



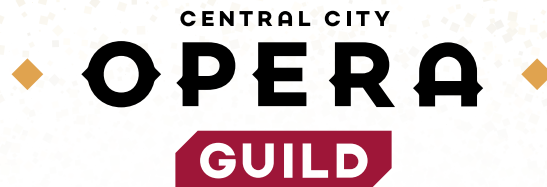
Central City Opera House Association
4875 Ward Road, Suite 100
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033
Central City Opera Box Office:
303.292.6700

centralcityopera.org

2024 CCO Guild Winter Newsletter

Coeditors

Priscilla Mead and Christy Darling



2024 Annual Meeting

and Installation of Officers

Featuring Nancy Flanders Lockspeiser, former CCO visual artist

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 • 11am - 1pm

Cherry Hills Country Club, 4125 S. University Blvd.

Cherry Hills Village, CO 80113



Tickets: \$60 per person | **Scan the QR code to RSVP by January 10**
or call the Box Office at 303-292-6700.



WINTER
2024

CENTRAL CITY
OPERA
GUILD
Grapevine

L'ESPRIT DE NOËL KICKS OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON



L'ESPRIT DE NOËL
HOLIDAY HOME TOUR

November 17th and 18th marked the 47th Annual Edition of Central City Opera Guild's L'Esprit de Noël Holiday Home

Tour. For the first time since its inception, the tour was held in Denver's Park Hill neighborhood. Five beautifully historic homes, ranging from Craftsman to Georgian in architectural design, were decorated by some of the city's most sought after florists and table designers.



Thanks to the talents of Acre Collective, Birdsall & Co., City Floral Garden Center, Ed

Moore Florist, The Fresh Flower Market, KaraKara Blooms, Acre Collective, Enjoué Studio, and Home with Holliday, approximately 1500 tour goers were able to experience a taste of the holidays while supporting the programs of Central City Opera. Also, after a few years absence, the "Best Florist and Table Designer" contest was resurrected, and we are please to announce that **City Floral** and **Home with Holliday** were this year's winners.

In addition to our designers, we are eternally grateful for the support of our sponsors and donors. This year's presenting sponsors were Acre Collective and Guild founder Barbara H. Ferguson. The Guild was also fortunate enough to secure a match donation this year from the Max & Erin Nichols Charitable Foundation, which pledged a 1:1 match for every dollar raised, **pushing us over \$200K, a new L'Esprit record!**

Last but certainly not least, we'd like to thank the small army of volunteers and

our L'Esprit committee (led by Lauren Crist-Fulk) who spent countless hours planning the tour and who took such great care of both the tour homes and attendees.

To everyone who supported and/or attended this year's tour, we look forward to year 48 with you!

By Katie Grassby

To see more of this year's beautiful tour, please visit lesprithometour.com.



SAVE THE DATE

2024 ANNUAL MEETING AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS LUNCHEON

Wednesday, January 17,
11 AM to 1 PM

Please contact Karen Ritz
(amkrritz@comcast.net)
or Louise Atkinson
(louiseatkinson@comcast.net)
with any questions.

TIME TO RENEW YOUR CCO GUILD MEMBERSHIP!

It's hard to believe but the end of the year is almost upon us! 2023 was filled with many memorable moments at the Central City Opera Guild. We would love to have you join us for a spectacular 2024!

To renew your membership and be included in the 2024 Directory, please submit your renewal online by January 10th at centralcityopera.org/join-the-guild/

If you do not wish to pay online, download our form to pay by check or credit card and mail to

Central City Opera Guild
4875 Ward Road, Suite 100,
Wheat Ridge CO 80033.

Call 303-292-6700 to pay over the phone.

OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Valued Guild Members,

Reflecting on the past year, I am so grateful for the collective efforts that have made it truly exceptional. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your membership, steadfast contributions, and committed support throughout this remarkable year.

The dedication demonstrated by our Board, members, donors, and the diligent CCO staff has been instrumental in strengthening our Guild.

Serving as your Guild President has been a distinct honor, and I am sincerely grateful to each of you for making this year exceptionally fulfilling for both my family and me. Moreover, your collective contributions have resulted in record support for Central City Opera. A special acknowledgment is due to the Max & Erin Nichols Charitable Foundation for their generous match and support of our Guild and its mission.

