

L'Arria

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SEATTLE
Opera Guild

July 2017 • Volume 66 • Issue 1

Mission Statement

The Seattle Opera Guild is a non-profit organization supporting and promoting opera. The guild provides financial support for Seattle Opera, funds vocal scholarships and promotes opera education for all age groups to ensure future opera audiences.

President's Message



Photo credit: Ann Milam

These are interesting times. SOG members enjoyed our Diamond Jubilee celebrations and our next chapter begins with our 61st season. We remain vital but must accept changes in our methods of communication and outreach. Like many of you, I like paper copies of our Directory and *L'Arria* but any day without computer assistance is tiresome and tedious. We can get more done with 21st century technology.

Communication, or lack of it, often impedes our good intentions. It is my hope that we will keep our lines of communication open and clear, within our Guild and between ourselves and Seattle Opera, with an accent on positive steps we may all take towards our continued success. Please be a part of this communication. It is important that our Board and Executive Committee know what you think and what you want. Many of you have provided me with ideas and inspiration over the years. Never more than now, we are "in this together." In the coming months we hope to have an improved website and will continue our popular Facebook postings. Thank you for renewing your membership!



Award of Distinction

Marilyn Leck was honored with the prestigious SOG Award of Distinction at our recent Annual Meeting. She has made many contributions to the Guild over the years, including serving as President (1999-2000) and Chair for our 2006 Holiday Soirée and 1999 Divas and Diamonds Fundraiser. More recently, in 2014, 2015 and 2016, Marilyn was Co-Chair of fundraisers coordinated by the Mercer Island, Allegro and Lakeside Preview Groups. These highly successful events raised in excess of \$70,000 for the Guild! She also made major contributions as a member of the organizing committee of our recent Diamond Jubilee celebration.

Marilyn has been a member of SOG since 1988 and until recently, was chair of our Mercer Island Preview Group. Marilyn is unfailingly gracious, smiling and energetic. We all appreciate her great attitude—she is always willing to lend her expert advice and assistance!

Marilyn was presented with a framed document of thanks for her many contributions to SOG and a Nordstrom gift certificate.

Emily Hartley chaired the Award of Distinction Committee. Members of the committee were Florence Rose Thompson, Robert Milnor, Peggy O'Brien-Murphy and Gayle Charlesworth.



Our 60th Anniversary Luncheon

by Ann Milam

Our annual luncheon was held June 8 at the Seattle Yacht Club. Former President Peggy O'Brien-Murphy welcomed the attendees and introduced President Christine Szabadi, who recognized our past Presidents and spoke of our accomplishments over the past 60 years. She thanked the board and preview chairs, and presented gifts to Barbara Howell and Van Johnson for their outstanding service. Christine also introduced past SOG Training Grant awardees Corinna Quilliam, Rachele Moss, Erich Parce, Julia Benzinger, Allison Pohl and Laurie Geyer.

Nominations Chair Joan Herald introduced incoming board members, who were elected by voice vote. Peggy thanked Christine for her service with a gold SOG lyre pendant and Gayle Charlesworth, incoming President, gifted Christine with a unique bracelet. Gayle then recognized previous Award of Distinction recipients and presented this year's Award to Marilyn Leck (page 1). Marilyn expressed her appreciation for this prestigious honor.

Christine presented SOG's donations to Aidan Lang, who is Seattle Opera's General Director, and Barbara Lynn Jamison, Director of Education and Community Engagement. Aidan spoke about the Opera's accomplishments and the 2018 opening of the Opera's new building. Other Seattle Opera representatives were Janell Johnson, Lisa Bury, Allison Rabbit and Alex Kyger.

Members of the luncheon committee were Sandra Boyd, Betty Carter, Marilyn Leck, Bob Milnor and Florence Thompson. The nominating committee comprised Jeffrey Ahia-Beech, Carol Corbin, Nick Elder and Florence Thompson. Regina Thomas organized the musical program; Kathleen Martin and Zoe Erickson sold script and raffle tickets; and Ray Ernst and Ann Milam were photographers.

