The Metropolitan Opera Guild

ANNUAL REPORT
2019–20
Dear Friends,

This year has presented the Guild with unprecedented challenges and wonderful learning opportunities. We are truly grateful for the tireless dedication our staff and Board have shown toward ensuring the success of the Guild’s programming. With their innovative work, the Guild has seen marvelous programs develop and grow, creating exciting possibilities to continue to foster our community of opera lovers as well as reach new audiences for years to come.

During our 2019–20 season, the Guild was able to serve more than 13,000 students and teachers at nearly 200 schools in person and online. An additional 6,000 individuals participated in our vast array of community engagement opportunities, with an additional 500 guests attending our special events.

OPERA NEWS reached 50,000 subscribers, and our social media pages have collected a sum of more than 166,000 followers and continue growing every day.

As we look forward to another wonderful year of programming, the Guild reflects on its accomplishments as well as the challenges that lie ahead. Through virtual programs and digital media, our departments have created new ways for audiences to experience the artistry of opera. I am personally delighted to share with you these changes and accomplishments in the following pages.

I could not be more appreciative of your support during the past year. Whether it be through support as a donor, partner, or sponsor, each contribution has been essential to our success. Together, we have adapted this year, and together we will grow in the coming year. From all of us at the Guild, thank you for investing in our work and the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Miller, Jr.
President
The Metropolitan Opera Guild is a nationally recognized arts education organization. Its mission is to enrich the lives of young people and adults through an awareness and deeper appreciation of opera while supporting the Metropolitan Opera by expanding its reach to diverse communities and a wider audience.

At the Guild, we believe in the value of arts education and its impact at any age. Our work is designed to put the student first, resulting in programs that continue to evolve and adapt as partnerships with schools develop and audiences become more engaged in community programs. This year, in response to the impact COVID-19 had on schools, the adaptive nature of the Guild’s programming allowed Teaching Artists and Guild staff to expand exciting digital content to create new offerings that met the specific needs of Guild partner schools. Among this year’s highlights are Opera-Based Learning at Home, a virtual classroom for learners of all ages; Online Learning, a platform for our community engagement lectures and adult learning opportunities; and our Metropolitan Opera Guild Podcast, which has grown significantly this year.

“MY WORK WITH THE GUILD HAS TAUGHT ME A LOT ABOUT MAKING VIDEOS FOR LEARNING … [VIRTUAL LESSONS] GAVE ME A LOT OF TIME TO FIND A LOT OF DIFFERENT WAYS TO REACH THE STUDENTS THROUGH THIS PARTICULARLY NEW MEDIUM.”

—SHAWN FARRAR, GUILD TEACHING ARTIST

Guild Teaching Artist Lauren Scales during an Urban Voices remote lesson for students at Staten Island’s P.S. R.373
SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Since its first student matinee in 1937, the Guild has pioneered hands-on arts learning that is integrated with classroom curriculum. We have always made it a priority to invest in our students by ensuring our programs are of the highest quality and adapt to the changing needs of our schools. In doing so, we offer opera-based learning opportunities as a creative tool for schools to provide comprehensive arts instruction, while bringing core curricula to life. This year, we significantly expanded our digital offerings by enhancing online resources for our teaching artists, classroom teachers, and students of all ages.

OPERATION—BASED LEARNING AT HOME

Opera-Based Learning at Home was launched in the spring of 2020 as a virtual classroom with video and online resources for students, parents, and educators to use for at-home learning. Our talented Guild Teaching Artists and education staff curate content on the website with classroom goals in mind. The site features videos, worksheets, and at-home exercises that are broken down by age group and familiarity with opera. Opera-Based Learning at Home allows students all over the world the freedom to engage with and explore opera on their own time. See all the options for yourself at metguildeducation.org/at-home-learning.

ACCESS OPERA

The Guild’s longest-running school program, Access Opera goes beyond the traditional field trip experience by providing students with the unforgettable opportunity of seeing a live performance at one of the world’s greatest opera houses. We provide teachers with classroom materials to ensure their students’ experience is a meaningful one by drawing connections across literature, social studies, foreign language, and the arts. All Access Opera participating teachers receive free professional development workshops. During the 2019–20 school year, this program served 11,238 students and teachers from 155 schools.