As we transition into a new chapter, I am so pleased to welcome Katie Grassby as your incoming Guild President for 2024. With her capable leadership, she will lead us to resounding success in the 50th Golden year of the Central City Opera Guild.

In closing, I wish you all joy in the New Year.

Warmest Regards,

Nancy Hemming

2023 Central City Opera Guild President



INCOMING PRESIDENT'S REMARKS



I am so excited to come on board as the 2024 Central City Opera Guild President. The Guild of CCO holds a special place in my heart, as both my grandmother and mother (pictured with me) were part of the founding group of Guild members 50 years ago, and I was a Flower Girl. Tradition and legacy are such an important part of the Guild, the Opera House, and

Central City itself. We have an extraordinary group of volunteers who drive toward consistently showing up to celebrate and continue these traditions and legacy. I can't wait to serve with each one of you, here's to Year 50 of the Guild!

Your Incoming Guild President,

Katie Grassby

CCOG 2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President - Katie Grassby

Past President - Nancy Hemming

President Elect - Heidi Burose

CoVPs Membership - Heidi Burose and Susan Adams

VP Education - Wendy Wenkstern

VP Historic Properties - Cathy Groene & Kay Fiege

Treasurer - Central City Opera Administration

Secretary - Marilyn Rhodes

CCO Liaison - Aidan Furlong

COMMITTEE CHAIRS & MEMBERS

Annual Meeting & Installation Of Officers -

Louise Atkinson & Karen Ritz

CCOG Belle Award - Louise Atkinson, Nancy Hemming, Cindy Koch, Karen Ritz, & Kristin Bender

Gardens - Nancy Parker, Christina Dinegar & Sally Scott

Grapevine Newsletter Coeditors -

Christy Darling & Priscilla Mead

Historian - Karen Ritz

L'esprit De Noël - Lauren Crist-Fulk

Nominating - Nancy Hemming

Opera Teaser - Karen Ritz & Christina Dinegar

Photography - Kathy Wells

Spring/Fall Membership Party -

Heidi Burose & Susie Adams

Young Artists Program Auditions -

Linda Clark, Gray Clark & Christina Dinegar

Youth Education -

Kristin Bender, Christina Dinegar & Ericka Mcdaniel

If you're curious about any other committees (please refer to your Guild Directory), contact Karen Ritz or the committee Chair. We welcome your participation!

Karen Ritz, 303-807-9464 or amkrritz@comcast.net

2024 CCO GUILD WINTER/SPRING CALENDAR

January 17 . . . Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers,
11 AM - 1 PM, Cherry Hills Country Club

February 7 . . . Guild Board Meeting, 9:30 AM,
Home of Karen Ritz

March 14. . . . Opera Teaser, 5:30 PM,
Wellshire Events Center

April 3. Guild Board Meeting, 9:30 AM, Location TBD

April 5. Theatre of Dreams Gala

CCO GUILD PRESENTS 2023 BELLE AWARD



*Belle award recipient
Erika McDaniel*

The tradition of Central City Opera Guild's Belle Award started in 2000 by then-Guild President Sandy Wischmeyer. Since 2000, twenty-three outstanding Guild members have been recognized for this award. Each has given extraordinary time, energy, and support to the Central City Opera and Guild for many years.

The recipient for the 2023 Belle Award is Ericka McDaniel. A Colorado native, born and raised in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Ericka has spent countless hours for the past 23 years as an integral part of the Central City Opera community and the CCO Guild in numerous leadership and volunteer capacities. These range from L'Esprit de Noel to the Guild Education Committee to the Yellow Rose Ball Committee.

She has helped with YRB Opening night corralling of the Flower Girls and their escorts, helped coordinate the L'Esprit home tour volunteers and hosted homes on the tour, helped create and fill the L'Esprit donor appreciation bags, and helped



*First Row: Cathy Groene, Sue Janssen, Liz Clarke, and Priscilla Mead
Second Row: Nancy Hemming, Barbara Ferguson, Glenda Richter, Nancy Westman, and Marnie King. ?
Standing: Julie Hughes, Lucy Showalter, Kathleen Ness, Karen Ritz, Bette Poppers, Wanda Larsson*

create and execute fabulous CCO education events for many years for CCO families and the Denver community.