Soprano Allison Pohl, cellist Alistair MacRae and pianist David McDade presented a memorable recital. They performed selections from Steven Gerber, J.S. Bach, Franz Lehár and others. We all enjoyed the lively singalongs conducted by Allison, who received a SOG Training Grant Award last year and is clearly on her way to a major operatic career!



Photo credit: Ann Milam

Greeters (L to R): Suzy Wakefield, Ingrid Welti and Liz Bagshaw.



Photo credit: Ann Milam

Allison Pohl and David McDade.

Incoming board members (L to R): Christine Szabadi, Jeffrey Ahia-Beech, Nick Elder; Gayle Charlesworth, Sally Buckingham, Joan Herald, Jean Stewart, Suzy Wakefield, Ann Milam and Kathleen Martin.



Photo credit: Ray Ernst

Our Festive Training Grant Competition

Our second annual competition, held on April 7, was a grand affair at the Women's University Club. After an introduction by President Christine Szabadi, the contestants were Lauren James (soprano), Kwangsuk Ku (baritone), Ibidunni Ojikutu (soprano), Lucy Weber (mezzo soprano), Rachelle Moss (contralto) and Lori Williams (soprano). The singers were accompanied by David McDade, Seattle Opera's principal coach, pianist and assistant chorus master.

The judges were Regina Thomas, Kathleen Martin and Bernard Kwiram (Director/Conductor at Tacoma Ballet and Opera, Puget Sound Concert Opera and Seattle Gilbert and Sullivan Society).

The winners were Lucy Weber, Rachelle Moss and Ibidunni Ojikutu; they were each awarded \$2000. The new Suzy Mygatt Wakefield Encouragement Award of \$1000 was won by Kwangsuk Ku.

The event was organized by the Training Grant Committee: Sue Buske, Regina Thomas, Dale Hogle, Julie Thompson, Newby Herrod, Christine Szabadi, Skip Dempsey and Kathleen Martin. Please remember that your Memorial and Tribute donations go directly to funding this program. Let's keep growing this valuable resource to young singers!



Meet Our SOG Training Grant Competition Winners

Lucy Weber (Mezzo Soprano): Lucy is currently a touring artist with Seattle Opera. She has sung the roles of the Stepmother and Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella en España*, the touring show of Seattle Opera's Education and Community Engagement Department. Lucy performed the roles of Raven and Eagle with Seattle Opera's commissioned work, *Our Earth*. She appeared in concert with Sun Valley Opera and has performed with Ohio Light Opera, Tacoma Opera, Lyric Opera Northwest, Spectrum Dance theater and most recently, the Seattle Shakespeare Company in its production of *Medea*. She is a member of the Seattle Opera Chorus.



Lucy Weber

Photo credit: Genevieve Hathaway.



Rachelle Moss

Rachelle Moss (Contralto): Rachelle also received a SOG Training Grant award last season. In the 2016-2017 season, Rachelle was an Apprentice Artist with Sarasota Opera, where she received the Mary Cook Memorial Award for Outstanding Apprentice Artist from Sarasota Opera Guild and the Stuart R. Silver Scholarship from Sarasota Opera. She was praised as "regal" by Sarasota's *Your Observer* for her portrayal of Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. Rachelle also received the Helen Price Encouragement Award from the Washington District of MONC NW. She recently debuted with Puget Sound Concert Opera as Afra in *La Wally*.



Ibidunni Ojikutu

Ibidunni Ojikutu (Soprano): Ibidunni made her Seattle Opera debut as Strawberry Woman in *Porgy and Bess* in 2011. *Opera News* said of her performance, "Ibidunni Ojikutu's turn as Strawberry Woman was as charming as the lilt in her voice." Recent credits include a debut at Benaroya Hall with Showtunes Theater Company in *Finian's Rainbow* and creating the role of Sally Hemings in Garrett Fisher's new opera, *Monticello Wakes*, at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Ibidunni recently performed Pamina and 2nd Lady in Seattle Opera's previews of *The Magic Flute*.

Kwangsuk Ku (Baritone): Kwangsuk is a regular chorister with Seattle Opera who sang a mainstage role in this season's production of *La Traviata* and in the chorus of *Katya Kabanova*. In the upcoming season he will perform roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Il Barbiere di Seville*. Last season Kwangsuk performed in Seattle Opera's *Nabucco*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Der fliegende Holländer*.



