

Milestones

Community

Opera Brings First Executive Director On Board

After 18 years of steadily building the quality of the Livermore Valley Opera (LVO), the Board of Directors voted in fellow Board member and Marketing Chair, Sara Nealy, as the first Executive Director of the organization.

Nealy, a strategic marketing executive and opera enthusiast, will focus on bringing the regional (Tri-Valley) opera company "to the next level, with professional, strategic planning, fundraising and marketing," according to Board President, Mike Miller. "Sara has the business capacity and passion for the arts that can boost our operational success."

Nealy has high hopes for the company she calls, "not your Grandma's opera."

Nealy believes that exposure to the arts provides people the opportunity to imagine and experience life on a grand scale. "Opera is a singular art form - a fusion of singers, chorus, orchestra, sets, costumes, lighting, choreography, history, literature, culture, and most of all, great storytelling. That's why opera is often described as a grand experience."

"Livermore Valley Opera is poised to engage the imagination of the community at a time it is needed most," says Nealy. "The many cuts in arts programs in schools have emphasized the need



Sara Nealy

to provide access to the arts for people of all-income levels and backgrounds." As a way to make opera more accessible to families, Nealy developed and launched LVO's new "Ice Cream & Opera," a children's opera learning adventure program, which debuted at the first Sunday matinee of the spring, 2010 production of the Johann Strauss opera, *Die Fledermaus*.

According to Nealy, the excitement these days at LVO is palpable, because the company has been successful in presenting operas led by a gifted conductor and talented stage directors who cast vibrant, gifted young singers who are rising stars of opera. Some of these singers have the opportunity to step into their first principal role with LVO at the Bankhead Theater

in Livermore, where the company stages two opera productions each season. "The community benefits by having an affordable way to see classic opera, with performers who are on the brink of moving up to national and international audiences," said Nealy.

An experienced executive producer, marketer and corporate communications consultant with a background in the arts, Sara Nealy has lived and worked in New York, Chicago, Boston, Hawaii, Washington and San Francisco. Sara specializes in projects that raise awareness through singular marketing communications. Her resume includes brand and market development, multimedia projects, advertising and PR campaign strategy, design of eMarketing, directing sales teams, creating websites and marketing collateral, and the production and management of global meetings and events. She worked as a corporate meetings and events planner on Wall Street, and was Director of Sales and Marketing at a luxury resort and a Manhattan boutique hotel.

Nealy lives in Pleasanton with two of her three children. Her eldest is away at college, one is at Amador Valley High School and her youngest is at Harvest Park Middle School.