

# SEATTLE OPERA. THANKFUL



**WINTER  
2023**

Donor Impact Report

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Photo © Philip Newton



From youth performances to community recitals to chorus tours, Seattle Opera does more than perform in McCaw Hall. Our performances, partnerships, and programs reach communities and people throughout the state. In this report, see how we're impacting kids, hair and makeup artists, and folks around the Puget Sound. In addition, see some of the amazing singers coming to Seattle Opera in 2024/25. All that we do, whether it's at Seattle Center, Federal Way, or Mt. Vernon, is the result of your investment in us. Thank you.

With deep appreciation,

Christina Scheppelmann  
General Director

*Thank you, Seattle Opera, for fearlessly bringing Malcolm X's story to life on stage. It's a powerful reminder that creativity is not just about conceiving ideas; it's about the boldness to bring them to fruition. I procrastinated about seeing the show for a long time due to the weighty subject matter, but I'm so glad I did. You truly did justice to such a dynamic historical figure. Thank you for having the courage to portray Malcolm X and for reminding us all of the importance of realizing creative visions."*

—Instagram Patron



# THE SOUNDS OF SUCCESS



*Members of the Seattle Opera Chorus arrive at the Vashon Center for the Arts. The chorus performed on Vashon Island and Mt. Vernon during its Chorus Around the Sound tour.*

The Seattle Opera Chorus completed a very successful tour, traveling and performing at Mt. Vernon's McIntyre Hall and at Vashon Island's Center for the Arts. The *Seattle Opera Chorus Around the Sound* tour featured the ensemble performing well-known and not-so-familiar choral selections from the opera repertoire, among them were pieces from *Die Fledermaus*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *Pagliacci*.

"The Pacific Northwest has a deep and rich choral tradition with ensembles in almost every town, both large and small. The tour was an opportunity for us to share our talents in communities where vocal music is nurtured and appreciated," said Dennis Robinson, Jr., Director of Programs and Partnerships at Seattle Opera, on the purpose of the tour.

And the singers embraced the chance to sing outside of McCaw Hall. "Each community was very welcoming," said Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox, a soprano, who has been a member since 1997.

*The singing was delightful!*

**—Robin Keller, Vashon Island resident**

A two-performance tour would seem simple to pull together; however, the logistics of going on the road took months to plan because it was our first time. "It took the involvement of every department at the opera," said Chorus Master Michaela Calzaretta. "It's impressive that the chorus has the support and commitment of the entire company."

The tour's success provided all the information we need to take thirty-five singers, as well as support staff, on the road. "Now we have a playbook," explained Michaela, "and doing this again will be much easier."

The hard work paid off! "We received star treatment," said Heidi Vanderford, a 10-year member of the chorus. "We got standing ovations at both performances. It was lovely," the alto recalled.

What's more, traveling by motorcoach wasn't bad either, explained Eric Jeffords, a tenor, who joined the chorus last year. "It reminds me of high school when my chorus went on tour."

"I would do it again in a heartbeat!" said Michaela.

# IMPACTFUL PARTNERS



Seattle Opera artists (l to r) pianist Kevin Miller, baritone Joshua Conyers, and sopranos Elliana Lewis and Ibidunni Ojikutu presented *The Human Family: A Recital* as part of our community programming for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*.

As part of our community programming surrounding the production of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, three artists from the cast presented recitals in and around Seattle. *The Human Family: A Recital* featured sopranos Ellaina Lewis and Ibidunni Ojikutu, baritone Joshua Conyers, and pianists Donald Lee, III and Kevin Miller. Performances were held at the Opera Center, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute in the Central District, and the Federal Way Public Library.

The one-hour performances included “Song to the Dark Virgin” by Florence Price, with text by writer Langston Hughes and other arts songs by Black composers. Opera selections were arias from *Andrea Chenier*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and *La sonnambula*. A contemporary setting of the spiritual “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me,” and a selection from the musicals *Songs for a New World and Man*, and *Man of La Mancha* completed the program.

The recital’s theme is based on a quote from Malcolm X that said, “... it takes all of the religious, political, economic, psychological, and racial ingredients, or characteristics, to make the Human Family and the Human Society complete.”

## COMMITTEE WORK



Textile artist Zahyr Lauren of *Koro Rules the Sun* sold African-inspired tote bags, fanny packs, and other hand-made articles at Seattle Opera’s Black Artists Market in December 2023.

The Human Family recitals and the Black Artists Market were two of dozens of public activities held before and during our production of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. The planning and execution of the events were the results of a dynamic working group. The Malcolm X Community Advisory Committee was comprised of 15 individuals representing a dozen organizations.

Being part of the committee was like stepping onto a stage where community engagement took the spotlight. Inviting our community to lend their perspectives felt like composing a symphony of diverse voices, weaving together a narrative that resonated with authenticity. It was a thrilling performance in inclusivity, proving that when the community becomes a part of the production, the art becomes a reflection of everyone involved.”