Kwangsuk Ku

The winners (L to R) were Kwangsuk Ku, Lucy Weber, Rachelle Moss and Ibidunni Ojikutu.



Singer Spotlight: Clayton Brainerd

This Portland Oregon born, award-winning baritone received a SOG Training Grant award in 1993, early in his career. He has amassed a wonderful list of accolades and

successes singing leading roles with major orchestras and opera companies of the world under the baton of conductors including Seiji Ozawa, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gerard Schwarz, Charles Dutoit, Jeffery Tate, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Christophe von Dohnanyi and James Levine. His imposing stage presence and magnificent voice have electrified audiences in Europe, New Zealand, Canada, North and South America, Korea and Japan.

Highlights of the past few seasons include performances with the Seattle Symphony, including *Missa Solemnis*, *Mozart Requiem* and a recording of *Beethoven 9th* and *Mahler 8th*. Mr. Brainerd has sung *Wotan* around the world, including Scotland, New Zealand, Argentina and across America. His versatility encompasses not only Wagnerian roles, but also many in the Italian and French operatic repertoire.



Seattle Opera's Madama Butterfly: Down Memory Lane!

By Ann Milam

Seattle Opera closed its 2012 season with something entirely new: a free, live HD simulcast of the opening night of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on a huge screen in KeyArena.

"Bringing a Seattle Opera performance to everyone has long been my dream," said Speight Jenkins, Seattle Opera's General Director, in a news release about the May 5 simulcast.

The public was given 8,000 free tickets and the Arena was packed with adults and children, including many first-time operagoers. SOG members played an important role, selling raffle tickets and informing attendees about our organization. An announcement promoting SOG was projected on the giant screen before the performance began. We all had a wonderful time and are looking forward to our new 2017 production, which opens August 5!



MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Interested in joining a group that provides support to Seattle Opera?

Join Seattle Opera Guild

- Attend preview parties with singers
- Provide financial support for young opera singers

For details: seattleopera.org/guild

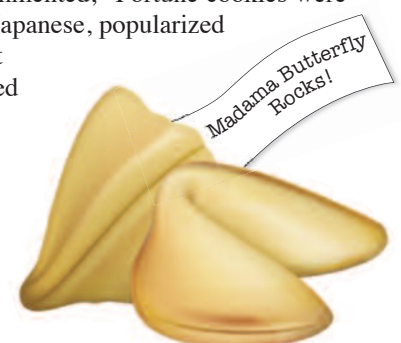


The True Origin of Fortune Cookies

Looking for a Japanese treat to celebrate *Madama Butterfly*? Consider fortune cookies! You can even order custom cookies with opera messages. And no, these treats are NOT Chinese! They actually originated in Japan in the late 1800's. In the US, fortune cookies were first served to visitors in San Francisco's Japanese Tea Garden, part of the 1894 World's Fair. The oldest public Japanese garden in the US, this park comprises five acres of manicured paths, ponds, sculptures and bridges.

After the World's Fair closed, Makoto Hagiwara converted the temporary fairgrounds into this beautifully landscaped park. His family maintained the Garden until 1942, when they were forced into an internment camp. The garden, renamed the Oriental Tea Garden, fell into disarray until 1952, when it was reinstated as the Japanese Tea Garden.

As one wag commented, "Fortune cookies were introduced by the Japanese, popularized by the Chinese, but ultimately consumed by Americans!"



