

# SEATTLE OPERA. THANKFUL



**FALL  
2023**

Donor Impact Report

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Photo © Philip Newton



## Seattle Opera's 60th Anniversary Season has started with a BANG!

The successes of *Das Rheingold* and, most recently, *Alcina* have sparked an excitement across the city—an enthusiasm that is reminiscent of our inaugural season six decades ago. The region's passion for opera can be traced from our first supporters to you. Your investment in vibrant music, dramatic storytelling, and innovative stage design fuels this community's love of opera. Moreover, it inspires our engagement with civic and arts organizations, schools and community centers, and dozens of local institutions that strive to make living in Seattle healthier, smarter, more peaceful and more enjoyable. Discover in this Impact Report how your contribution to Seattle Opera benefits our productions, artists, and the place we call home.

With much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'C. Scheppelmann'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'C' and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Christina Scheppelmann  
General Director

# GLOBAL RECOGNITION

## International Opera Awards

Our world premiere of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was nominated for World Premiere of the Year at the 2023 International Opera Awards. This is the second nomination the company has received in recent years: our co-commission of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* was also nominated in 2018.

Photo © Sunny Martini



In October, we received wonderful news! Seattle Opera was nominated for a 2023 International Opera Award for the world premiere of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The awards celebrate opera talent from around the world and raise funds to support aspiring artists. The nominees come from 26 countries, representing companies, productions, and artists across Europe and North America joined as well as from Australia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, South Africa, Korea, and Guatemala.

We were nominated along with world premiere productions from several European opera companies, San Diego Opera, and Metropolitan Opera.

The nomination recognizes our total passion and dedication to the masterpiece created by Sheila Silver, Stephen Kitsakos, Khaled Hosseini, and Roya Sadat. Furthermore, the nomination also serves as a tribute to you and your support of Seattle Opera.

THANK YOU!

## AND CLOSER TO HOME

### GRANT TO EXPAND OUR REACH IN SOUTH KING COUNTY

A \$250,000 grant from the Hearst Foundation will go towards Seattle Opera developing partnerships with Highline Public Schools, the district that serves the communities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, SeaTac, and White Center.

# ELECTRIFYING

Our season-opening production of Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold* was electrifying and impressed fans and the media alike. Here are a few reactions.

*A main draw of this "Rheingold" is the return of Seattle Opera favorite Greer Grimsley, a veteran interpreter of Wotan whose vocal heft and stage presence continue to impress."*

**—The Seattle Times**

Photo © Philip Newton

*My wife and I have been attending operas all over the world for many years and this was one of the best experiences we've ever had."*

**—Seattle Opera Patron**

*Seattle Opera continues its legacy as America's premier Wagner company. [...] From top to bottom, it has to be the most winningly and attractively sung "Rheingold" in Seattle Opera's history. In fact, it is overall the best-sung Wagner production I can recall there."*

**—OperaWire**

*On top of an overall strong cast, Frederick Balletine's Loge completely steals the show; it's worth attending just to see this performance."*

