



ASSOCIATION FOR  
**OPERA IN CANADA**

2019-20

# Annual Report





A little over one year ago, we were in UBC, embarking on a transformative year while preparing for our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We had no inkling what was in store for us other than a celebratory year and a new strategic plan.

Our second Summit in Vancouver was a success, bringing together the young artists and educators from the Education Summit piloted at McGill the previous year, with the professional opera companies assembled for the bi-annual Colloquium. We worked with Aria Umezawa to ideate solutions on bridging the gap between training and an eventual career in opera, were introduced to the members of Indie Opera West and heard exciting new voices during the Speaker Discovery Series.

On the international front, we participated on panels at Opera Europa's fall conference and on the travel day between Strasbourg and Karlsruhe, celebrated World Opera Day, introducing the Canadian opera scene on social media, following the time zones from Europe across Canada's from East to west. With funding from Global Affairs, we finalized our first ever International market development strategy for opera in Canada on the World Stage. The strategy, developed by Joel Klein, opens the gates to future opera sector delegations to attend market events to proliferate Canadian operas and partnerships abroad.

In December, we announced the Opera Civic Impact Framework, the culmination of our five-year strategic plan to chart the impact opera companies have in their communities. The Framework was developed in consultation with Good Roots consulting.

In the new year, we selected Pacific Opera Victoria's Development Director Yvette Guigueno to attend the Leadership Intensive in New York and awarded the National Opera Directors Award to Elba Haid of Manitoba Opera. By Mid-March, we were one week away from the event to honour Ms Haid at the National Opera Trustees Award Dinner in Washington, DC. We had just finalized the details of a special briefing at the Canadian Embassy for Opera Company Board members on Cultural Diplomacy. By the middle of the week, we received the news that the borders were closing, and that Canada was going into Phase I lockdown.

As dozens of opera productions were cancelled, and many artists were flung into uncertainty and financial precarity, Opera.ca sprang into action. We were the first to survey our sector and provide immediate statistics to the government on impact of the closures on the sector. The board of Opera.ca held an emergency board meeting right after that and established the Opera Artist Emergency Fund. We collected just over \$1,000 in donations and provided \$8,000 in support to artists in urgent need of basic necessities in only three weeks.

The following few months of the fiscal year were a blur of activity on zoom, as we hosted hundreds of sector teleconference calls with members, educators, and special committees on specific themes. During the pandemic response, we also found the time to work on our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary plan to re-brand and re-name the Association, a process that began in the last fiscal year, and that has been announced in the current one as we emerge as the newly renamed Association for Opera in Canada.

We've never been busier at AOC, and this is because it is precisely times like these when we are needed the most to keep people connected, to ensure shared learning and rapid knowledge dissemination, and most importantly to care for one another and to find new ways to help each and every one of us get through this terrible crisis together.

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation go out to the board of directors, energetically led by Chair Michael Mori. I value their support, guidance and stewardship of the association without which we could not have achieved what we have this year.

Christina Loewen, Executive Director



I am very proud of the work that Christina, the staff, and board of directors have done in a remarkably challenging year. The Association for Opera in Canada is here and serving a more important purpose than ever. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, plans for the welcoming of greater and more diverse opera stakeholders were already underway, following two successful years of opera summits at McGill and the University of British Columbia bringing together every level of artist, educational institution, and producer. This underlining of our association as the national organization for opera in Canada where we can begin to unify our collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing opera continued its journey in a tumultuous year – where many more opera stakeholders in Canada are now looking to us for leadership.

Our professional member companies have faced stark challenges and new opportunities. While on one hand revenues and in particular ticket sales are stagnant and audience engagement has had to be completely reimagined, digital literacy, social media marketing and video production are improving across the board. We must still fight to keep our head above water, but there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Our artists have been and will continue to be the hardest hit for the 19/20 and 20/21 season, and our collective future will depend on how we continue to manage not only the health and survival of our companies, but of our artists and other vulnerable stakeholders.

I want to thank and congratulate Christina on her responsive approach to leading our association through this crisis, with heart and a redoubled understanding of the importance of our mission. I would like to thank all of the leaders of opera companies in Canada for their openness in meeting and sharing their insights and crises and support for one another. And I am incredibly grateful to the government of Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts for their rapid and steadfast response to this crisis.

Michael Mori, Chair of the Board of Directors

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### Overview

For the year ending June 30, 2020, the Association reported an operating surplus of \$10,162. This is our fourth year of surplus budgets in a row, with a rolling amount totalling \$33,705.

Highlights include exceptional performance of our investments, earning \$17,000 this year, as well as increases across every revenue line in the P & L, the results of increased grants, donations, sponsorships, and earned revenue.

Management of our investment portfolio was provided by Harbourfront Wealth Management, and Advisor Bill Richardson. Our overall net assets at year end, including the Board Designated Operating Reserve is \$548,571, up from \$538,409 last year.

Complete financial statements are available by request to [c\\_loewen@opera.ca](mailto:c_loewen@opera.ca)

## UBC OPERA SUMMIT AND COLLOQUIUM

SEPTEMBER 2019



As part of our continuing focus to become a more inclusive association, we hosted the UBC Opera Summit “Building New Bridges”, the largest convening in Opera.ca history, the Vancouver/UBC Opera Summit. Combining board meeting, strategic consultation, colloquium and education summit, the event drew in over 140 delegates for holistic conversations to better connect emerging artists, educators, training programs and professional producing arms of the sector. With support from the Azrieli Foundation, we were able to provide \$10,000 in emerging artists travel subsidies to allow emerging artists the opportunity and platform to participate in the Summit as delegates and first-time speakers, while also highlighting the many small regional opera companies in BC that recently formed Indie Opera West. The multi-day event was a resounding success!

## ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS – BY TELECONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2019

At the 2019 AGM, we welcomed a new board Chair, Michael Mori and said farewell to outgoing Chair Cheryl Hickman thanking her for 4 years of strong leadership. Cheryl remains on the board as Past-Chair. Ian Rye was nominated as Vice-Chair. Two new members were also elected, Amy Mushinski of the Canadian Opera Company, and Bruce Munro Wright, member-at-large, and former board chair for Vancouver Opera.

## INTRODUCING THE OPERA CIVIC IMPACT FRAMEWORK

Our five-year strategic plan, Charting our Civic Impact, culminated in the release of the Opera Civic Impact Framework. Deped with Good Roots Consulting, it reflects existing civic practices in the opera sector and is designed to capture impact data in an iterative way, supporting the opera sector's commitment to creating strong and positive civic impact in communities across Canada. There are five major civic impact theme areas under which these various civic impact activities can be aligned: Education, Access, Community, Experience, and Truth and Reconciliation.

For the full framework, visit: [http://www.opera.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/opera\\_civic\\_impact\\_framework\\_full\\_report\\_2.pdf](http://www.opera.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/opera_civic_impact_framework_full_report_2.pdf)



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## LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE – YVETTE GUIGUENO



We were proud to select Canadian Yvette Guigueno, Director of Development, Pacific Opera Victoria to attend OPERA America's Leadership Intensive in 2019/20. Congratulations Yvette!

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## INTERNATIONAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

With funding from Global Affairs Canada CanExport Program for Associations, we embarked on the development of an International Market Development Strategy with consultant Joel Klein. The exploratory nature of the project brought us to Opera Europa in fall 2020 where we had the opportunity to highlight Canadian productions, our work in civic impact, as well as our burgeoning independent opera scene. Opera Europa's fall conference in Strasbourg and Karlsruhe also coincided with World Opera Day, providing us with a social media platform from which to highlight the creativity of Canada's opera scene to the rest of the world.



Christina Loewen, Executive Director on the steps of Opéra national du Rhin, opening World Opera Day on Facebook for Canada.

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## NATIONAL OPERA DIRECTORS RECOGNITION AWARD – ELBA HAID OF MANITOBA OPERA

FEBRUARY 2020

Elba Haid of Manitoba Opera was selected as the 2020 recipient of the National Opera Directors Award. Unfortunately, the event to honour her in Washington, DC in March 2020 had to be cancelled as the pandemic struck. We extend our congratulations to Elba and we look forward to the day we can celebrate her contributions when it is safe to gather again.

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## THE OPERA ARTIST EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND



Within one week of COVID19 lockdowns, the board of directors held an emergency meeting where they approved the creation of the Opera Artist Emergency Relief Fund, providing critical support to artists in need of basic necessities while waiting for government support programs to kick-in.

In three weeks, we granted \$8,000, helping 27 artists with an average grant of \$400. In 19-20, we received just over \$1,000 in donations to this Fund.

## AOC BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2019-20

Michael Mori – Chair  
General Director  
Tapestry Opera

Ian Rye – Vice-Chair  
CEO  
Pacific Opera Victoria

Tim Yakimec – Secretary-Treasurer  
General Director  
Edmonton Opera

Cheryl Hickman – Past Chair  
General Director  
Opera on the Avalon

Dean Burry  
Assistant Professor and composer  
Queens University

Kim Gaynor  
Director-at-large

Prof. Patrick J. Hansen  
Associate Professor, Director of Opera Studies  
McGill University

Bruce Munro Wright  
Director-at-Large

Amy Mushinski  
Associate Director, Public Affairs  
Canadian Opera Company

Chantal Lambert  
Directrice  
l'Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal  
Montreal, QC

Marion Newman  
Mezzo-soprano

Marc Scorca – ex-officio  
President and CEO, OPERA America

## AOC STAFF & SUPPORT SERVICES 2019-20

Christina Loewen  
Executive Director

Susan Durnin  
Membership and Communications Services

Ryan McDonald  
Events Associate (summer 2019)

Jaclyn Grossman  
Social media services (spring 2020)

Simone Auger  
Translation Services

Amanda Whitney  
Accounting and Book-keeping Services

Meredith Davis - Good Roots Consulting  
Civic Impact Framework Consultant

Joel Klein  
International Business Development Consultant



The Association for Opera in Canada acknowledges and thanks all of its funders and supporters for their generosity and commitment.

## PUBLIC FUNDING SUPPORT, GRANTS



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



Global Affairs  
Canada  
Affaires mondiales  
Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



Canadian  
Heritage

Patrimoine  
canadien

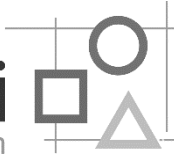


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## FOUNDATIONS AND SPONSORS

OPÉRA  
DE MONTRÉAL

Fondation  
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STINGRAY  
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VICTORIA



vancouveropera

Domoney Artists  
MANAGEMENT

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

### \$500 & Above

Mr. Richard Cook  
Mr. Larry Desrochers  
Ms Chantal Lambert  
Ms Christina Loewen  
Mr. Ian Rye  
Mr. Tim Yakimec  
Mr. Bruce Munro Wright

### Up to \$499

Mr. Dean Burry  
Ms. Kim Gaynor  
Mr. Michael Mori  
Mr. Michael Morres  
Mr. Robert Vineburg  
Ms Cheryl Hickman  
Mr. Tom Wright  
Ms Rosemary Thompson  
Anonymous

### Artist Relief Fund Donors

Azrieli Foundation  
Adam Da Ros  
Catherine D'Angelo  
Hans and Susanne Forbrich  
Ian Henderson  
Nina Horvath  
Rodney M. Kerr  
Christina Loewen  
Wendy Nielsen  
Kat Williams  
James Wright  
Tom Wright