

OPERA IN THE
OZARKS
AT INSPIRATION POINT

GOOD NEWS LETTER

Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony
16311 Highway 62 West
Eureka Springs, Arkansas 72632

December 2020
Don Dagenais, Editor

Chris Cathcart is New Operations Director

Chris Cathcart has been named the new Operations Director for Opera in the Ozarks, assisting our General Director Nancy Preis. Chris started work in the spring and has been instrumental in much of the on-site and planning work done for Opera in the Ozarks over the past few months.



Chris is a Los Angeles native and grew up in an entertainment family. He started performing at the age of 3 and spent most of his childhood as an actor and singer. In college he began providing production management for various student films, theater productions, commercial projects and concerts, most notably the Malibu Earth Day Celebration, a 1992 outdoor concert attracting 25,000 attendees.

In 1994 Chris moved to Branson, Missouri to open the 2,200-seat Welk Resort Theatre. He did not plan on staying but fell in love with the Ozarks. "I moved to Missouri for six months 26 years ago," he says.

In his 25+ years as production/stage manager at the Welk Resort Theatre he worked with some of the biggest names in entertainment including The Beach Boys, B.B. King, Chuck Berry, Huey Lewis and The News, Tony Orlando, Andy Williams, Glen Campbell, Ray Stevens, Pat Benatar and many others.

He also worked on five nationally televised shows at the Welk Theatre and hosted hundreds of conferences, concerts, competitions and events. He also produced and wrote several original shows and produced the Broadway musicals *Shrek* and *The Million Dollar Quartet*.

Chris is married to Lori, his wife of 25 years, and they have a son, Jack.

Welcome to Opera in the Ozarks, Chris! We are delighted to have you join our team.

Opera in the Ozarks is Planning a 2021 Season "In the Bubble"

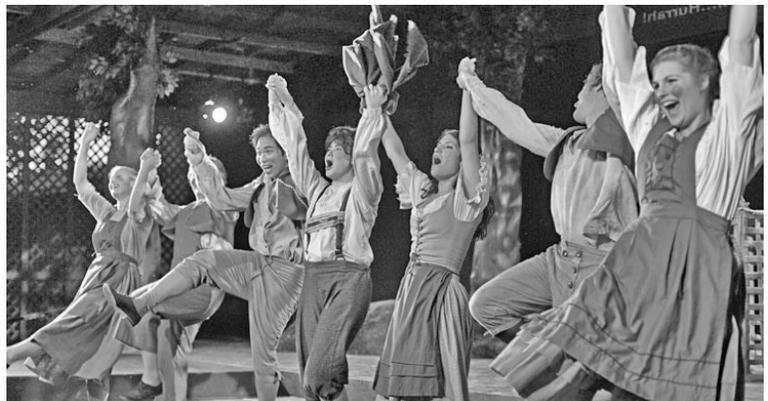
Opera in the Ozarks has announced an unusual season planned for the summer of 2021.

Due to the expectation of there being continued restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, Opera in the Ozarks is planning on maintaining a "bubble" around the campus for any directors, performers, orchestra musicians, and other staff who are brought to Eureka Springs a few days before the summer session begins. They would all be tested for Covid-19 and isolated for several days before the session begins.

When all have cleared quarantine, Opera in the Ozarks would take place much as in years past, except that nobody would be allowed to leave the campus. A few outsiders such as certain grounds crew, kitchen crew, and so forth would be allowed inside the "bubble" but only after taking stringent precautions.

Performances would be held as usual in the theater, but audience members would need to stay well back from the stage and be socially distant in order to protect the performers and others in the "bubble."

Artistic Director Tom Cockrell has determined that only two operas, rather than three, will take place in the summer of 2021. Those will be the Massenet comedy *Cendrillon* and the Donizetti drama *Lucia di Lammermoor*. A revised schedule and other details will be announced in the spring.



Won't it be fun when we can gather together again at Inspiration Point and see your fine young singers kick up their heels and celebrate a return to our stage? (Photograph from Hansel and Gretel, 2009, courtesy of David Bell).