—Janell Turner, Malcolm X Community Advisory Committee Member and Seattle Opera Board Member

# DIVERSE BEAUTY

Photo © Glenn Hare



*Patti Barila-Wilmot and Terry Wright, two Seattle Opera hair and makeup artists, practice hair braiding during the Diversity in Beauty workshop hosted by Seattle Opera last winter.*

In January, hair and makeup artists from across the region came to the Opera Center for two days of intensive, hands-on training focusing on African American hair and makeup. Artists from the opera, area theaters, film and television productions, and freelancers with corporate clients, learned about color theory and skin tone, makeup techniques for African Americans, Black hair texture, and braids.

Thirty participants attended the workshop, which had been in planning for years. “The idea for the class started years ago,” said Ashlee Naegle, the opera’s Wigs, Hair, and Makeup Manager and Designer. “Then the pandemic happened, which delayed the planning for several years. Once we identified an instructor, it took us six months to pull together the logistics and supplies needed to make it happen.”

Ashley Cortez, a makeup and hair artist and manager for Disney Cruise Line, led the workshop, which also covered the pros and cons of various cosmetic products and how to apply them. The second day was devoted to preparing and styling textured hair with participants practicing braiding methods.

“This is a rare opportunity. Continuing education this specific rarely happens. And to have an outside expert as a presenter is truly unique,” said Pattie Barila-Wilmont, a Seattle Opera hair and makeup artist. Barila-Wilmont has been with the company since 1986.

A survey taken after the workshop proved there is a need for this type of professional development, explained Naegle. “All the participants who took the class were asked what they’d like to learn in the future. We had great responses, so stay tuned.”



# TRAVELING THROUGH ROOTABAGA COUNTRY



*Rootabaga Country, a children's opera based on stories by Carl Sandburg, was this season's Youth Opera Production. Forty-five young performers presented six shows in the Opera Center's Tagney Jones Hall.*

This season's Youth Opera Project production was *Rootabaga Country*, a children's opera based on a series of stories by American writer Carl Sandburg. With music and libretto by Rachel J. Peters, *Rootabaga Country* is the story of two siblings and their father who travel along the Zig Zag Railroad to learn about the mother they never knew. Along the way, they learn that families come in many shapes and sizes. Forty-five young singers, ages 7 to 18, performed six shows in the Opera Center's Tagney Jones Hall in front of crowds of proud family members and supportive friends.

*I've been singing in the opera since I was seven. I've been in four productions. I'm a railroad person, and part of the train crew in this show. Being in the opera is really fun. I enjoy being with kids who like the same things that I do. I probably know ninety-five percent of the people here. Being in opera also helps me with Carnatic, Indian-style singing.*

**—Sarabhesh Saravanakumar, 11**

*This is my first Youth Opera Project production. I'm looking to improve my vocal skills, so I decided to try the program. I sing the role of Miss. Axenbax, the mean teacher. It's a great opportunity. I'm enjoying meeting the little kids, who are very sweet. And it's great to meet older high schoolers, especially the ones who are more experienced.*

**—Laela Molina, 14**

*I play a shopkeeper who sells moldy fruit. The thing I like about Youth Opera Project is socializing with my friends and being in a community where I can express my creativity and practice expanding my vocal range.*

**—Victoria Cail, 11**

# 2024/25 ARTISTS

Your gift makes it possible for us to feature award-winning artists in our productions. Next season we're honored to have these singers and others performing in McCaw Hall, the Opera Center, and throughout the region.



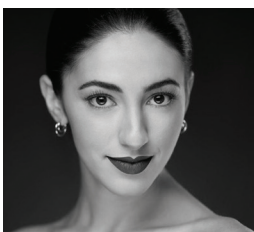
## CRAIG COLCLOUGH

**Tosca**

**Seattle Opera Debut**

*"...the evening goes to the Craig Colclough as Scarpia, a performance chilling for its ability to flick in an instant..."*

—CULTUREWHISPER



## MONICA CONESA

**Pagliacci**

**Seattle Opera Debut**

*"Remember the name Conesa. She is young but that voice suggests a major future."*

—The Daily Telegraphs



## VANESSA GOIKOETXEA

**Tosca**

**Previously at Seattle Opera: Alcina, Alcina ('23)**

*"Soprano Vanessa Goikoetxea's Alcina carries the room with her massive voice."*

—NW Theatre



## DIEGO TORRE

**Pagliacci**

**Seattle Opera Debut**

*"...full-blooded and seductive bravado."*

—OperaWire



## IN SUNG SIM

**The Magic Flute**

**Seattle Opera Debut**

*"Korean bass In Sung Sim creates a welcome surprise with his deep voice and an unstoppable sense of drama."*

—opera-online.com



## RUSSELL THOMAS

**Les Troyens in Concert**

**Previously at Seattle Opera: Ismaele, Nabucco ('15)**

*"A tenor of gorgeously burnished power."*

—The New York Times

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