“Music - opera particularly - is a process which is endurable or successful only if it is achieved by people who love to collaborate.”

Sarah Caldwell
SD Opera Ambassadors

SDO Administration/General Information:

Tel:  619-232-7636
Webpage:  www.sdopera.org/support/volunteer
Email:  ambassadors@sdopera.org

SDO office hours: 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday

Ambassador Liaisons:
Kate Bower  Ushering / Office Admin Support / Gala
Barbara Carlton  Backstage Tours / Welcome Greeters / Patron Services Support / Photo Opp. / Events
Norman Cullen  Artistic Support
Brenda Hines  Ushering

Contents                    Page number
Ambassadors’ Mission Statement   3
The Ambassador Code of Conduct   4
General Policies               5
Ambassador Assignments        8-12

Welcome to the San Diego Opera Ambassadors

Every American arts organization relies on the contributions of volunteers. San Diego Opera Ambassadors are passionate about opera and about giving their time, energy and talents to help the art of opera thrive in San Diego.

Ambassadors play many important roles at San Diego Opera. This manual is designed give you an overview of the opportunities available to you and SDO’s expectations of its volunteers.

San Diego Opera is grateful for your participation. We couldn’t do what we do without you.
The SDO Ambassadors’ Mission

San Diego Opera Ambassadors support the mission of San Diego Opera and its full-time staff, part-time/seasonal staff and artists by working collaboratively on one or more specific assignments. The SDO mission can be found here on the SDO website: https://www.sdopera.org/about/mission

As an Opera Ambassador you represent a company whose work matches that of the finest companies in the U.S. and around the world. We strive to give our audiences the best experience possible and work to build and grow new audiences for the future of opera. As a San Diego Opera Ambassador you are on the front line of our patrons’ experience. You may well be a patron’s very first contact with the world of opera. It is therefore essential that you embody professionalism, courtesy, graciousness and enthusiasm at all times.

A Positive and United Front

You’ll naturally have your own opinions about the SDO season, performances and programs. We welcome your feedback and suggestions and encourage you to share them with us. However, when acting as an Ambassador we ask that you represent SDO in only the most positive light. Always project an attitude of friendly professionalism and please refrain from making any comments on sensitive issues in the presence of patrons. Stick only to positive comments about San Diego Opera programming choices, visiting artists, outreach programs, staff, and management.

Patrons occasionally may express their opinions about performances to you. Thank them for praise. For less than positive comments, please don’t judge, just acknowledge. Some possible responses to have at hand for this kind of comment:

“That’s a very interesting observation.”
“I’m sorry you were disappointed.”
“Thank you for your comment.”
“I’ll certainly pass that information on.”

Should you encounter a particularly disgruntled patron, refer them to a nearby SDO staff member if available. You may also suggest they write a letter or email the Company directly. SDO takes feedback seriously and responds accordingly.
The Ambassador Code of Conduct

As an Ambassador, I am here to support San Diego Opera and its patrons. I will:

- Represent San Diego Opera with professionalism, dignity and pride, and always conduct myself with courtesy and appropriate behavior.
- Be reliable, punctual, and prepared for all assignments.
- Be committed to my assignment and always project a positive attitude.
- Display respect and courtesy to staff, program participants, visitors, artists, property and fellow Ambassadors.
- Respect the privacy of artists and personnel of San Diego Opera and hold in confidence any sensitive, private or personal information.
- Keep staff informed of progress, concerns, or problems within the programs in which I participate.
- Perform and complete accepted tasks and duties in a safe manner.
- Adhere to all San Diego Opera policies.

As an Ambassador, I will not:

- Use vulgar or inappropriate language.
- Request autographs, use sound-or other technical-equipment or take photographs.
- Use or be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while volunteering.
- Discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, height, weight, physical or mental ability, veteran status, military obligations, or marital status.
- Go backstage, on-stage or into dressing rooms unless authorized.
General Ambassador Policies

Rotation of Assignments
Because of the high level of interest in Ambassadors we sometimes have the fortunate problem of having more volunteers than we need. As a result we may not always be able to schedule you as often as you may wish. This in no way reflects on the excellent job you’re doing but is our attempt to give everyone an opportunity to participate.

