

Association for Opera in Canada

Annual Report

2023-2024



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



The 2023/24 period marked an inspiring resurgence for AOC and the opera sector, with significant milestones in our national and international impact. Aligned with our Strategic Plan, AOC strengthened its global connections by leading a Canadian delegation to Opera Europa in Copenhagen in October. This mission advanced our goal of international collaboration, sharing Canadian innovation on the world stage.

The momentum continued as we gathered in Winnipeg in November for the annual Opera Summit Embracing Challenges, Unlocking Opportunities and the new production Li Keur. The Summit drew an impressive turnout to discuss strategies to re-vitalize the art form, develop next generation leadership, and balance opera's civic impact with organizational realities.

As part of our work to secure sustainable funding for opera, AOC joined SI Canada to explore social finance with the innovative concept of Opera Bonds. This initiative embodies our commitment to sustainable growth, creating new funding channels that align financial resources with our social impact objectives.

In January 2024, we proudly presented the Canadian New Works Showcase in New York as part of the New Works Showcase. This celebration of Canadian talent highlighted groundbreaking works by Canadian artists for new audiences and exemplified our dedication to elevating Canadian stories and artistic voices.

The year concluded with Canada's presence at the World Opera Forum in Los Angeles, where global opera leaders engaged in pivotal conversations about the future of the art form.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our staff and board members, whose efforts made these accomplishments possible. Together, we continue to build a future where opera thrives as a dynamic and accessible art form.

Christina Loewen
Executive Director



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



As co-chairs, we are privileged to lead the board for our first year, taking over the reigns from outgoing Board Chair Michael Mori, who stepped down after a four-year term.

Co-chairing is a new model for the Association, and one that allows for a balanced and sustainable leadership structure, making the most of joint strengths and contributions. Our term as co-chairs will be marked by an exploration of strategic opportunities as we go into consultations towards the development of a new strategic plan. We are proud to serve our members and communities during this transformative time.

As part of our commitment to greater representation on the board, we welcomed last year, three new board members, Daniel Turp, Président, La ROQ and Marie-Annick Beliveau, Artistic Director, Chants Libres deepening our ties with francophone Quebec, and Sandra Horst, representing artist development and education through her role as COC Chorus Director and Head of U of T Opera.

As a board, we are renewing our foundational documents, and working on institutional values, through a shared desire to be accessible, patient, flexible and helpful. We extend our deepest gratitude to Michael Mori, whose four years as Board Chair saw AOC through unprecedented challenges with vision and dedication. On behalf of the entire board, we thank Michael as he rotates off the board at this year's AGM after 10 incredible years of service.

Finally, we would like to thank our fellow board members and one another for the shared leadership and collaboration that continues to advance our mission. We look forward to building on this momentum as we collectively shape the future of opera in Canada.

Robin Whiffen and Bruce Munro Wright
Co-Chairs

FINANCIAL REPORT

Overview

Thank you to the audit committee for reviewing the statements, Debra King, Edmonton Opera, and Saptarsi Saha, COC.

The 2023/24 AOC auditor's report is unqualified.

Our budget in 2024 contracted to a more "typical" budget size of around \$400,000, down from a high of \$1M the previous year due to the large \$584,550K grant in CPAWRF funding to support the Opera Artist Resilience Program.

Overall, the association had a small operating surplus of \$3,333, and with an increase in market value of investments, our overall surplus position at year end is \$6,710.

We proudly acknowledge that this is our 8th consecutive year of operating surpluses, a positive indicator of our financial stability, contributing to our strong net asset position over many years. I congratulate Christina for her strong budgeting and financial oversight assisted by Young Associates book-keeping services.

A deficit budget for 24/25 was approved by the board in June 2024, and is available for review, per request. Complete financial statements are available by request to christinal@opera.ca

Ian Rye
Treasurer

SALUTE TO BOARD MEMBERS



We salute and bid adieu to outgoing board member Michael Hidetoshi Mori after ten years of service, four of which he served as board chair. The board expresses their deep appreciation and gratitude to him for his time, energy and dedication to the opera sector.



At the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members, we welcome new board member Erecia Hassell, Director of Production & Artistic Administration at Pacific Opera Victoria.