News of Our Alumni

Mezzo soprano
Suzanna Guzman
(OIO 1977) has sung
over 400 performances
with the Los Angeles
Opera, as well as
many performances



with other opera
companies including the
Houston Grand Opera,
Metropolitan Opera,
Washington National
Opera, Ludiwigshafen
Opera, Opera de
Geneve, Dresden Opera,
Opera Montepelier,
Dallas Opera, Seattle
Opera, Edinburgh
Festival and Opera de
Nice. She is particularly
known for her portrayal
of Carmen. She was
nominated for a Grammy
award for the 2006 Best
Classical recording of
*Carlos Chávez: Volume
III*, and won an Emmy
award for hosting the
KCET television show
Open Call for over 145
episodes.

Antonio Nagore, tenor
(OIO 1989), has had a
substantial international
opera career featuring
over 40 roles, includes
Don José in *Carmen*,
Werther in *Werther*,

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From the General Director

As this *annus horribilis* draws to a close, we still have much to be grateful for at Opera in the Ozarks. We couldn't hold a live opera season, so we created on-

line classes for our 2020 class of singers and alumni. You, our generous friends, helped support our deserving faculty and staff with relief payments. With the help of our volunteer sleuths, we re-connected with hundreds of our alumni and recorded over 30 Zoom interviews with illustrious alumni. (Thank you Don Dagenais for being the Dick Cavett (or Larry King) of Opera in the Ozarks.)

And as a result of this alumni effort, we launched a new series of events: The Alumni Recital Series. These recitals, which will take place monthly from March to November, pair a recent alum with a more experienced one in a concert of arias, art songs, and popular music.

We held two of these recitals in the fall of 2020 and they were lots of fun. With the addition of Chris Cathcart to our team, we have audio-visual skills that make it possible to film and stream professional videos. They are available on a private YouTube channel for two weeks after the recital.

Next summer, we will film each cast's performance of our mainstage operas and make them available for patrons who are unable to attend in person. Access to these performances will be available through our website's ticketing service.

Our restructured 2021 season calendar will go up on the website soon so you can begin to make your plans for sharing our wonderful season of music and operas performed in the original language, fully staged, and with live orchestral accompaniment. The Opera in the Ozarks experience will be back and better than ever!

Mary Speis

A Message From the President

Dear Opera in the Ozarks Friends,

When we think about the coming holidays usually our hearts are filled with lots of excitement and joy, but this year is truly different -- most of us have been home for so long, that every little different thing makes us happy. Today, Duane and I did some Christmas shopping -- what fun! Yesterday we went to the grocery store -- what an adventure!



Sunday we participated in church again on Facebook -- what a blessing!

But speaking of blessings, each of you is a blessing to Opera in the Ozarks. Thank you so much for your participation in our Annual Fund Drive and GivingTuesday. We are having some successes, but we still need your contributions to the Annual Fund.

Thank you too, for all of the gifts that you give in many different ways to support our opera company. As you know, OIO provides

amazing young singers untold opportunities to sing and grow, but it also gives each of us the joy of hearing beautiful music, experiencing amazing stories, meeting new friends that can last a lifetime, and most importantly, gives us the joy of supporting something important. So thank you again for all of the ways you give to OIO -- financially, volunteering, and sharing your love of this beautiful art form by telling your friends about Opera in the Ozarks!

You may know that a board committee has been working to find lots of our alumni from years past, now in this newsletter, you'll have an opportunity to meet some of those special musicians. What fun to think we had a part in helping these people along the way to their success!

Finally, the Governing board has also had several Zoom meetings so work is progressing in many areas as we prepare for our upcoming season. It's all exciting, so thank you again for all you do for OIO. Now lets look forward to a great season when we can once again experience all of the joys of Opera in the Ozarks.

Carole Langley

From the Artistic Director

*'Tis the song, the sigh of the weary,
Hard Times, hard times, come again no
more.
Many days you have lingered around
my cabin door;
Oh! Hard times come again no more.*

Stephen Foster's pre-Civil War song resonates with particular poignancy at the end of 2020, a year of persistent upheaval, division, plague and suffering. Hard times these are, indeed.

But before we turn the calendar page with hope to 2021, I wish to focus on points of inspiration and resilience from the current year.

From my perspective as a university professor, I marvel at the resourcefulness and resilience of our music students, teachers and support staff in confronting the challenges of these hard times.

Our students, staff and educators, be they at preschool or universities, continue to face unforeseen and unprecedented hardships and challenges.