UPCOMING OPERA EVENTS *By Ann Milam*

July 28, 2017

Sarah Larsen in Recital
Seattle Art Song Society
Queen Anne Christian Church
1316 3rd Ave W, Seattle, WA 98119
www.seattleartsongsociety.org

August 5-19, 2017

Madama Butterfly
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
(206) 389-7676
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

September 23, 2017

Bern Herbolzheimer Celebration
Julia Benzinger, Erica Row & John Marzano
Seattle Art Song Society
Queen Anne Christian Church
1316 3rd Ave W, Seattle, WA 98119
www.seattleartsongsociety.org

October 1, 2017

Songs of Love and Passion
Pacific MusicWorks
St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral
1245 10th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98102
(206) 323-0300

October 12-22, 2017

Jenůfa - Pacific Opera Victoria
Royal Theatre of Victoria, BC
www.pov.bc.ca/2017-18
250-385-0222

October 13-21, 2017

Turandot - Vancouver Opera
Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC
www.vancouveropera.ca/2017-2018-Season-and-Festival
(604) 682-2871

October 14-28, 2017

The Barber of Seville
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
(206) 389-7676
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

October 27-November 5, 2017

Tales of Hoffman
Pacific Northwest Opera at McIntyre Hall
2501 E. College Way, Mount Vernon, WA
(360) 416-7727 Ext. 2
www.mcintyrehall.org

October 28, 2017

Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*
Pacific MusicWorks
St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral
1245 10th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98102
(206) 323-0300

October 28-November 5, 2017

Marriage of Figaro
Tacoma Opera at Rialto Theater
www.tacomaopera.com
(253) 627-7789

October 29, 2017

Metropolitan Opera National Council NW
Washington District Competition
Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall
200 University St, Seattle, WA 9810

November 5, 2017

Wilderness Mute
Music of Remembrance
Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall
200 University St, Seattle, WA 9810
www.musicofremembrance.org
(206) 365-7770

January 13-27, 2018

Così Fan Tutte
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
(206) 389-7676
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

January 29-21, 2018

L'Elisir d'Amore
Vancouver Opera
Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC
<https://www.vancouveropera.ca/2017-2018-Season-and-Festival>
(604) 682-2871

February 3-11, 2018

Carmen
Tacoma Opera
Pantages Theater
www.tacomaopera.com
(253) 627-7789

February 15-25, 2018

La bohème
Pacific Opera Victoria
Royal Theatre of Victoria, BC
<http://www.pov.bc.ca/2017-18.html>
(250) 385-0222

February 24-March 10, 2018

Beatrice and Benedict
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
(206) 389-7676
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

March 4, 2018

Metropolitan Opera National Council NW
Pacific NW Regional Competition
Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall
200 University St, Seattle, WA 9810

April 6-15, 2018

Turandot
Pacific Northwest Opera
McIntyre Hall
2501 East College Way, Mt. Vernon, WA
(360) 416-7727 Ext. 2
<http://www.mcintyrehall.org>

April 14-22, 2018

The Merry Widow
Tacoma Opera
Rialto Theater
www.tacomaopera.com
253-591-5893

April 19-29, 2018

Rinaldo
Pacific Opera Victoria
Royal Theatre of Victoria, BC
www.pov.bc.ca/2017-18
(250) 385-0222

April 27-May 5, 2018

Eugene Onegin
Vancouver Opera
Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC
www.vancouveropera.ca/2017-2018-Season-and-Festival
(604) 682-2871

April 28-May 6, 2018

The Overcoat: An Opera
Vancouver Opera
Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC
www.vancouveropera.ca/2017-2018-Season-and-Festival
(604) 682-2871

May 5-19, 2018

Aida
Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall
(206) 389-7676
www.seattleopera.org/tickets

May 12, 2018

Roman Holiday: Young Handel's Italian Adventures
Pacific MusicWorks
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
4400 86th Ave. SE,
Mercer Island, WA 98040
(206) 232-1572

May 20, 2018

Gaman
Music of Remembrance
Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall
200 University St, Seattle, WA 9810
www.musicofremembrance.org
(206) 365-7770

In Memoriam

Donn Talenti

Our dear friend Donn Talenti passed away at age 84 on March 28, 2017. Donn served SOG in many ways: President (2003-2004), Chair and Treasurer of our M/QA Preview Group, VP of Education and administrator of our unique opera previews. In recognition of his many contributions, Donn received the SOG Award of Distinction in 2005. With his partner, famed opera singer Julian Patrick, Donn contributed a great deal to Seattle Opera as a long time subscriber/donor, artist aide and ticket office agent. If there's an Opera Heaven, Donn's in the front row sitting next to Julian, happily enjoying an aria by Callas. And she'll surely blow them kisses when she's done!

