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January 2018

The Metropolitan Opera
National Council Auditions
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr, Editor

Volunteer Spotlight: Backstage at the Auditions with Lynn Harrington, Singer Arrangements

Several years ago, when the auditions committee was looking for someone new to handle singer arrangements, we were lucky to find the perfect fit. As a retired teacher, singer, opera lover and supporter, and former President of the Denver Lyric Opera Guild, Lynn Harrington brought the ideal background and skill set to the job. Moreover, as our auditions singers will attest, we couldn't have found a more caring and supportive person to serve as backstage "opera mom." (And oh, those cookies!) Chris Mohr asked Lynn to share a bit about herself and what it's like to shepherd the 50 singers who enter the District Finals and those who vie for the coveted trip to New York during the Regional Finals.



CM: When did you first come to love opera, and what is your favorite opera?

LH: Coming from Montana, most of what I heard was country music, which I despised. It wasn't until college when I majored in voice that I learned to appreciate [opera], and then, of course I was hooked. I am partial to anything by Verdi, Puccini or Mozart but I love them all for different reasons.

CM: What inspires you to support young artists?

LH: Having been an elementary music teacher for 33 years, I really like to work with the kids, big or little, and when I was asked to do this job it was such a good fit as I like to organize and mostly work with the singers to make them feel happy and comfortable about their audition. I know how it feels to be under pressure to audition and wanted to help them feel at ease. I put myself in their place. I know that if I were coming from far away I would want to know all the details such as transportation, accommodations, etc., so I could concentrate on the audition.

CM: What do singers have to provide to be accepted into the Met Auditions (referral letters, etc.)?

LH: Each singer must fill out an application, meet the age criteria, 20-30, must be able to sing in 5 languages, have a varied and accomplished repertoire, have a headshot and pay the \$30 application fee.

CM: Any interesting things come up in the applications?

LH: Some of the younger singers ask some interesting questions, but for the most part they are very intelligent and do a great job. Last week I did get the same

**2017-2018
ROCKY
MOUNTAIN
REGIONAL
AUDITIONS**

Arizona District
(held November 4, 2017)

Utah District
(held November 11, 2017)

**Colorado-Wyoming
District**
Saturday, January 27,
9:30am
Robert and Judi
Newman Center for the
Performing Arts
University of Denver

**Rocky Mountain
Regional Finals**
Sunday, January 28,
1:30pm
Robert and Judi
Newman Center for the
Performing Arts
University of Denver

National Grand Finals
Sunday, April 29, 3:00pm
Metropolitan Opera
House
New York, NY

application 14 times. The singer didn't think it was transmitting and kept pushing the button.

CM: When singers enter backstage to prepare for their audition, what do you do for them, both practically and emotionally?

(continued on page 2)

Winner Update: Tenor Matthew Plenk

Growing up in the middle of Long Island, Matthew Plenk played violin and sang in the church choir, but to this day doesn't



know how he got into opera. He didn't even see an opera until he was in college: Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in Budapest sung in Italian with Hungarian supertitles. As an undergrad at the Hartt School of Music, he double majored in music education and performance, but after two weeks, realized he had more of an affinity with the performance students and was more interested in focusing on the craft of singing. The decision paid off: he was a Metropolitan Opera National Council finalist in 2007 and then invited into the Met's prestigious Lindemann Young Artist Development program, where he studied for three years. The pressure at the auditions was especially intense that year, as the singers were followed with cameras and microphones for the filming of the documentary *The Audition*. His time in Lindemann was also intense, and while he trusted the Met team, he found (continued on page 2)

(Lynn Harrington, continued from page 1)

LH: The day of prelims I get there early with the program inserts so the volunteers can stuff the programs, set up a check-in table, post the schedule on the walls, check the students in an hour before their audition time, tell them where the warmup rooms are located, how to get on stage, when to be ready to sing, and hopefully make them feel comfortable. Many of them thank me for the all the information I give them ahead of their arrival. This is what I hope really makes them feel relaxed. I always refer to myself in all communications as their "backstage Mom" which I think gives them a warm feeling also. I always bake homemade cookies, bring clementines, etc. for a snack after they sing. I make sure to send them information about what to wear. They have gotten much better but the younger ones sometimes need advice. I also send them a critique as a group after the auditions without pointing anyone out.

CM: What's it like back there? Are singers nervous, excited, competitive with each other, etc?

LH: For the most part, the singers aren't that nervous. It helps a lot if I am calm as well, as they can pick up on vibes.

CM: Any interesting stories about singers?

LH: There aren't that many interesting stories, but it is so fun getting to know these wonderful singers and following their careers. Most of them are very modest and fun to be around. They all seem to appreciate what we do to help them.

CM: Thanks, Lynn, for all you do!

Please support your local Met Auditions!

True or false? The Metropolitan Opera pays to put on the auditions in local communities. Answer: false. It is only through the generosity of local patrons that we can meet our annual budget of \$33,000 and continue this exciting and inspiring event here in Colorado. Donations are used to pay for renting the fabulous Gates Hall at the Newman Center, judges' travel expenses, and prize money for the singers. Please join us today to help young singers' dreams come true here in our community.

I wish to be an MONC patron for \$75/year/person.

Number of people _____

I would like to donate an additional amount of \$_____

Join by credit card at www.metoperaauditionsrockies.org or call Steve Dilts at 720-530-0483.

You may also send this form with your check

(payable to MONC-RMR) or credit card information to: Steve Dilts, 16684 Antero Street, Broomfield, CO 80023

(Plenk, continued from page 1) he often had to advocate for his own artistic choices. At the Met, roles include Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Arturo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the Italian Tenor in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Closer to home, he was a soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Aspen Music Festival in 2016 and Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at Central City Opera in 2017. Matthew, his wife and two children, 3 and 6, reside in Denver where he is now an Assistant Professor of Voice. Luckily, he loves the beauty of Colorado and hopes to stay!

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National Council Auditions
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr
6226 West Jefferson Avenue
Denver, CO 80235

Save the Date!
Rocky Mountain Regional
Finals
Sunday, January 28, 2018,
1:30pm
Robert & Judi Newman
Center for the
Performing Arts
University of Denver

Metropolitan Opera 2018 HD Calendar

The Opera House (documentary)

Saturday, January 13, 10:55am,

Wednesday, January 17, 12:55pm, 6:30pm

Puccini: Tosca

Saturday, January 27, 10:55am

Donizetti: L'Elisir d'amore

Saturday, February 10, 10:00am

Puccini: La Bohème

Saturday, February 24, 10:30am

Rossini: Semiramide

Saturday, March 10, 10:55am

Mozart: Così fan tutte

Saturday, March 31, 10:55am

Verdi: Luisa Miller

Saturday, April 14, 10:30am

Massenet: Cendrillon

Saturday, April 28, 10:55am

Except where noted, encore screenings are shown Wednesdays at 6:30pm the following week.
www.metopera.org for cast information and to find local theaters.