Musicians have been compelled to confront the unique challenges posed by the proven dangers of spreading the coronavirus through droplets and aerosols.

Singers and wind instrumentalists have been the most hampered — yet they persist:

◆ Singing behind masks that are obstacles and detriments to their technique, growth and performance — our young musicians persist.

◆ Adapting to lessons, coachings and rehearsals separated by meters, rooms or distances bridged by the internet — our young musicians persist.

◆ Drawing upon wells of youthful creativity and determination that bring forth a wealth of virtual performance — our young musicians persist.



With 2020 soon in the past, Opera in the Ozarks will move forward into 2021 buoyed by the resilience and persistence of these young artists.

We move forward to a 70th season in 2021 armed with a bold response to the ongoing pandemic. We move forward with initiatives to reach out and bind our alumni to the Point.

We move forward with an ambitious master plan for a new theater and campus.

Though hard times will continue, may 2021 be a year of persistent return to unity, to health and to the music of vibrant young voices at Inspiration Point.

Alumni Committee is Forging New Connections

During the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, several members of the OIO board of directors and volunteers have been busy working with Chris Cathcart, OIO's new Operations Director, on a committee to reach out to OIO alumni.

The members of the committee are Tom Cockrell, Don Dagenais, Ed Henson, Janet Parsch, Nancy Preis, Colleen and Steven Shogren and Jim Swiggart. So far, the committee has researched and found current information on several hundred alumni with which OIO had previously

lost contact. In addition, the Committee is conducting recorded Zoom video interviews with prominent alumni. These interviews are being deposited with the University of Arkansas as part of the Opera in the Ozarks Archives maintained at the University library. Nearly thirty such interviews have already taken place, and more will be added in the coming months. These are adding great value to the content which is already available as part of the Opera in the Ozarks archives.



News of Our Alumni

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Hoffmann in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Rodolfo in *La*



Bohème, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Calaf in *Turandot*, Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Pollione in *Norma*, and Radames in *Aida*. He has appeared with the opera companies of San Francisco, Arizona, Pittsburgh, Fresno, Sarasota and Shreveport. Overseas, he has sung with Oper Frankfurt am Main, Opera Australia, Royal Opera (Covent Garden) and Bath City Opera, among others.

Baritone **Joshua Powell** (OIO 2001) has pursued a career in opera, musical theater and television. In opera he has performed with the Connecticut Light Opera, El Paso Opera, Utah Opera Festival, Stockton Opera, Light Opera of Oklahoma, Townsend Opera and other companies. In musical theater he has sung with the Carousel Theater, Ivorytown Playhouse, Broadway by the Bay, Playhouse

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News of Our Alumni

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West, Utah Festival and others. On television he has appeared in D.O.A., Blue Bloods, Monumental Mysteries and 20/20. He also performs in spoken theater with the Penguin Rep, Seven Angels Theater, Lagniappe Theater and other companies.

Maryjean Allen (OIO 1989-92 under the name of Maryjean Steinmetz) has had an interesting multifaceted career. After a career as an opera and classical music teacher she



became a licensed body mapping teacher and is the co-author of a popular text, *What Every Singer Needs to Know About the Body*, the 4th edition of which was published in 2020. Body mapping enhances a singer's performance by correcting and refining individual body maps, which are mental representations of the body's size, structure and function. The technique teaches about the musculoskeletal system and how the body makes

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Help Us with Our Annual Fund

Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony has begun its regular year-end Annual Fund campaign to provide financial support for next summer's Opera in the Ozarks season. The goal of the Annual Fund campaign is to raise at least \$110,000 for Opera in the Ozarks.

Even though Opera in the Ozarks was not able to perform in the summer of 2020, Inspiration Point has continued to incur expenses for such items as campus maintenance, insurance, staff salaries, and expenses in preparing for the 2021 season. Therefore, it continues to have ongoing expenses.

Of course, Opera in the Ozarks had no singers paying tuition, and thus had no income in 2020. This makes it even more important that the organization raise funds in the Annual Campaign to cover these expenses.

You have previously received a letter outlining this year's Annual Fund campaign. If for some reason you do not have a letter, then please contact our Treasurer, Duane Langley, whose contact information appears in the membership box on the last page of this newsletter. Duane will be happy to forward you a copy of our letter and donation form.

