season, we will see two more operas composed by Americans, *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd and *Treemonisha* by Scott Joplin.

The Opera Doc has written some questions about operas by American composers. All of these operas have been produced by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis since the 2013 Festival Season. The answers can be found on page 7.

1. Name an opera which begins in the state of Oklahoma.
  2. In what state does the opera mentioned in number 1 end?
  3. Name the opera based on the play *The Little Foxes*.
  4. What operatic character marries her own son?
  5. Where does the opera mentioned in number 4 take place?
  6. Who is also assassinated along with Harvey Milk?
  7. Who composed *Highway 1, U. S. A.*?
  8. What is the real name of the Champion?
  9. Who is accidentally killed by the Champion?
  10. What opera takes place in a hospital in the Bronx?
  11. Who portrayed the physician in the movie version of the opera mentioned in number 10?
  12. Who are the protagonists in "27"?
- A. Benny "The Kid" Paret
  - B. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas
  - C. *Emmeline*
  - D. *Awakenings*
  - E. Mayor George Moscone
  - F. *The Grapes of Wrath*
  - G. Robin Williams
  - H. William Grant Still
  - I. *Regina*
  - J. Emile Griffith
  - K. California
  - L. The mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts

## Getting to Know Volunteer Magan Harms

-By Deanna Stevenson



Magan Harms is the Arts and Culture Director for MindsEye, a non-profit in Belleville, Illinois, that translates vision into audio for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. As an OTSL volunteer, Magan is a member of the OTSL Community Engagement and Inclusion Council (CEIC).

When opera lovers leave a performance, we generally talk about the music and the story, the singers' voices, the sets, and stage direction. Most of us don't know about something that's happening on the catwalk over the stage. Up there with the lighting crew are professional "audio describers" providing an audio description of what's taking place below. They are the "eyes" of the partially sighted or blind who can hear an opera but can't see it. Now, through specially designed headsets, these audience members can hear the music AND the voice of an audio describer, who helps bring to life the moment when Butterfly raises a dagger, or aspects of the hospital set in *Awakenings*, where Dr. Sacks meets his patients.

Magan Harms is the director of the OTSL audio describers. She manages all the elements required for the audio-description of a performance. Magan volunteered as an audio describer at the non-profit organization MindsEye before being hired there as the director of the Audio Description Program. She understands the issues and lives the mission. "To achieve a more equitable world is what I'm about," she says. As a volunteer member of OTSL's Community Engagement and Inclusion Council, Magan is in a position to bring about the change she envisions.

Magan first heard of OTSL in 2021 when she was approached by former OTSL staff member Dawn Walter for audio description services for select performances. Dawn and Magan worked closely to solidify the MindsEye/OTSL partnership. Dawn provided information about the costumes, sets, and props of the operas, along with photographs and singer bios for use by the describers.

Magan also partners with Morgan Fisher on *Opera on the GO!* She estimates watching *Pirates of Penzance*, an *Opera on the GO!* virtual performance for children, at least fifty times to get the description right. As Magan puts it, "Opera Theatre is not a company looking to check a box to

avoid a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Rather, OTSL truly is trying to make its events and performances more accessible to everyone."

As a member of the OTSL Community Engagement and Inclusion Council, Magan helps others think about inclusion in new ways and in all its forms. What would it be like to be in a wheelchair and not be able to access a restroom? How hard is it for people with a cane to climb stairs without rails?

"We all need to be reminded that people with disabilities have the same rights as every other person in this country. That includes going to the opera and feeling welcome and included," she says. The other members of the committee are just as dedicated. Change is taking place.



## Announcing the Third Class of Clayco Fellow

-By Jane Brader

The Clayco Future Leaders Fellowship initiative was launched in 2021 to recruit and cultivate future leaders in opera and the arts from historically underrepresented populations, particularly those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

The 2022-2023 Fellows are Jenna Pieper (Administration Fellow), Linda Holyoke (Advancement Fellow), and Jhané Perdue (Artistic Fellow). They began their full-time salaried positions with OTSL on September 30 and they will serve in their departments until the end of the Festival Season next July, gaining the requisite skills, experience, and knowledge for a successful career in the world of professional opera production. Of the new Fellows, General Director, Andrew Jorgensen, said, "They're a wonderful and talented group of individuals, and we're thrilled to have them join the OTSL team."

The six Clayco Fellows from the first two years of the program now work with such prestigious organizations as the Glimmerglass Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. "We're incredibly proud of our previous classes of Fellows and are grateful for all they've taught our organization. We are encouraged by their remarkable successes since leaving the program, and we are confident that Jhané, Linda, and Jenna will add to the legacy of this initiative," said Andrew Jorgensen.