Congratulations to Ericka on becoming Central City Opera Guild 2023 Belle!!!



A BEAUTIFUL DAY GREETED OUR ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON



Nancy Hemming, 2023 Central City Opera Guild President



New President and CEO, Scott Finlay



PLEASE SAVE THE FOLLOWING DATES!

"MONEY FOR MATTRESSES"

Guild Fundraiser for Historic Properties at our Spring Membership Party on April 25, 2024

HOUSEWARMING VOLUNTEER DAYS:

Wednesday, May 14 & Saturday, May 18 from 9 AM - 3 PM.
Followed by a picnic lunch at The Teller House Patio.

For questions, additional volunteer dates, to sign up or donate contact:

Cathy Groene, cggroene@msn.com, 720-205-9058 or
Kay Fiege kayfiege@gmail.com, 763-438-7970.

The CCO Guild Board Holiday Luncheon, was hosted at the Lakewood Country Club on December 6, 2023, by Guild President Nancy Hemming. This gathering was a moment to express gratitude for the outstanding efforts of the Guild Board, committee members, donors, and the dedicated CCO staff. Their collective contributions have been key to our shared success for 2023.

FALL MEMBERSHIP COFFEE



Incoming President Katie Grassby, Heidi Burose, Susan Adams, Wendy Wenkstern, Cathy Groene, Marilyn Rhodess, & Aidan Furlong

BRAVA for Heidi Burose and Susan Stiff, Co-VPs of Membership, who carried off a Perfectly Lovely Autumn Event! Central City Opera Guild's Fall Membership Coffee was held at the beautiful Balfour Senior Living facility located at Balfour at Riverfront in downtown Denver. CCO Guild president Nancy Hemming was instrumental in working with the Balfour team who graciously underwrote the entire event. Susan Stiff served as emcee as Nancy was out of town.



Karen Ritz

This annual coffee was an opportunity for the Guild to be updated by CCO Board member and past CCO Guild President Karen Ritz on the past 2023 summer festival, as well as updates on the (then upcoming) 2023 L'Esprit de Noel Holiday Home Tour. In addition, Karen updated attendees on the Max and Erin Nichols Family

Charitable Foundation's matching grant of \$100,000 earned from L'Esprit donations and ticket sales. In addition, Karen reported that the Voice Your Dreams Guild Fund (part of the endowment) was eligible for matching funds (via the Avenir Foundation) through December 31, 2023.

Central City Opera Association's incoming Board Co-Chair Sonny Wiegand was in attendance to introduce the new Central City Opera President & CEO Scott Finlay, who has served with



the organization for many years as the well-loved Director of Development.

The annual Belle Award was presented by Central City Opera Guild's Past President, Cindy Koch, to Erika McDaniel. Erika's extraordinary time, energy and support to the Guild over many years makes her the Perfect Belle Award Recipient!

As a final treat, Soprano Lauren Lestage and Dr. Teresa Crane offered a lovely program to reminding us that music enhances life and communities.



VOICE YOUR DREAMS GUILD FUND CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Generous Guild Members, we have met and exceeded the minimum to establish the Voice Your Dreams Guild Fund within the Central City Opera Endowment! At the time of this writing, nearly \$31,000 has been donated and will be matched at the close of 2023.

Our Golden Year, 2024, is the first that this fund will provide additional support for our work enhancing lives through music and historic preservation. Of course, the extra financial benefit will continue in perpetuity.

The Guild Fund can always receive donations In Memory or In Honor of those we hold in esteem. Please feel free to reach out to Karen Ritz directly at 303-807-9464 or amkrritz@comcast.net if you have questions or would like more information.

Karen Ritz

2019 & 2020 CCOG President

CCO Board Member

Voice Your Dreams Campaign Committee Member



NEW CCO PILOT PROGRAM ADDRESSES YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Operatic stories do not shy away from topics of suicide, trauma, bullying, isolation, and challenging social dynamics and relationships. **CHIAROSCURO: LIGHT IN DARKNESS**, Central City Opera's new pilot program for adolescent audiences, uses **BIG** voices to communicate **BIG** emotions in hopes to present, identify, raise visibility, and lower stigma on mental health challenges that adolescent audiences face. This programming offers a new and innovative way of addressing the mental health concerns that students experience through storytelling. Using unfamiliar musical styles and relatable stories - *opera can and does reflect our daily lives and resonate with our inner workings and emotions*. The goal is to use opera as a vehicle to spark conversation, to present relevant and challenging scenarios including bullying, cyberbullying, suicidal ideation, and gender dysphoria, and to connect audiences to mental health and social emotional learning resources from expert partners.