As in past years, Inspiration Point is pleased to announce that a group of Challenge Grantors has agreed to match up to \$55,000 of contributions made by others to the Annual Fund. The Challenge Grantors are Lois Armor, Lorie and Glenn Bear, Alice Conway, Don Dagenais, Carole and Duane Langley and Maria Putter (deceased; see article on page 7).

Lois Armor took piano lessons as a child but says now that she plays "at" the piano. She worked for 30 years for the City of San Antonio and after her retirement had a second career for 15 years, operating The Little Wedding Chapel. Now she spends most of her



Lois Armor

time doing volunteer work and supporting several organizations, including Opera in the Ozarks.

"My first introduction to opera was when I attended Federation Days at OIO as a member of the National Federation of Music Clubs," she says. "My first opera was *Madame Butterfly* performed by the young artists that year. What a marvelous introduction to opera. I wish I had had the benefit of OIO's Children's Opera as an introduction to opera instead waiting so long." This is Lois' first year serving as a Challenge Grantor for the IPFAC Annual Fund campaign.

Lorie Bear is the daughter of Carole and Duane Langley (see below). She and her husband Glenn are both geophysicists for Exxon Mobile Company and are based in Texas. They support the Houston Symphony and sing in their church choir. They have two grown sons. They have been dedicated supporters of Opera in the Ozarks for a number of years and have graciously served as Challenge Grantors in previous



Glenn and Lorie Bear

Annual Fund campaigns.

Alice Conway is an attorney with Bayer AG, a German pharmaceutical and life sciences company which acquired Monsanto, Alice's longtime employer, in 2018. She lives in St. Louis and is a fine singer and musician. Alice enjoys St. Louis museums and St. Louis musical events. She is a supporter of the Opera Theatre of



Alice Conway

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Annual Fund

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St. Louis and the St. Louis Symphony. She has been a member of the Governing Board of IPFAC since 2008. Alice has served as a Challenge Grantor in several previous Annual Fund campaigns, and we are grateful for her continued support.

Don Dagenais is a longtime opera fan and former board member of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, where he served as the board president and in various other officer capacities. He was also the national president



Don Dagenais

of Opera Volunteers International. He has been an IPFAC board member since 2006 and has also been a Challenge Grantor for some previous Annual Fund campaigns.

Carole and Duane Langley are the President and Treasurer, respectfully, of the IPFAC Governing Board and have held those offices for many years. Both are active in the National Federation of Music Clubs and the Missouri Federation of Music Clubs (for which Duane also serves as the Treasurer). Carole has been an officer of the National Federation of Music Clubs and was previously the South Central Region vice president of NFMC.

Carole was a singing artist for IPFAC a few years ago during her student days, and Carole and Duane have been wonderfully supportive of IPFAC for many years.

Maria Putter, a native of the Netherlands, learned to love music there. She married an American serviceman and moved to the United States many years ago. She enjoyed



Duane and Carole Langley

attending music performances in her adopted home of Texas and was a major supporter of IPFAC for many years prior to her recent death (see article on page 6). She enjoyed her time at Opera in the Ozarks although she had not been able to attend performances for the past few years. Her steadfast support has always been much appreciated. This marks her tenth year as a Challenge Grantor for the IPFAC Annual Fund campaign. She made her pledge to the Annual Fund prior to her death, and the payment of her pledge is expected from her estate.



Maria Putter

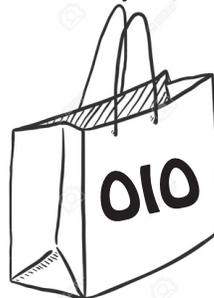
There are still a few weeks left in our Annual Fund campaign. Please get your payment or pledge to Duane Langley prior to the end of the year so that your gift will count towards our 2020 goal. We extend our greatest appreciation to you for your love of our talented young singers, and your continued generous support of IPFAC.

Visit the Opera in the Ozarks Store Online This Holiday Season

Have you visited the Opera in the Ozarks Store online? It now open for your shopping pleasure.

The OIO Store is available at our web site, opera.org, and features special items made just for OIO fans by OIO staff members and supporters. You will find a variety of interesting craft items that will suit many of the friends and family members on your holiday shopping list.

Be sure to check it out!



