

HISTORICAL RECOLLECTIONS ON THE FOUNDING OF IMPRESARIOS

By Carolyn Christy

Opera /Columbus was a fledgling organization when Michael Harrison was the Director and Impresarios was founded. Fran Luckoff, an active volunteer with Opera/Columbus, decided to open her Bexley home to friends in the community. It was a warm, sunny afternoon when her guests arrived. She had scattered white linen bedecked tables across her lawn. She welcomed her guests and made certain they had a beverage before asking them to take a seat there in her garden to learn about Opera/Columbus and what we could do to help this young arts group.

Michael Harrison gave an enthusiastic talk and the guests talked about ways to support Opera/Columbus. One way to assist which was identified as the establishment of a support group. Some of us agreed to meet again at Mike Gelpi's home to discuss the formation of such a group. Fran's efforts seem to be bearing fruit.

A few weeks later many of the same people gathered at Mike's to figure out the framework for the co-ed group soon to be named the Impresarios of Opera/Columbus. By-Laws were presented and approved before officers were nominated. Most of the people there agreed to do something for the nascent group. Mike's mother, Eleanor Gelpi, was a very prominent community volunteer with a wealth of experience in creating community organizations and all of us felt fortunate that she agreed to be our founding president. I was excited to serve as Vice President because it was a wonderful opportunity to learn from a very experienced leader.

At the first meeting we even determined a first project--a "polo fundraiser" to be held in July at the polo field. Ann Birrer and Lauren took the lead in getting this project successfully accomplished. They did this despite Eleanor Gelpi becoming very ill. Eleanor did not recover and so shortly I discovered that I was president of the young support group.

The Impresarios Board was composed of committed people and it continued with fund-raising projects supporting the opera as the directors and boards have changed. Opera/Columbus has always been supportive of our efforts in its behalf. We not only did the polo parties, but tapas events, dances with silent auctions, and a party at the downtown car racing. We have always been willing to try ways to raise funds for our opera.

THE PRESIDENTS OF IMPRESSARIOS

1985	Eleanor Gelpi
1985-1987	Carolyn Christy
1987-1989	Thomas O'Keefe
1989-1991	Lynn Elliott
1991-1992	Reed Dungan
1992-1994	Carolyn Christy
1994-1995	Antoinette Bloch
1995-1997	Jane Sheaffer
1997-1999	Seth Reichenbach
2000-2002	Marianne Mueller
2002-2005	Barry Liss
2005-2008	Andrew Oldenquist
2008-2011	Barry Liss
2011-2014	Miriam Utter
2014-2017	Larry Anderson
2017-2020	Barry Liss