URBAN VOICES: A CHORAL MUSIC INITIATIVE

Urban Voices: A Choral Music Initiative is a 20–30 week intensive music residency program that pairs a Guild Teaching Artist with classroom teacher(s) to deliver weekly instruction in choral-singing. Students learn repertoire customized to their school’s curriculum that is designed to engage them in literature, history, and foreign languages through the music of different cultures and time periods. Teachers consistently report that participating students demonstrate increased critical thinking, collaboration, and self-reflecting skills. The residency culminates in concerts and performances throughout the year. Students in the third grade or above also have the opportunity to attend a dress rehearsal at the Met. During the 2019–20 school year, this program served 1,681 students and teachers in 65 classrooms.

STUDENTS COMPOSE OPERA

Students Compose Opera is an 18-week interdisciplinary arts learning program in which a Guild Teaching Artist works alongside the classroom teacher(s) to facilitate the creation of an original opera based on a short story, poem, or historical event from classroom curriculum. Students are involved in all aspects of the creation. They write and compose the entire libretto and score, help with staging and design, and perform the finished product for their school and community. Schools have reported improved literacy in students who participated in the program, as well as improved cooperation and communication skills. For students in the third grade or above, this program includes a field trip to the Met to attend a final dress rehearsal. During the 2019–20 school year, this program served 1,237 students and teachers in 47 classrooms.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Learners of all ages come to the Guild to dive deeper into the world of opera through our intensive workshops, pre-performance talks, and community outreach programs. Our community engagement programs cover a range of topics from the basics of opera to in-depth courses of study to behind-the-scenes visits at the Met. In recent years, the Guild has developed digital content as an extension of our efforts to connect to our broader audience around the world.

ONLINE LEARNING
Our various online courses are specifically designed to provide distance learning opportunities to anyone interested in delving deeper into opera without ever needing to step foot on site. Each course features video lectures, supplemental readings, and, when applicable, score excerpts. Now in its second year, our online learning platform (accessible by visiting metguild.thinkific.com/) has seen tremendous success. Popular offerings this year included our “Introduction to Score Reading” and “Opera Boot Camp: Conductors and Conducting” courses.

PODCAST
The Metropolitan Opera Guild Podcast allows opera lovers and newcomers alike to connect to the current Met season from anywhere and at any time. With exciting guest lecturers, artist interviews, and more, podcasts are released nearly every week and are free to listeners around the world. We have released over 150 episodes to date and have reached more than a million listeners across five continents.

LECTURES AND COURSES OF STUDY
Lectures, interviews, pre-performance talks, and panel discussions by Met artists, Guild staff, and scholars offer audiences a deeper understanding of the opera world. Additionally, the Guild offers ongoing courses to those who wish to delve even further into opera. This season, the Guild put on 78 adult learning events.

SCORE-DESK TICKETS
Score-desk seats are equipped with a desk and reading light for the study of an opera’s score during the opera’s performance. The Metropolitan Opera House’s excellent acoustics offer a unique experience to opera lovers interested in studying the music at a fundamental level. This season, more than 200 performances at the Met were available for score-desk tickets with more than 1,200 individuals participating.

BACKSTAGE TOURS
The Guild works closely with the Metropolitan Opera to provide the public with a behind-the-scenes look at one of the world’s premier performing arts organizations. Tours offer a fascinating backstage look at the scenic and carpentry shops, rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms, and stage area. This season, we gave 79 backstage tours. More than 2,700 individuals participated in our backstage tours this season.

HIGH SCHOOL OPERA SINGERS INTENSIVE
This five-day intensive is designed to inform and inspire developing young singers as they explore options for college or conservatory study and beyond. The program offers students the chance to participate in a variety of workshops and training sessions led by guest teachers and Guild staff, including daily master classes, song interpretation, audition tips and techniques; a backstage tour of the Metropolitan Opera House; and an informative chat with an opera artist.