News of Our Alumni

(continued from page 4)

movements.

The Pacific Opera Project in Los Angeles, California has drawn nationwide attention for its presentations of unique opera works under special circumstances. The company was founded and directed by **Josh Shaw** (OIO 2001). In the fall of 2020 the company featured a "fall drive-in"



series, including *Covid fan tutte* and *La Corona Il Parnaso Confuso*, operatic take-offs on the pandemic theme. The second was a double of Baroque operas by Gluck, both United States premieres. It also performed *La Boheme*, a/k/a *The Hipsters*.

Carroll Freeman, a former artistic director of Opera in the Ozarks (1988-2001), has recently retired from his teaching position at Georgia State University but still maintains an active career as a

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News of Our Alumni

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private teacher, coaching students from around the world (including China) on Zoom during these pandemic times. Freeman was also the



artistic director of the Tennessee Opera and directed opera studios at the Knoxville Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera. His performing career included appearances with the Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Lyric Opera of Kansas City and others. He was given a Presidential Citation from the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Tenor **Nathan Granner** (OIO 1992-93), famed for being one of the Three American Tenors of recording fame about 20 years ago, has formed a new production company, AstroLabs, a digital media studio. He has appeared in several recordings with Sony Classical. Next spring he is set to sing Don Jose in the Opera

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OIO Loses Three Great Friends

The Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony is deeply saddened to note the recent deaths of three of its longtime supporters, Maria Putter, Caroline French and Francis Christmann.

Maria Putter was born in Holland. She and her family suffered a great deal during the World War II years, but in her late teens she began to sing with a local music group, which successfully performed across Europe and beyond.

Maria married a young American pilot and came with him to America where she became a U.S. citizen. After just a few years he was tragically killed in a car accident, but Maria then had the good fortune to meet another fine young airline pilot and they married and



Maria Putter

enjoyed many happy years together.

Maria became acquainted with Opera in the Ozarks through a fellow Texan, Lee Meyer. She enjoyed driving to Eureka Springs with Lee. Lee says they sometimes enjoyed singing old pop songs together, which Maria and Lee both knew so well.

For years Maria had cousins in Holland who would occasionally come to visit her, but they all predeceased her. She loved her friends in the Wednesday Music Club in Austin.

Maria was a major benefactor of Opera in the Ozarks and served as one of our challenge grantors for the annual fund campaign for all of its ten years to date. She had committed to do so once again this year, and her grant will, we anticipate, be included as part of an estate planning gift to IPFAC. She died just a few days after her 89th birthday. She will be greatly missed.

Caroline French was born in Baltimore but spent most of her life in the Kansas City area. She received a law degree from Kansas City University (now the University

of Missouri-Kansas City), one of the first women to do so. She enjoyed a short but successful law career before meeting and marrying William French, a Kansas City businessman.

Caroline loved classical music and opera and devoted the rest of her life to serving music and arts organizations in Kansas City as well as other charities. She was a longtime volunteer leader in the Lyric Opera of Kansas City organization, serving as president of two different volunteer auxiliary groups, the Lyric Opera Women's Committee (later League) and the Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild. When these two organizations merged she became the first president of the newly merged group.

She also was a board member of the Friends of the Conservatory of Music of her alma mater, UMKC, and generously gave scholarships to benefit music students.

Caroline served for about 20 years on the Governing Board of Inspiration Point, where she was a major contributor and recruited several other Governing Board members. She was tireless in her promotion of the Point in the Kansas City area, raised money for student scholarships, and enticed many opera fans to journey to Eureka Springs to attend performances. She also served as a Trustee of the Inspiration Point trust, which owns and controls the campus property. She died at the age of 96.

Francis Christmann grew up in the oil fields of West Texas and, since she had a fine voice, sang in church choirs as a young woman to earn extra money during the Depression. She received a college degree in voice from North Texas State University.



Caroline French

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From the Archives: Carroll Freeman

by Janet Parsch

What do Carroll Freeman, Lakmé, and my niece Laurie have in common?

In 1995 my husband's niece Laurie traveled from Madison, Wisconsin to visit us in Fayetteville, for a summer weekend. Our plans included a trip to Eureka Springs, where Laurie saw her first opera, *Lakmé*, at Opera in the Ozarks.