Schedules
We always aim to ask you for your availability as early as possible. When we provide you with the dates and times for which we request your help, please check your calendar immediately to ensure that you are still available and then please confirm. Please contact us as soon as possible if your availability changes.

Punctuality
Please arrive on time. We are a team and often Ambassadors are assigned very specific tasks. Please call if you know you will be late so that we can re-assess assignments if necessary.

Cancellations
Life happens. On (we hope) very rare occasions, you may have to cancel your assignment. Please call or email us as soon as you know that you will not be available.

No-Shows
For some tasks, we need a minimum number of volunteers to carry out a project effectively. Your last-minute absence is unfair to your fellow volunteers. If you are unable to attend, please contact us as soon as possible, so we can try to find a replacement.

Time Keeping
Please keep track of your time spent for each assignment. We’ll need this information for our record-keeping.

Eating and Drinking
Your schedule is hectic, and we understand that you may need to bring a packed meal or snack for break periods. We don’t want you to starve! However, if you need to have a quick bite, check with an SDO staff member first. Please make certain that you use only appropriate areas, and that you dispose properly of all trash.

Smoking
Please do not ever smoke when representing San Diego Opera in any capacity.
Spontaneity
You have unexpected free time and you’d like to work? Great!
But please contact us first. We’ll gladly schedule you if we can but please don’t show up to work without having been scheduled. We’d hate you to waste your time if we are unable to make use of your talents.

Bringing guests with you when volunteering
We’re delighted when you want to introduce your friends to the Opera. But please don’t bring guests when you’re scheduled to work. All volunteers must complete Opera Ambassadors profile forms and to be officially trained and scheduled. Not only does SDO tracks the assignments and hours of all volunteers but also works to maintain a coherence in both information and quality.

How long are you expected to stay?
When you sign up to volunteer we expect that you will help with every phase of the job as outlined by the Ambassador Liaison. This can sometimes include cleaning up after an event. We try to let you know the full shift duration prior to your accepting the assignment. If for any reason you cannot work the full shift please let us know as often we can adapt to your time limits.

Tickets
We wish we could give all our Ambassadors free tickets to enjoy the performances. Unfortunately this is not possible. Even SDO staff are required to purchase tickets. We genuinely value your help, and we aim to show our appreciation in other ways. Do ask us about discounts!

Infringement of Policies
San Diego Opera’s policies concerning Ambassador conduct are intended to promote professionalism and goodwill. These policies also enhance the enjoyment and sense of pride that all of us want to feel about our work. When an Ambassador refuses to abide by the policies governing conduct his or her future participation will be subject to review and may result in dismissal.

Important Tax Information
Ambassadors’ unreimbursed expenses are deductible contributions for itemizers. The IRS has ruled that unreimbursed expenses are deductible if they are directly connected and solely attributable to the rendition of services to a charitable organization. For example, if you pay for parking and the only reason you need to park is to volunteer for SDO, this expense should qualify. In addition, mileage is deductible at the rate of .14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.
To document these deductions properly you should keep a canceled check or request a receipt for any unreimbursed expenses from SDO. For mileage deduction, you’ll also need to keep a log of the miles driven and obtain a verification of participation from SDO for your volunteer activity. We’ll answer your money questions to the best of our ability. We recommend seeing advice from a financial advisor for guidance in deducting expenses related to volunteer work.
Questions/Concerns/Compliments

We do want to hear from you. Your feedback is essential to SDO to maintain and improve procedure and we encourage you to share your thoughts with us. Please remember that the SDO Office is a place of business often faced with deadlines, therefore we appreciate you calling in advance to make an appointment before stopping by.

