



Don Carlo

Producing Magic

Maestro Richard Buckley



Maestro Buckley at City Hall for his proclamation on October 17.

Learn more about Maestro Buckley

[Austin Culture Map](#)

[Austin Lyric Opera](#)

Producing an opera of the magnitude of Verdi's *Don Carlo* is very different than other repertoire. Every step of the decision making process requires a different approach. Many of our staff, crew, and chorus had no relationship or experience with it as a piece, other than it was by Verdi, and with some, that it had been done one other time in Austin

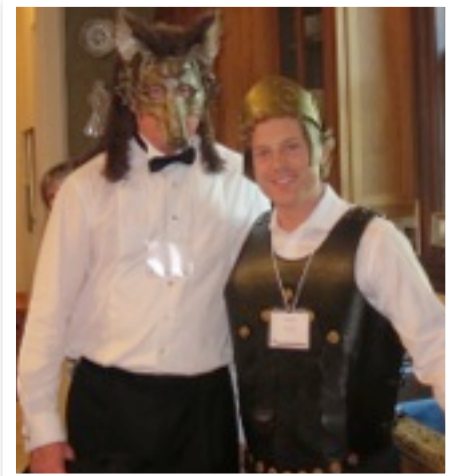
at the very beginning of Bass Hall's entry into Austin's cultural life.

It has taken courage, perseverance, tenacity, luck, favors, and trust to put this on the stage. As you have learned, producing any opera is a multi-year project. Dreaming of doing a *Don Carlo* is immediately thwarted by the extra cost it entails. This challenge was met by the extraordinary financial gift made by **John and Marcy Melanson**. Even after receiving that special funding, it was not yet a go. The next step was to find a physical production that we could afford and would fit on our stage. *Don Carlo* is not done as often as many other Verdi operas, and the availability of productions to rent is drastically reduced. We are also concerned with the cost of "loading in" the set. How many trucks (containers) does it come in? How many hours will it take to put up? Then we have all the period costumes, extra-large cast, chorus,
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COSTUME FANTASY PARTY KICKS OFF THE GUILD'S YEAR

Diane Ingram

It was a night of fun and fantasy at the beautiful home of **Cornelia and John Wood** on the banks of Lake Austin, Saturday night, October 12th.



John Wood and Bryan Bourgeois embraced the fantasy costume theme.

The ALO Guild's Kickoff Party started at 6:00 in the evening with the guests arriving in costumes ranging from glamorous to hilarious. Marilyn Monroe, Mae West, Lucille Ball and Yoko Ono were among the celebrities spotted with their escorts including Ricky Ricardo and John Lennon.

There were also cheerleaders,
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supernumeraries to clothe and the technical challenge to make it all work. There are many unseen technical heroes that make every show happen, but especially one like this.

In addition to the above, are the singers. Interestingly, that challenge of attracting singers was less of a burden because every artist on stage WANTED to sing *Don Carlo*. It was not just another gig filling in the calendar. It was an opportunity to perform a piece of such musical depth that artists agreed to come based more on that than of money. I am proud to say that our company continues to have a reputation of providing an extremely positive nurturing environment in which to work, and that helps getting artists to agree to come. Let's not ever forget the orchestra that continues to grow and be recognized for its artistic input to our performances.

After Saturday night's opening, I had great pride (and some relief) at our accomplishment. To challenge an organization is one thing, but to have the satisfaction of the end result, which was so stunning, is the fulfillment of the dreams that I have for this company present and future. One other aspect I wish to share. The audience was a great part of the success of the evening. Attentive, active, involved listening. Quiet support and huge ovations of appreciation to the performers. That's the type of thrill and energy that makes this a community effort of great consequence. Not just in Austin but a world community of Opera.

Thank you all for helping me live this life!

Check out the reviews!

[Austin Post](#)
[Broadway World](#)



Top: Top hats are all the rage at opening night for Hudson Ingram and Wendi Kushner **Bottom:** Dr. Craig and Peggy Kuglen pose on the red carpet. Portraits by Tony Spielberg, available at: <http://www.austincandid.com/gallery/v/ALO/> **Right:** We were all wowed by Michael Chioldi and James Valenti.