INTERNSHIPS
Guild interns are students pursuing careers in arts administration and education. The positions are tailored to the skills and goals of each intern, who works closely with their supervisors to hone their skills in a supportive and encouraging environment.

VOLUNTEERING
Guild Volunteers are opera lovers who donate their time and passion to lead backstage tours, assist at final dress rehearsals, and involve themselves in other activities that support the Guild’s mission. Each season, we are fortunate to welcome approximately 90 volunteers to the Guild.

Clockwise from Top Left: Audience members studying course material while enjoying one of our popular Guild lectures.

Bass-baritone Luca Pisaroni speaks to students in the High School Opera Singers Intensive.

Edwin Jhamal Davis, Kofi Haymord, and Adam Unger receive applause during the Exploring Low Voices—Baritones and Basses master class.

Members of the public enjoying a backstage tour of the Metropolitan Opera House.
SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE GUILD

Since its founding, the Guild has produced events to commemorate opera’s past as well as its future. Guild events have always been a way of coming together in celebration of the art form and those who dedicate their lives to bring opera to us all.

Always a highly anticipated and star-studded event, the Metropolitan Opera Guild’s Annual Luncheon pays tribute to opera giants while raising funds to support our education programs. The 85th Annual Luncheon: Diamond Jubilee was no exception. Opera legends Martina Arroyo and Teresa Stratas were celebrated for the 60th anniversary of their Met debuts. The event featured moving tributes from soprano Harolyn Blackwell, mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, and bass-baritone Eric Owens, with a musical tribute by soprano Ailyn Pérez and tenor Matthew Polenzani. The legacy of the Luncheon continues brightly as this year more than 500 individuals attended in support of these great artists and the Guild’s mission.

Each year, the Guild also celebrates opera stars at the OPERA NEWS Awards. Although we were not able to present the 15th Annual OPERA NEWS Awards as planned, we are thankful for so many who donated their table and ticket purchases in support of our education programs or participated in our online auction. Thanks to their support, the OPERA NEWS Awards raised $420,000 in support of the Guild’s programs.

During the 2019–20 season, special events at the Guild helped raise more than $1 million in funds to support our education initiatives.

OPERA NEWS

OPERA NEWS, currently the largest-circulation classical music publication in North America, was first issued in May 1936. A six-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Publisher Award, OPERA NEWS is the only magazine in the U.S. that covers opera nationally every month. Editorial content includes profiles of up-and-coming singers as well as established artists of the present and past, features on the art form’s history, as well as new works and productions; performance, CD, and DVD reviews; and opinion pieces on the current opera scene.

This year, OPERA NEWS tackled timely topics such as the post-pandemic landscape for classical music in the June issue with an essay by Anthony Roth Costanza and the enduring impact of Porgy and Bess in a thoughtful article from January by Pulitzer Prize–winning critic Philip Kennicott. OPERA NEWS also presented stunning features on this season’s Met singers, OPERA NEWS honorees, hundreds of performance reviews from around the world and interviews with rising stars and opera legends.

In addition to the printed magazine, OPERA NEWS also develops exclusive online content, including audio and video features and breaking news in opera. The publication also continues to engage its growing audience through social media platforms with nearly 145,000 worldwide followers to date. See what OPERA NEWS is doing now by visiting operanews.com.

Clockwise from Top Left: Stephanie Blythe gives a tribute to Teresa Stratas at the Annual Luncheon. Ailyn Pérez and Matthew Polenzani, with accompanist Ken Noda, take their bows after singing a duet in tribute to Martina Arroyo and Teresa Stratas. Artists and guests applaud 85th Annual Luncheon Honoree Teresa Stratas. 85th Annual Luncheon Honoree Martina Arroyo expresses words of gratitude. All photography by Dario Acosta.
The Metropolitan Opera Guild is grateful to the supporters who helped make our programs possible in 2019–20.

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For more information about how you can support the Guild’s education programs, please contact Greg Joye, Director of Development, at 212.769.7025 or gjoye@metguild.org.