WORLD OPERA FORUM

Five Canadians were selected as official delegates of the World Opera Forum in Los Angeles; Larry Desrochers, General Director and CEO, Manitoba Opera, Rebecca Hass, director of engagement programs and partnerships, Pacific Opera Victoria, Michael Hidetoshi Mori, artistic and general director, Tapestry Opera, Jean-Pierre Primiani, director of development, Opéra de Montréal, Robin Whiffen, general director, Against the Grain Theatre.



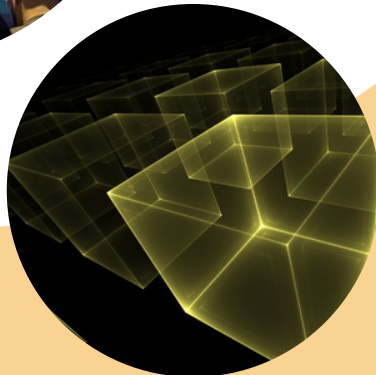
WINNIPEG SUMMIT

Returning to Winnipeg, Manitoba for the first time since 2007 with an annual gathering, The Opera Summit Winnipeg, was held November 20-22, 2023, co-hosted by Manitoba Opera. Held jointly at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Fort Garry Hotel, sessions included "Revitalizing the Art Form through the Wisdom of the Room," designed and led by David B. Devan, a keynote address by former Senator Patricia Bovey, as well as panels and consultations on Succession/Leadership Development and Social/Alternative Financing.



COPENHAGEN DELEGATION

As part of our International Market Development Strategy, we hosted an official delegation to the Opera Europa Autumn Conference in Copenhagen/Malmö, October 4th to 7th, 2023. This selected delegation was chosen to represent a Canadian brand that included 9 representatives active in large and small scale coproducing, creators of new and exciting works, Indigenous artists, technological innovators, and civic impact leaders. Kicking off with a networking event the morning of October 4, at the Royal Danish Opera, the delegation was present throughout the conference and featured in various pitch presentations as well.



OPERA BONDS - EXPLORATION

Through a Canada Council for the Arts Seed Grant, AOC has partnered with Social Innovation Canada in exploring the feasibility of a bond offering to investors to develop a pool of capital to create a new Change Fund, providing low interest, repayable capital to the opera sector for projects that generate a social and financial return. We held an in-person consultation at the Opera Summit in Winnipeg and a virtual consultation on February 29 by zoom.



NEW WORKS SHOWCASE - NEW YORK

As part of our International Market Development Strategy, we were delighted to be invited to produce an all-Canadian Showcase recently at the New Works Forum in January. Featured works included those by Julia Dawson – *Obscura Nox*, Mathilde Côté – *La nuit est ma femme*, re:Naissance Opera – *Eurydice Fragments & Inferno: A Hip Hop Opera*, and Soundstreams – *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*. [Click here](#) for more information on these works.

BY THE NUMBERS



259

MEMBERS

SOCIAL MEDIA



13,872 FACEBOOK
VIEWS

4,650 INSTAGRAM
VIEWS

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES



93 ATTENDEES AT OPERA SUMMIT

13 MEMBER NETWORK CALLS

2 CANADIANS SELECTED FOR LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE

1 RECIPIENT OF BEST IN GOVERNANCE AWARD



\$14,500
IN DUES RELIEF
PROVIDED

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BRUCE MUNRO WRIGHT – CO-CHAIR
DIRECTOR- AT- LARGE

ROBIN WHIFFEN - CO-CHAIR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EDMONTON OPERA

IAN RYE – SECRETARY-TREASURER
CEO PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA

MARIE-ANNICK BELIVEAU
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, CHANTS LIBRES

DEAN BURRY
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND COMPOSER
QUEENS UNIVERSITY

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

SANDRA HORST
COC CHORUS DIRECTOR

MICHAEL HIDETOSHI MORI
GENERAL DIRECTOR TAPESTRY OPERA

AMY MUSHINSKI
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS
CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

JENNIFER SZETO
DIRECTOR,
ATELIER LYRIQUE DE L'OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL

DANIEL TURP
PRÉSIDENT, LA ROQ

ARIA UMEZAWA
CO-FOUNDER, AMPLIFIED OPERA

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

STAFF & SUPPORT SERVICES

CHRISTINA LOEWEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOEL KLEIN
GENERAL MANAGER

RYAN MCDONALD
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSOCIATE

KYLE BRISCOE
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YOUNG ASSOCIATES
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