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CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY: Songsters Drive EV to California

By Roger Allen



John and Nancy Songster are electric vehicle (EV) pioneers. Like barnstorming pilots in the 1920s, they conquered the open road in their battery-powered Tesla.

The happy couple has made two cross-country trips from Athens to see family in California. John says that Tesla has thousands of charging stations across the country, and he's never seen one with an electric cord out of order. "There are more stations than we could use," said Nancy.

John was a little concerned once in western Colorado as they climbed up in elevation. He wasn't certain he could make it to the next charger, so he turned around. But just two exits in the other direction, they spotted a charging station they had missed and then proceeded on their way.

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ENJOYING OPERA IN ATHENS

By Cher Snyder

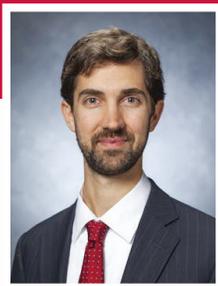
The Enjoying Opera in Athens SIG became a reality in 2006 thanks to OLLI members Nancy Songster and the late John Rudy. Timing was everything that year. Celebrated baritone and 22-year Metropolitan Opera veteran Frederick Burchinal had just been appointed director of opera at UGA's School of Music. And, in December, the first-ever livestream broadcast of *The Met: Live in HD* was presented to an eager audience of opera enthusiasts – including Nancy and John – at the Beechwood Cinemas. During intermission, the two remarked about how well the broadcast dovetailed with the creation of the opera program at UGA.

Envisioning how an opera-themed SIG could provide learning opportunities for opera students and OLLI members alike, Nancy and John shared their idea with Frederick Burchinal. Frederick agreed that opera students could give lunchtime presentations for SIG members before each *Live in HD* broadcast and, seventeen years later, Enjoying Opera in Athens is still going strong!

Nancy led the SIG for the first ten years, followed by Pat Minkler, Dennis Caughy, and most recently, her husband John Songster. John admits he wasn't a fan early on but has become an avid opera enthusiast over the years. The SIG's meeting dates coincide with scheduled *Live in HD* broadcasts; upcoming performances include *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Dec. 9), *Nabucco* (Jan. 6), and *Carmen* (Jan. 27).

Members meet for lunch at the nearby Golden Dragon restaurant, where opera students provide food for thought before adjourning the group to the Beechwood Cinemas. Members also attend opera performances and student recitals at UGA.

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Tim Meehan

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Small Steps. Sometimes progress can only be measured in small steps, but that does not mean that the steps themselves are not important.

For example, we have two rooms at River’s Crossing that have assisted-hearing loops. This means that audience members with hearing aids can set them so that the speaker can be clearly heard without having to turn the hearing aids all the way up and picking up all the sounds in the room. Because we share our rooms with other UGA and educational departments, we cannot always guarantee that we have these rooms available, but this gives us another way of being able to make our programs more accessible.

In order to provide different ways to socialize, the Hospitality Committee has been encouraging members to attend the free showing of UGA football games at the University 16 Cinemas on Saturdays. This is a great opportunity to hang out with fellow OLLI members – though we are not responsible for the outcome of the games!

There are a lot of other small steps that we are making across all of our programs (as can be seen in the Travel Study article on page 6), but this takes a lot of support. Thank you to everyone who has given to the Annual Fund so far, and to anyone who is considering giving, thank you!

We are also working on ensuring that we are communicating the need for planned gifts, which provide the ability to pay forward the lifelong learning benefits you have experienced with OLLI@UGA. If this is something you are interested in learning more about, please reach out and we will work with you to ensure that your wishes can be honored.

Most of the time, everything that endures is built slowly, by small steps. We might not be Rome, but looking back over the last 30 years of both Learning in Retirement and OLLI shows that we definitely were not built in a day. Early next year, the Board of Directors will be looking at a new Long Range Strategic Plan, where we will look at more steps that ensure we can continue to provide a large amount of programming and be sustainable into the future.

ENJOYING OPERA IN ATHENS

Continued from page 1

John says, “Many opera students develop and maintain personal relationships with our SIG members. It’s wonderful to get to know the students and to see them grow and develop.”