Have you filled out your Profile Form yet? If not, please download it at:

www.sdopera.org/Support/Volunteer
**Ambassador Assignments**

San Diego Opera offers opportunities for Ambassadors to volunteer in one or more of the following areas:

- Administration/Office Ambassadors
- Backstage Tour Ambassadors
- Welcome Ambassadors
- Photo Booth Ambassadors
- Patron Services Support Ambassadors
- Education Docents
- Special Events Ambassadors
- Student Night Ambassadors
- Detour Series Ambassadors

**Administration/Office Ambassadors:**
San Diego Opera staff members sometimes need assistance to prepare patron mailings, stuff envelopes or gift bags, or staff the box office telephone on performance days.

**You’ll need**
- A professional attitude
- Attention to detail and accuracy
- Organizational skills
- The ability to maintain confidentiality

**Time Commitment**
- Sessions are during the day, usually between 9:30am and 3:30pm.
- Please commit to one full shift at a time: shifts are approximately three hours, although they may sometimes be shorter.

**Dress Code**
- Casual.

**Backstage Tour Ambassadors:**

Backstage Tour Ambassadors, as you might guess, give backstage tours before performances. Any ticket holder may attend on a first-come-first-served basis. A backstage tour is often a patron’s first opera experience and it’s our opportunity to build excitement with a behind-the-scenes look at what it really takes to create opera.

**You’ll need:**
To be comfortable with public speaking, including the ability to engage with patrons and convey information in a vivid and personal way and the ability to speak loud enough to be heard by a large group, oftentimes over ambient noise.

Fluency in other languages, especially Spanish, is occasionally useful but not a requirement.

The ability to keep your group together, moving and safe in the busy backstage work area.

To be comfortable with steep stairs.

**Time Commitment**

- Up to 2 hours prior to the performance.
- We try to assign one tour per Ambassador per production, but if we run short of volunteers, we may ask if you can do more.

**Dress Code**

- Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
- Sensible CLOSED-TOE shoes are essential, as the stairs are steep. Open-toe shoes or sandals are not permitted backstage.
- *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*

---

**Welcome Ambassadors:**

Welcome Ambassadors do just that: welcome patrons to the Opera on performance days. They hold signs in strategic locations around the Civic Center Plaza and greet arriving patrons with a smile. They also give basic directions. This job combines naturally with that of Backstage Tour Ambassador so you may be asked to work both tasks on the same night.

**You’ll need:**

- To be comfortable welcoming and speaking to patrons.
- Standing for up to an hour or more outside.
- Fluency in other languages, especially Spanish, is occasionally useful but not a requirement.

**Time Commitment**

- Up to 2 hours prior to the performance.

**Dress Code**

- Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
- Comfortable shoes for standing.
- *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*

---

**Patron Services Support Ambassadors:**

Patron Services Support Ambassadors field questions about patrons’ ticketing needs and guide patrons to the correct line so that they can be helped as efficiently as possible in the 90 minutes leading up to Mainstage performances at San Diego Civic Theatre.

**You’ll need:**

- To be comfortable speaking to patrons and answering questions.
• Standing for up to 90 minutes or more in the theatre lobby.
• Fluency in other languages, especially Spanish, is occasionally useful but not a requirement.

**Time Commitment**
• Up to 90 minutes prior to the performance.

**Dress Code**
• Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
• Comfortable shoes for standing.
• *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*

---

**Photo Booth Ambassadors:**

Photo Booth Ambassadors work staff the “step-and-repeat” photo booth on the Civic Concourse where patrons may have their photos taken in front of an official SDO-branded backdrop. This is one of the fun activities SDO provides to create a welcoming, VIP-feel for all patrons.