Some of Donn's friends remember him fondly:

Evelyn Simpson (a long time artist aide with Donn): I first met Donn and Julian many years ago—we became dear friends and spent a lot of time together. I am so sad that Donn had serious health issues in recent years. May his soul rest in peace.

Corinna Quilliam (young opera singer): Donn was absolutely convinced that one day I will sing on the biggest stages and he always made certain I knew it. His belief in me and my talent bolstered my flagging spirits many times as I've made my way through this, at times disheartening, career. I hold his words of encouragement close to my heart and know that one day I will fulfill his vision for my voice.

Evette Glauber (former SOG President and Seattle Opera board member): Donn was caring, loving, loyal, generous and supportive in every endeavor. He was respected and admired particularly for his courage and strength in confronting adversity. Donn was dedicated and his contributions to the Opera and SOG earned him the Award of Distinction. He gave of himself unstintingly and served us with pride and enthusiasm, making my relationship working closely with him on the SOG Board and Education Committee a privilege and pleasure.

Lisa Bergman (KING FM announcer, pianist and Director of NW Opera in Schools Etc.): Donn was a constant source of inspiration for those around him. He was unflinching in his devotion to the human voice and its power of connection. Donn was himself a conduit of love and support from the center of his beliefs—a force *majeure*—yet always cuddly and inviting. May he rejoin Julian knowing how much we all miss them both.

Glenda Williams (accompanist and director): Donn was a real old-school gentleman and we all looked forward to seeing him at musical events. We're grateful to him for his support of many young singers and his boundless enthusiasm.



Florence Thompson (former SOG President and board member): Donn was one of my dearest friends. He was a real force in SOG and always so professional in his work. Besides being fun loving, kind and generous, his background in business served him well in all of his SOG endeavors. We will all miss him terribly.

Casey Carlson-Iffert (fellow artist aide): Donn was a NY transplant who added a lot to Seattle's music world. He was a gatherer of people and ideas as well as a generous provider of good advice on fundraisers, hot pot chili on a snowy night and locations for opera previews. Donn will be remembered for his affability, kindness to all and his joy of music.

Ann Milam (SOG board member/Editor and Seattle Opera volunteer): I had great respect and affection for Donn. He was an expert on all things opera and willing to tackle challenging tasks. With his excellent business background, he contributed his expertise in finance to our Guild, preview groups and fundraisers. He also had a great sense of humor and told us wonderful stories about Julian and his experiences in the great world of opera. We will all miss him very much!

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to SOG c/o Cheryl Lundgren or: The Julian Patrick Vocal Camp for Gifted High School Singers, Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, 127 South Mission St. Wenatchee, WA 98801

Butterfly: The Fiasco

The première at La Scala in Milan on February 17, 1904 was a dreadful experience for Giacomo Puccini. As described in *Musice e Musicisti*:

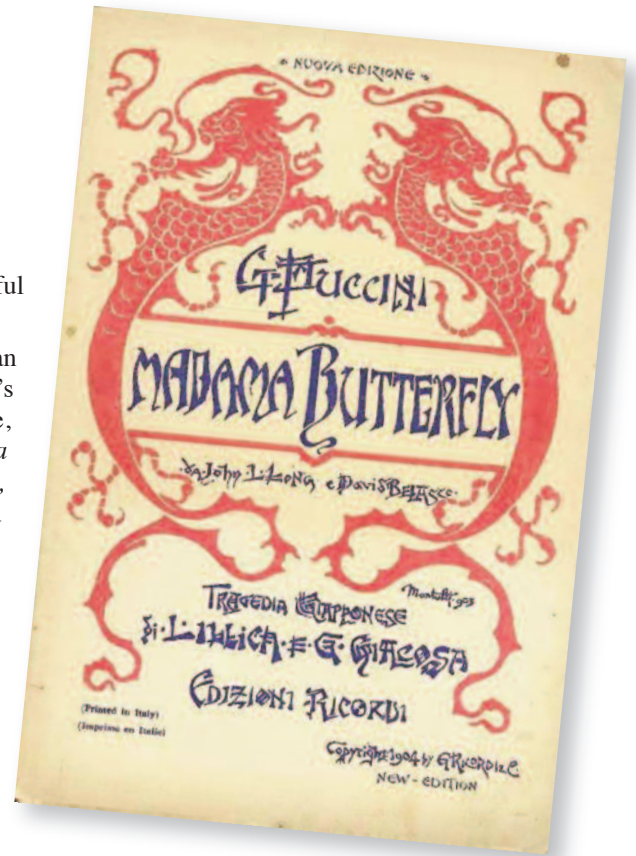
The La Scala audience was hostile from the beginning. Problems began with Butterfly's entrance. Approaching her new home, she and the women's chorus sang "*Quanto cielo.*" To belligerent elements of the audience, Butterfly's descending line resembled a melody from Puccini's earlier *La Bohème*. When Puccini's detractors heard the aria, they cried out, "*Bohème, Bohème!*" (Italian audiences in the 19th century were unforgiving of a composer's deliberate or inadvertent borrowing from another opera.)