Alongside pre- and post-performance engagement, students will experience **CHIAROSCURO: LIGHT IN DARKNESS** and then reflect upon the work. The pilot phase of this program includes a showcase at the 2024 CMEA Convention and presentations for adolescent audiences. All the while, CCO will be gathering feedback from consultants at MARIA DROSTE COUNSELING CENTER, as well as from other mental health professionals and a task force of people and organizations with expertise in mental health and school-based social-emotional learning, our own CCO Touring artists, CCO Guild Education Committee members, and our audiences and members of their communities.

CCO OPERA WELCOMES GUILD PRESIDENTS' LUNCHEON



On November 30, 2023, the Guild Presidents Luncheon took place at the historic Fleming Mansion in Platt Park, Denver. Twenty-one current and former CCOG Presidents gathered for this special occasion. The event was graciously hosted by Edie Bell and Denise Sanderson, and the delectable luncheon was prepared by Serendipity Catering. The distinctive venue, combined with the enduring camaraderie and shared commitment to Central City Opera, created an atmosphere that resonated with the spirit of the holidays. A wonderful time was had by all in attendance.



PROCEEDS MAKE OUR GARDENS GROW!

ENGAGING YOUNG SINGERS:

CCO'S PROFESSIONAL SINGERS JOIN YOUTH IN A SIDE-BY-SIDE CONCERT

On September 24, Central City Opera, Performing Arts Academy, and the Denver Young Artists Orchestra took the stage of Boettcher Concert Hall in a collaborative concert under the baton of Colorado Symphony Orchestra's Wilbur Lin in a program of opera and musical theatre hits called "Fountain of Youth." In addition to providing a cast of excellent opera soloists for the show, Central City Opera coordinated side-by-side learning experiences for the young orchestral and vocal musicians.

Soprano Christie Conover, mezzo-soprano Kim Stanish, tenor Eric Botto contributed their time and talents to DYAO's weekend workshop, held at UNC in Greeley the weekend before the concert, while CCO Touring Artists of all voice types, along with pianist Sara Parkinson, joined an ensemble of high school vocalists from PAA to provide a side-by-side learning experience in Highlands Ranch. Over the course of several rehearsals, the CCO professionals and PAA students joined in collaboration. The combined chorus was prepared by conductor and PAA Director, Dr. James Ramsey.

In rehearsal, the CCO singers and PAA students found many teachable moments. "There were discussions of vocal pedagogy—as the sopranos maneuvered how to tackle the high B flat on a "hum" in *Madame Butterfly's* "Humming Chorus"—and chats between songs about what it's like to audition for professional acting and singing jobs. And, of course, the moments when both the professional singers and students were in awe of each other's talents. There was so much to be proud of and I look forward to the next time," explained soprano Lauren Lestage, who recently earned a master's degree from Lamont School of Music (DU). Like Lestage, many of CCO's Education and Community Engagement Touring Artists are experienced voice teachers and hold degrees in music performance or music education. Professional choristers enjoyed introducing the young singers to opera hits like "Va pensiero" from Verdi's *Nabucco*, and the "Habanera" from Bizet's *Carmen* for the first time.

DYAO's student instrumentalists played a wide range of orchestral, operatic, and musical theatre pieces impressively. "They were truly inspiring in their abilities to perform the difficult repertoire placed in front of them," Lestage explained.

OFFICE NEWS FROM THE CCO . . .



The Board and Leadership of Central City Opera (CCO) are delighted to announce the appointment of Scott Finlay as the new President and CEO. With a remarkable 12-year journey within the organization, he brings an unparalleled understanding of CCO's rich history, its unique challenges, and its immense potential for artistic and organizational growth. With Finlay's leadership in place, a national search for an Artistic Director led by Management Consultants for the Arts will commence immediately to ensure continuity of the rich 92-year artistic legacy of CCO.