Nabucco by Giuseppe Verdi

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF QR CODES

By Patricia Dixen

In today's digitally driven world, QR codes (Quick Response codes) have become universal, transforming the way we access information, connect with businesses, and enhance our daily lives. While you have occasionally seen OLLI@UGA use QR codes on our printed materials, going forward you'll see them used more frequently. We'll still include a web URL; we're just adding the convenience of a QR code.

Businesses use QR codes in a multitude of ways, including on menus, brochures, and product packaging. You can easily access additional information, reviews, and promotions by scanning them. You'll find OLLI using them on flyers, posters and in *OLLI Times* to provide you quick access to a web page with more information about a particular activity, event, or trip.

Wondering about their security? QR codes themselves are generally secure. However, it's essential to exercise caution when scanning them. Stick to reputable sources, and be cautious when asked to provide personal information.

If you haven't scanned a QR code, you'll need a smartphone or tablet with a camera. Newer smartphones and tablets have sensors built in. If yours doesn't, there are many free QR code scanner apps available.

To scan a QR code, position your device's camera so the QR code is within the frame. The app will automatically detect and scan the code. Once scanned, the app will direct you to the content linked to the QR code.

Try it out on this QR code to access information about OLLI's 2024 Scotland trip:



Find out more about the
Scotland Trip!

CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY

Continued from page 1

Traveling about 350 miles a day, the Songsters took their time and reached California in about eight driving days. Westbound, they stopped in Kansas City to take in the National Toy and Miniature Museum because Nancy has an interest in miniatures and dollhouses.

In Tucumcari, NM, they were puzzled at the presence of a single huge turbine windmill. They were told that it is part of Mesalands Community College. "People come from all over the state to learn about how to run windmills," John says.

Further west, they made it a point to stay at the Best Western in Palm Desert, CA.

"The motel has almost the same phone number as mine," says Nancy. "I have taken calls for them for years."

While they were in the motel's breakfast room, Nancy received a call.

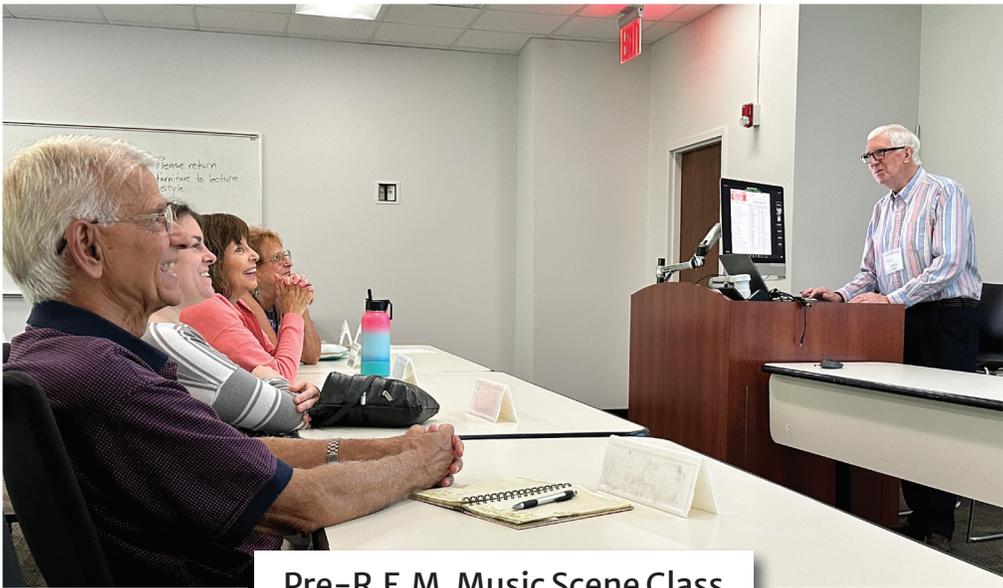
"Someone asked me for a reservation, so I just took my cell phone over to the front desk," she recalls.

Even when going through west Texas or the Mohave Desert, John says he was not worried about running out of battery life. His Tesla's computer plots the route, notes the charging stations along the way, and predicts battery charge remaining at the destination.

At about \$27 to charge the battery for 300 miles at a Tesla Supercharger, it's an economical ride for a high-powered car. Faster than a gasoline car, the Tesla Y in performance mode can go from 0 to 60 mph in 3.5 seconds, reach 155 mph, and has 303 miles of range.

