

Association for Opera in Canada

Annual Report

2022-2023



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



The 2022/23 period marked a resurgence for AOC and the opera sector, characterized by significant milestones and unwavering service commitment. The year kicked off with key events such as the Opera Beyond conference in Helsinki and the fall Summit in Vancouver. Notably, the Summit boasted an impressive turnout and featured National Auditions—a new collaboration with agents, companies, and artists.

Aligned with our Strategic Plan, we made substantial progress towards our third goal, Thriving Decent Work, through initiatives like the Opera Artist Resilience (OAR) Program. This landmark program disbursed \$430,000 to artists, facilitating skill development opportunities for over 250 individuals across 50 opera organizations.

In April, we convened the Ontario Roundtable, drawing over 75 participants, and continued our commitment to supporting artists through programs like "Centering Artists," made possible by Azrieli Funding. This suite of initiatives included dues relief, the Opera Artist Relief Fund, and the New Works Pitch Session in Pittsburgh at Opera Conference—a platform for equity deserving creative teams in line with our Strat plan and supporting productivity in the sector.

Furthermore, our Opera Impact Platform Project concluded with the release of Powered By Arts Impact, an Evaluation Toolkit for the Arts. We also conducted an International Market Readiness Workshop in collaboration with Dani Fecko and Jeffrey Crossman, of the Trade Commissioners Service.

Membership remained robust, concluding the year with 427 members.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff—Joel Klein, Ryan McDonald, and Jaclyn Grossman—and to our esteemed board of directors for their guidance and support.

Finally, I extend heartfelt thanks to Michael Mori for his exceptional leadership as Chair during unprecedented COVID times in his four years as Chair. Michael's steadfastness and vision have propelled us through the challenges posed by the pandemic, enabling us to innovate and support our sector effectively.

Christina Loewen
Executive Director

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



As I reflect on my tenure as Chair of the Board, I am reminded of a saying: "Not fair weather, but adversity, makes a good sailor."

These past four years have truly tested our mettle as we navigated the challenges brought forth by COVID-19. Yet, through adversity, we have not merely persevered; we have thrived, realizing a beautiful vision of connectivity across our sector.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Christina and her exemplary staff, whose dedication and hard work have been instrumental in our achievements. Your passion and commitment have been the cornerstone of our success.

This marks my final Annual General Meeting as Chair, and it has been an absolute honour to serve this organization. What began as an association primarily uniting opera leaders nationwide has blossomed into a unifying force that embraces educators, businesses, and artists alike. A house united truly does thrive, and I am proud to have played a small part in our sector's growth and success.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for these incredible four years. They stand as a testament to what our organization can achieve—growth not only in numbers and staff, but in the quality of individuals involved.

Thank you all once again, and congratulations on our collective accomplishments. Here's to the future and the continued prosperity of opera in Canada.

Michael Hidetoshi Mori
Chair of the Board of Directors

FINANCIAL REPORT

Overview

Thank you to the audit committee for reviewing the statements, Debra King, Edmonton Opera, Saptarsi Saha, COC, Ian Rye, Vice-Chair and incoming Treasurer.

2023 was a very large overall budget year due to the infusement of \$584,550 in PCH funding to support the Opera Artist Resilience Program. This program had its own independent clean audit, as a requirement of the grant program.

For the year ending June 30, 2023, the association had an operating surplus of \$18,465 but with investment losses, an overall deficit of -\$13,780. As the deficit is not operational in nature, the overall deficit only affects our unrestricted assets and does not draw down on our Board Designated Operating Reserve, which was boosted by board motion in 2021 to provide stability in a recovery period of projected deficits.

2022-23 is historic as it is also the first time since founding that the association had annual revenues over \$1M, while furthering a 7 year track record of operating surpluses.

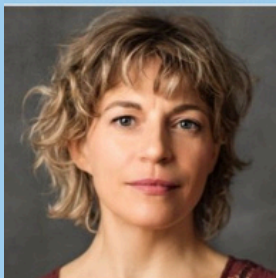
Complete financial statements are available by request to christinal@opera.ca

SALUTE TO BOARD MEMBERS



We salute and bid adieu to outgoing Board Chair Michael Hidetoshi Mori after four years as Chair, and board member Chantal Lambert, stepping down this year after five years of service. The board expresses their deep appreciation and gratitude to them both for their time, energy and dedication to the opera sector.