**You’ll need:**
• To be comfortable welcoming and speaking to and engaging with patrons. The photo booth is often the first “fun” part of a patron’s evening and is a great opportunity to set the tone for an amazing experience.
• Comfortable using smart phone camera apps.  The Patrons hand the Ambassador their smart phone or camera and that is used to take one or two photos.
• Fluency in other languages, especially Spanish, is occasionally useful but not a requirement.
• Lines can be very long for the photo-opp.  Ambassadors should be mindful of this, keep the line moving, ensure that patrons do not take too long at the booth (although they shouldn’t feel rushed), and keep those standing in line engaged and excited.
• At some performances Photo Booth Ambassadors may be asked to help record soundbites from patrons at the booth about their opera experiences. Recording equipment, suggested script and guidelines and some brief basic training will be provided by SDO as well as support from and SDO staff member.

**Time Commitment**
• Up to 2 hours prior to the performance.

**Dress Code**
• Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
• Dressy “opera” clothes also permitted.
• Comfortable shoes for standing.
• *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*
**Education Docent Ambassadors:**
Education Docent Ambassadors visit schools and introduce students in grades 3-12 to the world of opera before their Student Night at the Opera experience.

**You’ll need:**
- A warm and age-appropriate manner. You have to like kids—that’s just essential.
- A commitment to preparing students for a successful and rewarding Student Night at the Opera experience.
- Communication and organizational skills.

**Time Commitment**
- One 3-hour docent meeting in the fall.
- Up to 2 hours for each docent visit to a school.

**Dress Code**
- Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
- Comfortable shoes for standing.
- *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*

**Special Events Ambassadors:**
Special Events Ambassadors greet patrons, assist with check-in and guide attendees at a variety of special events, often for donors.

**You’ll need:**
- A professional and courteous manner.
- Good vision to read check-in lists.
- The ability to keep check-in lines moving at high-volume events.
- Grace under pressure - a positive attitude and the ability to keep calm goes a long way when things get hectic.

**Time Commitment**
- Up to 5 hours for each event.
- Events may take place in the morning, late afternoon or evening

**Dress Code**
- Slacks, khakis or knee-length skirt and a shirt with a collar, a blouse or dressy sweater.
- Comfortable shoes for standing.
- *Jeans, sneakers and other casual attire are not acceptable.*
**Student Night Ambassadors:**
Student Night Ambassadors usher for the final dress rehearsal of each production when students from grades 3 – 12 are invited to attend. Student Night at the Opera is often the first opera, or even theatre, experience this young audience encounters. Ambassadors greet students, assist with seating and help with crowd control. Student Night Ambassadors may need to stand for up to 3 hours.

**You'll need:**
- To like kids! (No two ways about that.)
- A professional and courteous manner toward both children and adults.
- The ability to engage with patrons of all ages.
- Grace under pressure - a positive attitude and the ability to keep calm goes a long way at these fun and hectic nights.
- The ability to walk up and down multiple flights of stairs.
- Familiarity with the venues seating layout, in order to accurately and efficiently direct groups to their seated locations.

**Time Commitment**
- Up to 4 hours at each performance.

**Dress Code**
- **All black:** Dress pants or skirt with a long-sleeved shirt, blouse or dressy sweater. Black sports jacket or sweater optional.
- Comfortable black dress shoes with socks or hose.
- **Ushers will be issued Ambassador badges and their signature accessory of gold scarves or ties upon check-in at the theatre.**

**dētour Series Ambassadors:**
SDO’s dētour series presents new work, chamber operas and recitals and has proved enormously popular bringing new audiences to the Opera. dētour series performances take place in venues around San Diego, including, but not limited to, Balboa Theatre, Lyceum Theatre, Patrick Henry High School and the Joan B. Kroc Theatre in Rolando.

dētour series Ambassadors greet patrons and usher for all performances. Ambassadors will be expected to arrive when specified and stay throughout the entire performance, just as for Student Night at the Opera. Ambassadors will be given specific information for each venue including parking and timing in advance.

All requirements are the same as for Student Night at the Opera.