DON CARLO PRE-OPERA DINNER

Amanda Kushner

The pre-opera dinner is always an event to which I look forward. Always. Without fail. And the pre-opera dinner for *Don Carlo* definitely did not disappoint.

I was pleasantly surprised when I was serenaded upon arrival. No, seriously. As we were walking up to the Long Center, there were singers serenading the guests as they arrived – really setting us up for a wonderful evening of music. Guests enjoyed wine (and sparkling wine!) while listening to the singers. The red carpet added some fun, as did the backdrop for the photographs. And let’s face it: photos are always fun.

As the attendees moved from the red carpet to the actual dinner, I realized that we had completely missed the usual pre-opera dinner happy hour. Not like I’m complaining at all – I absolutely loved the change of pace and the fact that I was serenaded while sipping sparkling wine in a fancy dress. I was totally okay with that.

After hearing a few speeches (and getting their attention redirected several times to my mother’s sparkly top hat / fascinador), the attendees of the *Don Carlo* pre-opera dinner enjoyed their meals.

All three course of them. Plus [a good deal of] wine donated by **Twin Liquors**. Delicious arugula salads with almonds, feta, and a great blood orange vinaigrette were enjoyed as the first course. The guests then enjoyed pan-seared halibut as their main courses. These dishes were served with crab gratins, asparagus, and polenta cakes... YUM! For our non-carnivore brethren, potato and leek gratins with polenta cakes and asparagus were served. Another big YUM (or so I was told). The diners then finished off their meals with a dessert made up of of crème caramels and dried fruit compote.

So. Much. Yum.

Now let’s move away from food before I get hungry again and focus on the dinner’s décor:

The decorations were absolutely lovely and really channeled the opera quite well. I particularly loved the little chocolate fleur-de-lis at each place setting and the gorgeous centerpieces! The golden chocolates, golden candles, and the

flowers in the centerpieces all really popped against the deep reds of the tables. Basically, the tables were all absolutely lovely. Plus gold is very “in” right now so +20 in my book for event chairs **Paula Damore** and **Suzanne Breitbach**!

After the dinner, the attendees were beyond excited to attend the opera. The room cleared out in record time and we all settled into our seats for a wonderful evening of opera!



Top: A stunning dessert presentation after the performance. **Bottom:** Andrew and Mary Ann Heller meet James Valenti.

DON CARLO ENRICHMENT EVENT

Carol Angela Logan

Capturing the essence of a work in light, sound, and movement is the vital task of the Stage Director.

Garnett Bruce, Stage Director for ALO's *Don Carlo*, and Jim Sales, Lighting Designer, explained their craft for the upcoming Verdi work at a Guild Enrichment Event held Wednesday, November 6th at the lovely home of **Wendi and Brian Kushner**.

A premier for ALO, Austin is the only company other than the Metropolitan Opera, to perform *Don Carlo* this year.

Garnett tossed out this provocative notion: What would happen if your Dad married your girlfriend? The story of *Don Carlo*, written by Friedrich Schiller (who also brought us "Ode to Joy" of Beethoven fame) follows the arc of history during the Spanish inquisition. Garnett's operational dictum: 'It's a tragedy;

let's make it a tragedy.'

Imagine the challenge of portraying a pretend fire – an auto-da-fe: a form of confession popular with the Jesuits which invariably ended by roasting heretics.

Lighting Designer Jim Sales explained how he paints with a palate of light, using 'luscious' diffused light for *Don Carlo* versus direct light for the other characters.

Garnett noted the opera is a work in progress and all the final details are not fully defined. In the end, all conflicting activities have been presented. The stage is filled with 100 people all standing and singing. It is 'costume in concert'. The challenge is not taking a heavy hand to it.

Enrichment events provide Guild members with inside information on ALO's operation and are one of the perks of being a Guild member.



Our gracious hosts, Brian and Wendi Kushner, with ALO General Director, Joe Specter.



Katharine Shields and Garnett Bruce captivated the audience with their witty banter.