Act II: The demonstrators redoubled their efforts. Only the letter scene and flower duet were audible. At one point, owing to a draft or sudden movement by the soprano, Rosina Storchio, her kimono billowed up in front. Several cries of "Butterfly is pregnant!" were heard, along with the more offensive "Ah, the little Toscanini!" referring to her highly publicized affair with the conductor.

Butterfly's night vigil provided another opportunity for buffoonery. Performers with bird-whistles were placed throughout the opera house to greet the dawn. The audience joined in with various animal sounds of their own, reducing this poetic gesture to lunacy. Although accounts differ, the final curtain fell to either "a glacial silence" or to howls, laughter and disdain.

Reviews the following day were unforgiving, boasting such headlines as "Puccini hissed!" and "Fiasco at La Scala!" Devastated, Puccini described the incident as a "lynching" and withdrew the score. Although this meant a financial loss for La Scala, they complied and Puccini returned his fee of 20,000 Lire.

However, convinced that the opera would succeed in a smaller theater, Puccini made revisions and presented *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia. He was right; the work was a success and has remained so ever since!



In Memoriam

Nancy Lee Dickerson (1938-2017)

Nancy Dickerson, a long time member of our Bellini and Parties & Preview groups, died March 21. Born in Marshalltown, Iowa, she graduated with a BA in English from Iowa State University and an MA in Counseling from the University of Iowa. Nancy was a resident of Bellevue, WA, where she was a counselor at Bellevue High School. She was a strong supporter of the arts, including Seattle Opera, and a member of the English Speaking Union. Nancy is survived by her son, daughter, grandson and granddaughter. Remembrances may be made to the St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Medina, WA.

Hester Robinson Page (1923-2017)

Hester passed away on March 28. She was a member of our M/QA preview group. A long time Seattle resident, Hester was married to Don Page, *P.I.* Marine Editor, from 1966-1984 and a longtime companion of Robert L. Dickerson.

Hester worked for several small securities firms: Martin O. Nelson, Glenn E. Hinton and Robert M. MacRae. She also belonged to American Society of Women Accountants, Washington Athletic Club, Mountaineers, Alpha Phi Sorority, Young Republicans and Magnolia United Church of Christ.

She is survived by her daughter, Nancy Leake Warren of Venice, CA, sister Myrtle Christensen, Des Moines, WA and several nieces and nephews.

SEATTLE *Opera Guild*

2226 Eastlake Ave E.
Box 222
Seattle, WA 98102

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Editorial Staff:

Editor: Ann H. Milam

Editorial Board: Liz Bagshaw, Gayle Charlesworth,
Dennis Glauber, Kathleen Martin, Regina Thomas &
Suzy Wakefield

Digital Communications: Van Johnson

Web Manager: Seamus Smith

Graphics/Printing: Spot-on Print & Design
425-558-7768

Submissions:

Text and Photographs to Ann Milam: annmilam@uw.edu

If email is not available, the Editor will accept a typed
article. Mail to: 725 9th Ave, Apt. 1206
Seattle, WA 98104

Photographs should include subjects' names & name
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Editorial Policy: Editorial changes to submitted articles,
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Deadline for September issue of *L'Aria*: August 1, 2017

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