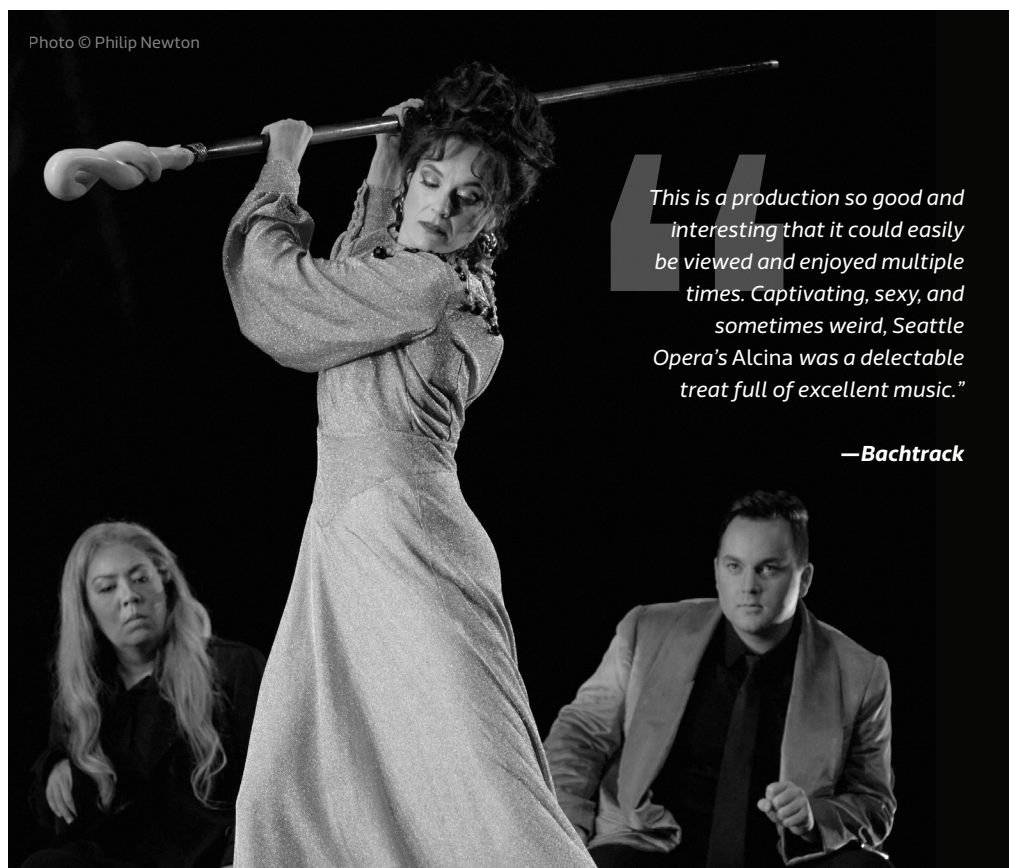
**—Bachtrack**

Photo © Sunny Martini

# SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL

Luscious singing was the star of our *Alcina* production. The all-star cast featured Vanessa Goikoetxea, Sharleen Joynt, Randall Scotting, Ginger Costa-Jackson, John Marzano, and Nina Yoshida Nelson—all Seattle Opera favorites.

Photo © Philip Newton



*This is a production so good and interesting that it could easily be viewed and enjoyed multiple times. Captivating, sexy, and sometimes weird, Seattle Opera's *Alcina* was a delectable treat full of excellent music."*

**—Bachtrack**

Photo © Sunny Martini



*One of the loveliest productions of a Handel opera I have seen in a long time, the Seattle Opera's new *Alcina* is more than worth the time to travel and see it."*

**—British Theatre Guide**

*We saw the matinee on Sunday and it was a triumph! Spectacular performances all around. Very creative. My favorite experience at the opera so far. Thank you for including this in your main stage season!"*

**—Seattle Opera Patron**

# WELCOME TO THE OPERA CENTER

On Saturday, September 23, the Opera Center was abuzz as over 650 people filled the building for our annual Open House. Visitors were treated to a smorgasbord of operatic delights, including performances by Lowbrow Opera Collective and Seattle Opera's resident artists; tours of the costume shop, props department, and Classical KING studios; and a Q&A with *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* composer Anthony Davis. The energy was palpable as guests received a behind-the-scenes look at the complex machine required to put an opera on stage.

Photo © Sunny Martini



*A Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, Anthony Davis discusses the creation of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*.*

This year's Open House felt extra special as it coincided with the start of our 60th anniversary season. The day's festivities had an air of reflection: longtime Seattle Opera patrons shared their favorite operagoing memories as they perused a stunning exhibit showcasing Seattle Opera's 60-year history and listened to dramaturg Jonathan Dean's presentation on Seattle Opera milestones.

The highlight of the day, however, was seeing the many faces of our community come together to celebrate art. Displays from community partners including Tasveer, Seattle Rep, Arte Noir, and Path with Art demonstrated the interconnectivity of Seattle's arts community. By opening our doors and sharing our work with our audiences, Seattle Opera renewed our commitment to creating top-quality art with and for our community. For there's nothing like a 200-voice sing-along to remind you of the power of community-building through art.



*The fall Open House was an event of hands-on activities, including costume dress-up (top), a “kazoo-along of The Barber of Seville Overture (bottom left) and Props Department demonstrations (bottom right)..*



# POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS



*Staff and artists from Seattle Rep share information with visitors at our recent Open House in September.*

Organizations both large and small have joined with us to enrich communities all over the state. In the last three years, Seattle Opera has worked hand in hand with partners like Sound Health, Path with Art, Classical KING, Jewish Family Service, Refugee Artisan Initiative, Casa Latina, and the Northwest African American Museum. More recent partners include Tasveer, ARTE NOIR, and Seattle Children's Theatre, to name just a few.

## POSITIVE GROWTH

Last season we had 6,600 new customers, just shy of our number of new audience members in 2018/19, before the pandemic.



**6600**  
NEW PATRONS

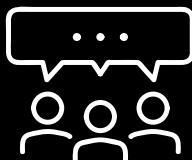
## POSITIVE IMPACT:

Last season, Seattle Opera was an important contributor to the state's creative economy, civic wellbeing, and education system.