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cowboys, gladiators and goddesses. Royalty was well represented by the commoners and it was rumored that there was some Opera Royalty in the crowd who was incognito as a "Hippie." Dorothy, Toto, and the Wizard were there as well as a priest who bestowed his blessing on the crowd.

Madam Faux-Nee was available to read fortunes and share mystical advice.

The menu was varied and delicious with everything from spooky appetizers to marinated pork roast to desserts of all kinds. The wine and champagne flowed freely.

The evening was made complete when Kate Specter performed for the guests. Her beautiful voice captured the attention of all who were attending. Accompanied by the talented Elden Little, she wove a spell of musical enchantment that even the cleverest sorceress would have been envious of.

At the end of the evening, **Marcia Toprac** distributed Yearbooks to all of the Guild Members.

A big thank you to our gracious hosts who opened their home to the Guild: Cornelia and John Wood and to our event chairs, **Jo Carol Snowden** and **Gretchen Woellner**. Also, a very grateful thank you to our volunteers who gave so generously of their time: **Cecelia Neuhaus, Sue Hoke, Marcia Toprac, Marcy Melanson, Hudson Ingram, John Melanson, Bryan Bourgeois, Anthony Toprac, Barry Woltag, Eric Brenner and Dean Dresser**. And we cannot forget to recognize our leader, **Polly Barbaro**, President of the Guild who was right in there working with everyone else.

It was truly a memorable evening and a wonderful start to the 2013-2014 Opera Season.



Top: Lissa Anderson, AKA Madam Faux-Nee. **Bottom Left:** Steve and Polly Barbaro, our Guild President. **Bottom Right:** Marcia and Anthony Toprac. Anthony learned a lot about the pains women go through to get dressed every day!

UPDATE ON OPERA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL GRANT

Lissa Anderson

The Guild is moving along on the OVI grant that enhances ALO's Opera by Night program of inviting Central Texas school kids to dress rehearsals. The project places trained docents in classrooms to introduce students to the joys of opera by way of focused, academically sound, multimedia lessons. Each lesson focuses on a specific opera from our 27th season.

Texas public education is ruled by the TEKS—the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, the curriculum standards that determine what textbooks must cover, what is taught in classrooms, and what is assessed by standardized tests. So it is essential that we show how the lessons would not be some fluffy extra for which the teachers have no time. Therefore, James Hampton, the Artistic Administrator at Austin Lyric Opera, recruited people with classroom, content, and arts experience to develop the curriculum. They have succeeded in creating lessons that hit TEKS *and* incorporate drama-based instruction—a concept from the Kennedy Center's "Any Given Child" program. (That program supports ensuring arts education for all school kids up to Grade 8.) Even some of the Texas Education Agency's English Language Proficiency Standards are addressed.

The lessons for *Don Carlo* were designed in two levels—for elementary and secondary grades. The elementary version

includes a more streamlined plot summary. For the upper level *Don Carlo* plan, there is a social studies lesson that focuses on the history of 16th century Spain in general and the Spanish Inquisition in particular. There are also music and English/language arts lessons. Lessons for the remaining operas will have different emphases; for example, for *Tosca*, students will take a close look at the city of Rome in the early 19th century. There is even a math lesson that involves ticket prices and other quantitative aspects of a performance.

The process of scheduling visits to some of the schools that sent students to the Opera by Night dress rehearsal of *Don Carlo* is proceeding apace. By sending docents in January:

- We will align with where the topic is covered in the school year curriculum. Students will be either in the middle of or about to study the Early Modern era, which includes 16th-century Spain.
- We will reinforce what students experienced during the dress rehearsal. We can say things like "Remember when the king was upset because the Grand Inquisitor was telling him what to do?" and the students can say "Oh yeah, that was weird. What was going on there?"

The Austin Lyric Opera Guild deeply appreciates the opportunity to bring our favorite art form to local students through this grant.

Visit the New Website!

Did you know that the Guild now has its own page on the ALO website? Stay up-to-date on events, volunteer opportunities, and Guild news by visiting:

<http://www.austinlyricopera.org/aloguild/>

Incorrect Contact Info?