Twenty-one years later she sent us a Facebook recording featuring the Flower Duet from *Lakmé* from an outdoor concert. Laurie had recognized the piece from her experience at Opera in the Ozarks. Moral of the story: You never know how you might be influencing someone for the rest of their life.



The Carroll Freeman connection? OIO alumnus Carroll Freeman was the

Artistic Director, principal stage director, and conductor during that 1995 IPFAC/OIO season when niece Laurie was introduced to opera. Carroll's first experience at Inspiration Point, however, was twenty years earlier,



in 1975, as a student, when he had the opportunity to work with Isaac Van Grove. He returned to OIO the next year and in 1978 as Assistant Artistic Director and stage director, and again in 1988 as stage director.

Then, for the next thirteen years, from 1989 through 2001, Carroll was OIO's Artistic Director. He also served at various times as conductor, stage director, choreographer, and costume and set designer.

Having had a successful academic career at the University of Tennessee, Carroll retired
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Three Great Friends

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She was a charter member of the violin section of the Lubbock Symphony and served on the Symphony's Board of Directors. While there, she helped to found local community concerts and chaired the Symphony's children's concert for 17 years.

Francis joined the Federation of Music Clubs in 1954 and became a Life Member. She served in many leadership roles in Texas Federation of Music Clubs, including President of the Allegro and Lubbock music clubs, State District President and, for ten years, Chairman of the State Young Artist Audition Committee. While she was state



Francis Christmann

President, she served on the Inspiration Point Governing Board.

She was also a life member of NFM and was a Rose Fay Thomas charter member. She chaired a number of committees both statewide and nationally, and was Vice President for the South Central Region.

In September 2002, Francis produced the first of three concerts for NFMC Young Artists at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

She remained a supporter of Inspiration Point after her Governing Board service and each year she purchased two Nights of Opera at Opera in the Ozarks. In 2016 she became the first person to receive a National Federation of Music Clubs Lifetime Achievement award. She died at the age of 92.

News of Our Alumni

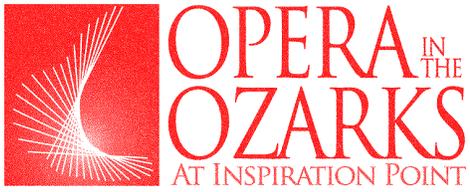
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Orlando production of *Carmen*, which will include Creole-based dialogues. He appeared in the Pacific Opera Project's *Covid fan tutte* this fall.

After a notable career in Europe, South Africa, the United States, and Mexico, soprano **Barbara Rondelli** (OIO 1957) joined the voice faculty of the University of Toledo, where she has taught since 1975. She won the Tchaikovsky Competition (voice) in Moscow and the Munich Radio Competition in Germany, among others. She sang frequently in opera and oratorio performances in Germany, many of which were broadcast or recorded. Her operatic repertoire ranged from Renaissance to



modern music. The Barbara Rondelli Perry Scholarship for Superior Achievement in Vocal Performance was endowed by her husband Dr. Richard R. Perry at the University of Toledo in 1998.



Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony
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GOOD NEWS LETTER

From the Archives

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this summer as director of the opera program at Georgia State University.

Beyond his faculty career, Carroll sang many leading roles and worked with many, many opera companies and studios across the U.S. and internationally.

The OIO Alumni Committee has had the good fortune of re-connecting with Carroll, and Don Dagenais recently conducted a Zoom interview with Carroll. That interview and many others will be made available more broadly as time goes by. For now, you will need to settle for a few photos of Carroll from his years at Opera in the Ozarks, photos that are in the OIO archives at the University of Arkansas Libraries.

Please help us



identify the individuals in the photos, and please think about donating materials you might have from Opera in the Ozarks. Contact Janet Parsch, OIO Board member, at jparsch@uark.edu. Thanks.



OPERA IN THE OZARKS at INSPIRATION POINT MEMBERSHIP FORM

My tax deductible membership and/or contribution of \$_____ is enclosed.

Check the Appropriate Box

- \$500 Patron
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Please make checks payable to IPFAC and mail to:

Duane Langley, IPFAC Treasurer
1203 Whispering Pines
St. Louis, MO 63146

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (____) _____

E-Mail: _____

@ _____

Your membership or gift is important to IPFAC. Thank you so much!