Upon accepting the role, Finlay expressed his excitement: "I am deeply honored to assume the position of President and CEO at Central City Opera. This institution's legacy is unparalleled, and I am committed to honoring its past while embracing the necessary changes to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future. I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and the opportunity to lead CCO into a new era."

We also welcome Chuck Calkins, Director of Finance, and Caren Ewing, Staff Accountant. We are delighted that Margaret Williams has accepted a permanent role as Managing Director and congratulations are in order for AJ Kazlouski as he moves into his new role as Patron Services Manager.





HISTORIC PROPERTIES

MCFARLANE HOUSE (THE GUILD HOUSE)

Here's some really special news! The Guild is about to have our own designated house in Central City! It's true! We can give it extra TLC, hold meetings and special events there, and simply make it a touchstone in the City that is the home of our Favorite Opera Company.



Painting of McFarlane House by Pancho Gates

Just in case you're wondering which of our many properties is McFarlane, it's the next house up the hill from D'Albe and across the street from the Martin Foundry.

This is how it happened: Fredrick McFarlane deeded

the residence and its furnishings to Justin W. Brierly in 1942 and the McFarlane's continued to use the house until Lillian Cushing's death in 1975. Brierly was the Opera Association's first Executive Manager and served for 11 years. He went on to become a member of the Association Board, an Executive Board Member and Honorary Director. Brierly donated the



McFarlane House

home to the Colorado Historical Society (History Colorado) in 1976 with the stipulation that the Society permit the Central City Opera House Association to use the residence to house summer festival staff.

There are 3 bedrooms in McFarlane; so, it saves us \$15,000 every summer.

Last year, History Colorado deemed it necessary to sell the house and after

many hours of collaborating and research, we found a way to make it part of our collection. Five Guild Members pooled some financial resources to complete the transaction: Margaret Baker, Barbara Ferguson, Newell Grant, Karen Ritz and Laura Trask Schneider.

Bravos to CCOG VP of Historic Properties, Cathy Groene; CCO Director of Historic Properties, Eric Chinn; Director of Operations, Deb Mountain; and CCO President and CEO, Scott Finlay, who did the collaborating and researching for this project.

What an especially exciting beginning to the Guild's 50th year of Service for Central City Opera!



WRAPPING UP AND MAKING PLANS



Nancy Westman volunteering at Coe House, preparing to host Festival Staff

Looking back on 2023, Guild Members can be proud of the various contributions they made to Central City Opera's Historic Properties. Thank you for helping make the 2023 Season a success! And now, with 2024 upon us, it's time to plan for 2024 Festival season preparations.

GUILD FUNDRAISER FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES:

The Spring Membership Party on April 25 will highlight the 2024 "MONEY FOR MATTRESSES" drive to purchase new beds for the historic properties in Central City. We all know the importance of a good night's rest! Sources will

be researched to supply new beds for the houses (no used mattresses for our guests!). Please let us know if you have ideas for providers, and know our Guild members are our best resource. Details to follow.

HOUSEWARMING DAYS:

Each spring the Historic Properties Committee and a group of volunteers head to Central City to prepare the homes for the summer Festival Staff. Small repairs, lamps, cleaning and replacing drapes, as well as replenishing household items are just a few of the areas in which our dedicated volunteers help to welcome Festival house guests ahead of the season. There will be multiple work dates in April and May so please let us

know if you're interested in joining us for a few hours of fun (bring a friend!). Wednesday, May 14 & Saturday, May 18 from 9 AM - 3 PM. A picnic lunch follows on The Teller House Patio. Your help is key to this area of support to the Opera!

GENERAL HISTORIC HOUSE NEEDS:

Should you have a picnic table you no longer need, the Opera's homes could benefit from such a donation. More miscellaneous needs are listed at: <https://centralcityopera.org/guild-historic-property-needs/>

For questions, additional volunteer dates, to sign up or donate contact:

Cathy Groene, cggroene@msn.com, 720-205-9058 or Kay Fiege kayfiege@gmail.com, 763-438-7970.



D'Albe House, one among the many historic properties in Central City Festival staff and artists will call home this upcoming 2024 Opera Festival season.