Michael will remain on the board as past Chair.



At the 2023 Annual Meeting of Members, we welcome three new board members: Marie-Annick Beliveau, Sandra Horst, and Daniel Turp. Robin Whiffen, General Director, Against the Grain Theatre and Bruce Munro Wright were elected as the new Co-Chairs of the Association. Congratulations to all!

We were thrilled to partner with OPERA America in a New Works Pitch event during the Pittsburgh Opera Conference the afternoon of May 18, 2023 featuring six exciting new Canadian new works in development. The room was packed!



& THE CIVIC IMPACT OF OPERA

As a result of a multi-phase grant from the Canada Council for the Arts Digital Strategy Fund, in Phase 3 we expanded and share the tools and resources developed by the opera sector to the broader art sector through a 4-part series in Evaluation Fundamentals for the Arts, developed and delivered by Good Roots Consulting in October 2022, and released a new web resource, Powered by Art Impact.

The full project culminated in the release of a new evidence base for the Civic Impact of Opera, featuring impact statements, stories and data from participants in pandemic-era programming from 7 opera companies.



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CENTERING ARTISTS

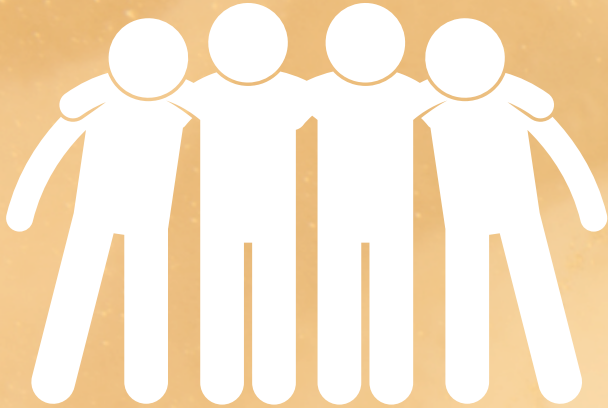
A three-year initiative, supported in part by the Azrieli Foundation, "Centering Artists" focussed on the needs of opera artists at all stages of their career. Highlights of the 2022-23 program included:

- Relief for Opera Artist Membership Policy (ROAM) providing dues relief to all opera artist members
- Direct support to opera artists in need through the Opera Artist Relief Fund
- New Works Pitch Program, providing key exposure to equity-seeking creative teams developing new works with the opportunity to pitch at a sector event as well as be featured in our latest resource, [The New Works Directory](#).



OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

OPERA ARTIST RESILIENCE PROGRAM



\$437,500 DIRECT SUPPORT TO ARTISTS

100 PAID 2-HOUR MINI-MENTORSHIPS (\$250/EACH)

160 PAID EARN AND LEARN PLACEMENTS (\$2,500 EACH)

55 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

160 ARTISTS IMPACTED

SOCIAL MEDIA



42,935 FACEBOOK REACH
9,526 INSTAGRAM REACH

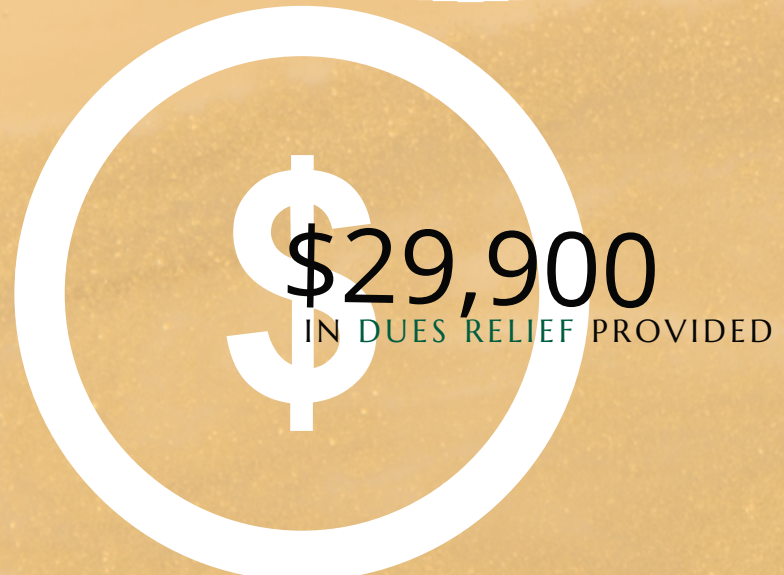


OPERA CIVIC IMPACT



1 EVIDENCE BASE

38 ARTS-SPECIFIC INDICATORS IN NEW TOOL KIT "POWERED BY ARTS IMPACT"



\$29,900
IN DUES RELIEF PROVIDED

IMPACT STATEMENTS

OPERA ARTIST RESILIENCE PROGRAM

“THE CONCEPT OF THIS PROGRAM WAS BRILLIANT. SO MANY OF US WANT TO ACQUIRE ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE BUT DON'T FEEL LIKE WE CAN STOP HUSTLING TO TAKE THE TIME WE NEED TO DO RESEARCH, NETWORK, AND GROW IN THOSE FIELDS. IT WAS INCREDIBLY EMPOWERING TO KNOW THAT I WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO MEET MY MONTHLY FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS EVEN THOUGH I WAS EXPLORING A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF OPERA PRODUCTION IN WHICH I AM STILL GROWING AND DEVELOPING SKILLS”

“THIS FUNDING GAVE ME ROOM TO GROW. IT MEANT I WASN'T BURNING THE CANDLE ON BOTH ENDS, WORKING A JOE JOB WHILE TRYING TO GROW AS AN ARTIST. I AM EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THAT, AS IT IS NOT AN OPPORTUNITY WE OFTEN GET AS ARTISTS.”

“JUST WANT TO SAY A BIG THANK YOU TO THE CREATIVE MINDS AT AOC THAT HAVE SUCH A BOLD VISION FOR WHAT THE FUTURE OF OPERA AND THOSE INVOLVED IN OPERA CAN LOOK LIKE!!!”

“THIS WAS A WONDERFUL PROGRAM THAT NOT ONLY GREATLY HELPED FINANCIALLY BUT ALSO INSPIRED ME TO EXPLORE ANOTHER CAREER PATH (BESIDES PERFORMING). LIKE MOST PERFORMING ARTISTS POST-PANDEMIC, I CANNOT SUSTAIN MYSELF ON THE INCOME I MAKE FROM PERFORMING ALONE. GAINING ANOTHER SKILL HAS ALREADY AND WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE ME WELL. THANK YOU.”

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MICHAEL HIDETOSHI MORI - CHAIR
GENERAL DIRECTOR TAPESTRY OPERA

IAN RYE - VICE-CHAIR
CEO PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA

BRUCE MUNRO WRIGHT - SECRETARY-TREASURER
DIRECTOR- AT- LARGE

DEAN BURRY
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND COMPOSER
QUEENS UNIVERSITY

PROF. PATRICK J. HANSEN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DIRECTOR OF OPERA STUDIES
MCGILL UNIVERSITY

AMY MUSHINSKI
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS
CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

CHANTAL LAMBERT
DIRECTRICE
L'ATELIER LYRIQUE DE L'OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL

JENNIFER SZETO
CO-FOUNDER MUSIQUE 3 FEMMES

ARIA UMEZAWA
CO-FOUNDER, AMPLIFIED OPERA

ROBIN WHIFFEN
GENERAL DIRECTOR AGAINST THE GRAIN THEATRE

MARC SCORCA - EX- OFFICIO
PRESIDENT AND CEO, OPERA AMERICA

STAFF & SUPPORT SERVICES

CHRISTINA LOEWEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOEL KLEIN
GENERAL MANAGER

JACLYN GROSSMAN
PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE

RYAN MCDONALD
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSOCIATE

KLX CONSULTING
(KRISTINA LEMIEUX, BRENDON MCMURTY HOWLETT)
OAR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

HILARY BURGI, ROB BRIL, YOUNG ASSOCIATES
ACCOUNTING AND BOOK-KEEPING SERVICES

MEREDITH DAVIS
GOOD ROOTS CONSULTING
OAR PROGRAM EVALUATION CONSULTANT

OUR SUPPORTERS

PUBLIC FUNDERS



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du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

Canada



Global Affairs
Canada
Affaires mondiales
Canada

FOUNDATIONS and SPONSORS

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CITY OF VANCOUVER
DAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
DOMONEY ARTISTS MANAGEMENT
EASY-CONNECT
OPERABASE

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RE-NAISSANCE OPERA
SKYBRIDGE STRATEGIES
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
VANCOUVER OPERA
VANCOUVER CIVIC THEATRES
VOLCANO

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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TOM WRIGHT