Working closely with the Fellows is Tai Oney, Administrative & Fellowship Manager. He observes that "Each fellow brings something different, new, and exciting to the table. They are eager to learn

and likewise, we are excited to learn from them as well. This cohort is a particularly special one, and I look forward to seeing what they will bring to the arts community for many years to come." On behalf of the Volunteer Guild, we extend a most heartfelt, enthusiastic welcome to these three talented individuals.



## Getting to Know Staff Member Orevia Vongsa



Opera Theatre of Saint Louis is committed to attracting, training, and advancing the careers of rising opera professionals, and Orevia Vongsa is a shining example of this. Orevia joined OTSL's annual staff as the Office Manager on September 16, 2021 and has played a substantial role in supporting the OTSL community. Orevia is a native St. Louisan but has lived in the Himalayan Mountains of India for five months, Alaska for five months, and has traveled to Nepal and New Zealand. While living in the Himalayas, she visited the Namgyal Monastery every other day and had the opportunity to see the Dalai Lama, which is one of her most cherished memories. We are very lucky to not only have Orevia in St. Louis, but also on staff at Opera Theatre.

Orevia has experience working in several capacities at performance venues in the area. She has experience in stage managing, lighting, wardrobe, and set building, but in a joking manner, claims to be a terrible carpenter. Her wide range of skills has led to opportunities with the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, the Kranzberg Arts Foundation, and most recently with the Tennessee Williams Festival. Her experience with and excitement for the technical aspects of the performing arts is a huge part of her passion for her role in the Production/Operations Department of Opera Theatre.

The role of Office Manager is unique in that it is responsible for supporting the staff but is also a very front-facing position. Whether she is disseminating information to staff, greeting visitors, or providing technical support, Orevia tackles her work with a smile. Being at the front desk allows her the opportunity to connect with other art enthusiasts and hear of their experiences. These responsibilities are much more than a job to her as she is working to support the company in its efforts to provide an "artistic escape from reality."

As if Orevia is not already busy enough, she also volunteers with and attends events of many arts organizations across the area, including the Arch City Defenders and the True/False Film Festival in Columbia, Missouri. When Orevia takes time to relax, she enjoys watching Chinese Dramas such as *The Romance of Tiger and Rose* and providing a peaceful retirement for a former classroom pet, now her good friend, Gigi, the Guinea Pig. Be sure to say "Hello" to Orevia Vongsa the next time you visit the Sally S. Levy Opera Center.

## Calendar of Events

### January 21

#### **Laffont Competition**

OTSL Guild members will volunteer at the annual Laffont Competition (formerly known as the Met Auditions).

### February 6-10

#### **Advocacy Week**

Advocacy committee members will meet with legislatures across the area to advocate for the arts. Zoom meetings can be scheduled anytime that week.

### March 3

#### **A Toast to Opera**

An opportunity to gather with friends to enjoy delicious drinks and delectable hors d'oeuvres in the Solarium space at the Ritz, capped off with a brief performance from Opera Theatre's talented artists.

### March 16, 17, 18

#### **New Works Collective**

Three 20-minute operas, commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and selected by a collective of St. Louis residents, will make their world premiere at the COCA. Three creative teams are working with OTSL's Artistic and Production staff to present stories from communities that are underrepresented in opera.

### April 14

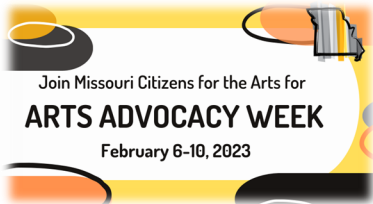
#### **OTSL to see *Champion* at The Met**

OTSL will be organizing a trip to see Terence Blanchard's *Champion* at the Metropolitan Opera

### May 6

#### **Spring Gala**

Opera Theatre's annual celebration will be held at CITYPARK in 2023, in a festive evening led by co-chairs Lori and Ted Samuels.



## Opera Doc Answers: (from page 6)

1. F *The Grapes of Wrath*; 2. K California; 3. I *Regina*; 4. C *Emmeline*; 5. L The mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts;
6. E Mayor George Mascone; 7. H William Grant Still; 8. J Emile Griffith; 9. A Benny "The Kid" Paret;
10. D *Awakenings*; 11: G Robin Williams; 12. B Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas

## Special Thank You

**We offer our most sincere gratitude to the many volunteers who have made this edition of *Overture* possible.**

Jane Brader

Andrew Jorgensen

Christine Scherzinger

Jamie Spencer

Robert M. Feibel

Diane McCullough

Linda Schulte

Deanna Stevenson

Linda Holyoke

Tyler McKenzie

Linda Siebert

Cay Sullivan