

The Mother of Pacific Opera

Pacific Opera Victoria is honoured to dedicate the 2011/2012 opera season to the memory of Jane Heffelfinger, who died June 22, 2011.

Jane joined the Pacific Opera board in 1983, after having supported her husband George in his efforts as co-founder and first President of the fledgling Pacific Opera Association. Jane's work and support over the decades that followed were instrumental in making POV what it is today. Jane served as President from 1989 to 1995, and chaired the POV Foundation from 1998 to 2008. For nine months in 1989/90 she rolled up her sleeves and put in long hours at the office as volunteer General Manager.

Over the decades Jane acted as POV's fundraiser extraordinaire, a dynamo who pioneered the festive Opening Night Sense of Occasion receptions, spearheaded a series of luxury car lotteries, and organized gala fundraising concerts with such luminaries as Ben Heppner, Richard Margison, Tracy Dahl, and Judith Forst.

As POV's artistic director Timothy Vernon once said, *No one has been more important in developing this company and pushing it forward. She is reliable, resourceful ... and doesn't take no for an answer — trust me.*

Indeed, Jane's charm, energy, and formidable powers of persuasion induced many donors and sponsors, not only to give, but to see their support as a form of "enlightened self interest". As Jane said in one of her many programme messages, *That form of enlightenment — that form of "self interest" — that generosity — these are really the things that have made Pacific Opera the company it is and that have made it as celebrated for the quality of its support as it is for the quality of its production. We are indeed blessed!*

After Jane's death, George found among her papers a note that read: *Throughout the darkest days of World War II, Winston Churchill continued to fund the arts. "What else" he said, "are we fighting for?"*

Though the quote is apocryphal, the sentiment is absolutely in tune with Jane's own fighting spirit when it came to the arts. She once told an interviewer, *I will not do anything for anybody unless I love the cause, and then I go at things like a tiger because I care so much.*

She was a tiger for Pacific Opera, bringing to bear both fierceness and love as she dealt with the vicissitudes of helping an opera company flourish over three decades.

Jane also worked tirelessly for a multitude of other causes — helping raise over \$12 million for the Greater Victoria Hospital Foundation and serving on the boards of the Lester B. Person College of the Pacific, the Victoria Commonwealth Games, CBC, the TELUS Community Board, and the University of Victoria Foundation.

Proclaimed an Honourary Citizen of Victoria in 1998, she received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in 2002; an honorary Doctor of Law degree from the University of Victoria in 2004; Leadership Victoria's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award; and in 2008 she was named an Honorary Life Member of Pacific Opera Victoria.

Jane Heffelfinger's influence extended far beyond POV. The citation for the Order of BC awarded to her in 2000 reads, in part, *Her dedication to showcasing Canadian talent changed opera. Her leadership and volunteer fundraising brought new standards to Canadian opera.*



Photo: Barbara Pedrick

With its ravishing vocal risk-taking, opera is like a vocal Olympics ... Its power and beauty will reach into your hearts and touch you in places you didn't know were there ... Opera has the ability to transform the audience and envelop it in a shared experience reminding us of our common humanity.

Jane Heffelfinger

quoted in *Bravo! The History of Opera in British Columbia*, by Rosemary Cunningham

We all hope to one day look back on our lives and know we've made a difference... Jane could do that in spades, and we are all the better off for having her in our lives. She lives eternally in our hearts.

True to her lifetime devotion to the arts and Pacific Opera Victoria, Jane arranged for an insurance policy, payable to Pacific Opera Victoria Foundation, to benefit Pacific Opera. She also specifically requested that those who wish to remember her should do so by supporting this Company that she so loved and nurtured.

If you would like to give to the **Jane Heffelfinger Legacy Campaign**, you may do so by **mail** to

Pacific Opera Victoria Foundation
500-1815 Blanshard Street
Victoria, BC V8T 5A4

OR by telephone: **250-382-1641**

OR online at

<https://secure.pov.bc.ca/legacy.html>