**58**

SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY  
CENTERS VISITED



**13,000+**

K-12 STUDENTS REACHED

# ARTIST SHOWCASE

Seattle Opera is honored to welcome soprano Camille Ortiz and baritone Michael J. Hawk, our first pair of Resident Artists, to the staff. As Resident Artists, they are salaried for an entire season, with multiple opportunities to perform. While with the company, Camille and Michael will receive professional development, mentoring, and the stability of a long-term partnership with us. Just several days ago, Camille and Michael presented an artist's recital in Tagney Jones Hall. They performed works by Richard Strauss, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Ambroise Thomas, Ernesto Cordero, and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, which were well received by the audience. In addition to covering roles throughout the season, both will sing at our 60th Anniversary Concert & Gala.



## **MICHAEL J. HAWK**

Michael is a graduate of LA Opera's Young Artist Program, and his recent schedule has included appearances with LA Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and the Buffalo Philharmonic. Michael will perform with Seattle Opera through the end of the 2023/24 season, covering the role of Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*. Michael hails from Upstate New York.

## **CAMILLE ORTIZ**

Camille is a native of Puerto Rico and currently serves as Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of Oregon. She has appeared with Opera Lafayette at the Kennedy Center, Opera Orlando, and Boston Baroque. Camille's time with us will run through the end of this calendar year, but we look forward to seeing and hearing her again at the anniversary concert in May.

# THOUGHTS FROM THE CREATORS OF X



Photo © Gordon Parks Foundation

Malcolm X gives a speech at a Harlem, New York, rally in 1963.

**Anthony Davis** on the genesis of composing *X*:

*The idea started when my brother Kip [Christopher Davis] was in a play called El Hajj Malik, performing as Malcolm X. He thought we could create a musical based on Malcolm's life. The autobiography [The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Alex Haley] had so many references to music, particularly during his time in Boston when he was working in clubs and dance halls. Kip's idea was to tell this story using jazz, say from the forties to the sixties, et cetera. I was intrigued that it should be an opera with Malcolm as a tragic hero. I studied a lot of Wagner when I was in school. I also read Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's ideas about opera. That's what got me really interested writing an opera."*

**Robert O'Hara**'s guiding vision to directing *X*:

*For me, the opera is about everyone. There's a Malcolm X Boulevard in almost every city. And so there are people who look like us, who walk down those streets, who look up at the sign and think about how that name got there and how they fit into the story of that man. Malcolm's legacy has been told in many forms—documentary, film, book, and quite a few plays. Opera is new to his biography. There is great responsibility to embody the way in which he lived and the things that he fought for.*

*"When I think about Seattle, I think about the various political movements and activism there. I think of many ways the community makes their opinions heard.... I have heard of [folks in] Seattle shutting things down. I think Malcolm would be right in line with that. Any experience of his life should take that into account. For me this opera isn't a biography of Malcolm X, it is an experience of Malcolm X."*

**Kenneth Kellogg** on portraying Malcolm X:

*I am not going to try to take on his persona. I can't. I'm concentrating on his message and what he stood for. I also think about how his message resonates in my life. And I think about what Malcolm's message means for today's audiences. I try to carry those ideals into how I prepare for the role. It affects how I sing."*

# CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF MALCOLM X



Thanks to the hard work of many community advisors, partnering organizations, and your generosity, Seattle Opera will host numerous public events that recognize and celebrate the African American community and the legacy of Malcolm X today.

## BLACK ARTISTS MARKET

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 11:30 AM–7:30 PM | THE OPERA CENTER**

Timed in conjunction with the Seattle Center Christmas Market, the Black Artists Market will showcase two dozen Black artisans and small businesses offering specialty gifts and services.

## A CONVERSATION WITH TAMARA PAYNE

**WITH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024 AT 7:30 PM | TOWN HALL (1119 8TH AVE.)**

Presented in partnership with Town Hall, Tamara Payne, who contributed to *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X*, her father's 30-year-long quest to interview anyone who had known the human rights activist, joins us in conversation to discuss the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography.

## THE HUMAN FAMILY: A RECITAL

**SATURDAY, JAN. 27, AT 7:30 PM, THE OPERA CENTER  
THURSDAY, FEB. 29, AT 7:00 PM, LANGSTON (104 17TH AVE. S)**

Joshua Conyers, Ellaina Lewis, and Ibidunni Ojikutu, cast members in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, join voices in a recital featuring opera selections and more.

## OPERA TALK

**FRIDAY, FEB. 23, AT 7:30 PM | THE OPERA CENTER**

The creators of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*—Anthony Davis (composer), Thulani Davis (librettist), and Christopher Davis (story writer)—come together with Seattle Opera's Scholar-in-Residence Naomi André in a discussion on the origins and development of this groundbreaking opera.

**LEARN MORE AT [SEATTLEOPERA.ORG/X](https://seattleopera.org/x)**

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entertaining...*

*from the downbeat to the final note.*

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