John only tapped the superior power once -- to get rid of a tailgater. "He was gone from the rear view mirror in a few seconds," Nancy says.

"We had a good time on both trips," John says, "but we probably wouldn't go again. It's just a long ride."



Pre-R.E.M. Music Scene Class
(P. Dixen)



Industrial Athens Walk & Talk Class



Lunch & Learn
(T. Meehan)



Marketing Committee
(T. Meehan)



New Member Orientation
(T. Meehan)



Euchre SIG
(P. Dixen)

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Ben Epps Airport Tour and Talk
(H. Hayes)



tion



Dahlonega Trip
(P. Dixen)

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: TRUMPS CATERING

By Ann Allen

OLLI members know that they can count on longtime sponsor Trumps Catering for delicious food, abundant fellowship, and learning opportunities. The full service catering company has been the go-to venue for OLLI Lunch and Learns and special events for several years. Thank you, Trumps.

Trumps Catering is owned and operated by Andrée Kosak and Ron Schwartz and has been serving the Athens community and surrounding counties for more than 35 years. Before its transition to catering, Trumps was a cozy eastside Athens bistro.

Trumps specializes in wedding receptions, rehearsal dinners, bridal luncheons, and corporate and University of Georgia events both on site at its South Milledge Avenue banquet facility and numerous venues off site. Menus range from casual to multi-course meals.

Find out more about all the great food and services that Trumps Catering offers at trumpscatering.com or 706.546.1320.



Left: Trumps Catering Dining Room (Photo/P. Oldfather)

Right: Trumps Catering owners Andrée Kosak and Ron Schwartz (Photo/ TrumpsCatering.com)

TRAVEL STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

By Tim Meehan

Travel can be one of the most life-changing experiences, and one that can only be enhanced by travelling with friends. Being able to either share a new experience or show someone an unknown place in a well-known city can be one of life's great treasures.

As we continue to build back the travel program, we are taking the step of working with travel providers to be able to offer a greater array of travel opportunities. The Travel Study Committee is in the midst of interviewing a range of providers to be able to give the best options to our members, whether travelling nationally or internationally. This will give members a much larger choice of destinations to visit with fellow OLLI members, whether whale-watching off the New England coast, or exploring the Mughal empire in India. Indeed, one of the larger lacunas in our travel program has been more extensive regional travel in the United States – exploring this vast and varied country outside the Southeast. Being able to work with providers can open doors to less well-known places (or at least harder-to-research places) to our members.



Spaces are still available for the Scenic Tour of Scotland, May 2024.

(Photo/Millennium Tours)

This is not to diminish the Travel Study Committee volunteers who have done sterling work over the years, but to add an additional arrow to their quiver. We want to be able to offer ways of travelling with OLLI friends to every part of the U.S. and the globe. We will also continue to offer day trips to different areas of Georgia for those of you who prefer trips closer to home.

It is exciting to be able to construct this opportunity for our community and we hope that, during 2024, you will be able to take advantage of some of these trips. As of this writing, we still have spaces on our Scenic Tour of Scotland in May next year.

PICTURE THIS!

By Cher Snyder

Picture This! is an OLLI@UGA Shared Interest Group (SIG) that is all about photography, with a focus on fun. Members range in experience from absolute beginners to seasoned pros, using everything from smart phones to professional Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) equipment. There is something for every photography lover in the group – including the opportunity to showcase photographs each semester in the OLLI Gallery located in Joan Williams’s office!

The group was originally conceived as a photography club in 2008 by long-time OLLI member and cherished instructor Chuck Murphy. Hosting has passed from Chuck to Pat McAlexander, Scott Mason, and others who have continued the tradition of shared knowledge, socializing, and fun. Current host and OLLI instructor Gary Whiting says, “This SIG is all about getting high energy, enthusiastic, friendly people together to have a good time, share photos, and tell stories.”

Past sessions have featured professional photographers like Jim Morgenthaler, Heather Larkin, and Martin Bozone, who have shared pro photos and tips with the group. Meetings are usually at River’s Crossing at 4 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month but can vary with the setting and theme. Members often adjourn to the Blind Pig or similar venues following photo walks. Gary especially likes photo walks because “offbeat, weird places are photogenic.”



(Photo/G. Whiting)

THANK YOU TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE:

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Patricia Dixen
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Cher Snyder**

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