Is your contact information incorrect? Please send updated information to Marcia Toprac:

mtoprac@earthlink.net

ALO GUILD AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Diane Ingram

The Guild President, **Polly Barbaro**, and the Vice Presidents of Volunteers, **Diane Ingram** and **Brenda Wendel**, have initiated a new program within the Guild.

The goal of the Ambassador Program is to reach out to the Guild members, both new and current members, in order to make them feel more connected and involved.

In the past, the Guild Board members were the primary source for volunteers and committee chairs. It became evident that the Guild needed more commitment and involvement from the membership as a whole.

It was then decided that a core group of experienced Guild members would be asked to serve as ambassadors connecting the Guild Board to the general membership.

These Ambassadors would reach out and get to know a specific number of members in order to keep them informed and be available to answer questions and solve problems.

Specifically, they would target new members, however, they would also reach out to current members who have not been previously involved in Guild projects.

Presently, there are only seven Ambassadors but, hopefully, as time goes on more members will be added to this list, which will enable the Ambassador Program to reach out to more Guild Members.

A big thank you to our core group of Ambassadors: **Loretta Hughes, Susan Gatlin, Martha Boyd, Carol Nogle, Kelley Lightfoot, Brenda Wendel** and **Diane Ingram**.

If any Guild member would be interested in serving as an ambassador, please contact Diane Ingram at diane@mhmachining.com or Brenda Wendel at frenchtour@gmail.com.



Left: Loretta Hughes, Martha Boyd, Susan Gatlin, Carol Nogle with Diane Ingram in the back. **Above:** Kelley Lightfoot and Brenda Wendel complete the Ambassador team.

CONTRIBUTORS

The *Libretto* is one of the many areas where volunteers make a difference. This newsletter is edited by **Madeline Nash** and other contributors include:

Lissa Anderson, Polly Barbaro, Angie Bonnici, Richard Buckley, Diane Ingram, Amanda Kushner, Carol Logan, and Tony Spielberg.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Guild members,



President of the Guild, Polly Barbaro, at the opening night dinner for Don Carlo.

Hang on! We are in for a rollicking ride with three fantastic Italian operas scheduled this season. Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti... Maestro Buckley and Austin Lyric Opera offer some of the best opera experiences ever to Central Texas opera lovers.

As a member of the Guild, you already are involved in supporting these efforts. Your dues help to defray expenses incurred as the

Guild creates educational experiences for both its members, through our Enrichment events, and in the community with our recently revitalized Educational Outreach program. Our volunteer work spans a wide spectrum of interests, from manning a booth at the Book Fair and the Boutique table at opera performances, to facilitating our parties, and helping out at the ALO office. Those who volunteer feel more connected, get to know each other, and enjoy a more satisfying overall experience within the Guild. I urge you to explore the various volunteer opportunities on our website, www.austinlyricopera.org/aloguild.

Fundraising is the prime focus of the ALO Guild. And our main fundraising event, the 4th annual Wine Dinner and Auction, which will take place on Saturday, February 22, 2014, at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin, is well along in the planning phase. We are collecting unique, highest quality wines, thanks to our generous donors. Extraordinary trips -- how about a vacation in British Columbia or an opera getaway to Santa Fe! -- and intimate dinners hosted by ALO supporters, are the subject of bidding "wars." We need volunteers the day of and night of this event. So, step up, check out the Guild website under "Volunteer," and get the most out of your membership.

The enthusiasm is infectious. Come join the fun!

Polly Barbaro

508-317-8499
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Calendar**January 14, 2014**

Guild Board Meeting #4
Eleven Plates

January 15, 2014

Tosca Enrichment Event
Gatlin Home

January 30, February 1-2, 2014

Tosca
The Long Center

February 1, 2014

Tosca Pre-Opera Dinner
Kodosky Lounge

February 11, 2014

Guild Board Meeting #5
Eleven Plates

February 22, 2014

Wine Dinner and Auction
Four Seasons Hotel

Austin Lyric Opera Guild

<http://www.austinlyricopera.org/aloguild/>

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