

SEATTLE OPERA. THANKFUL



**FALL
2024**

Donor Impact Report

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



During the last two months, Seattle Opera has experienced numerous successes. Since my arrival in September, I've been overwhelmingly impressed by the staff, our Board of Directors, and you—our closest friends and benefactors. A world premiere of *Jubilee*, the first school matinee performance in decades, a welcoming Open House event, and staff awards are just a few of the triumphs we're celebrating in this Impact Report. We are so very thankful for your investment in Seattle Opera. Your commitment drives what we do on the McCaw Hall mainstage, in the Opera Center's Tagney Jones Hall, in schools across the state, and in neighborhoods throughout King County.

With deepest gratitude

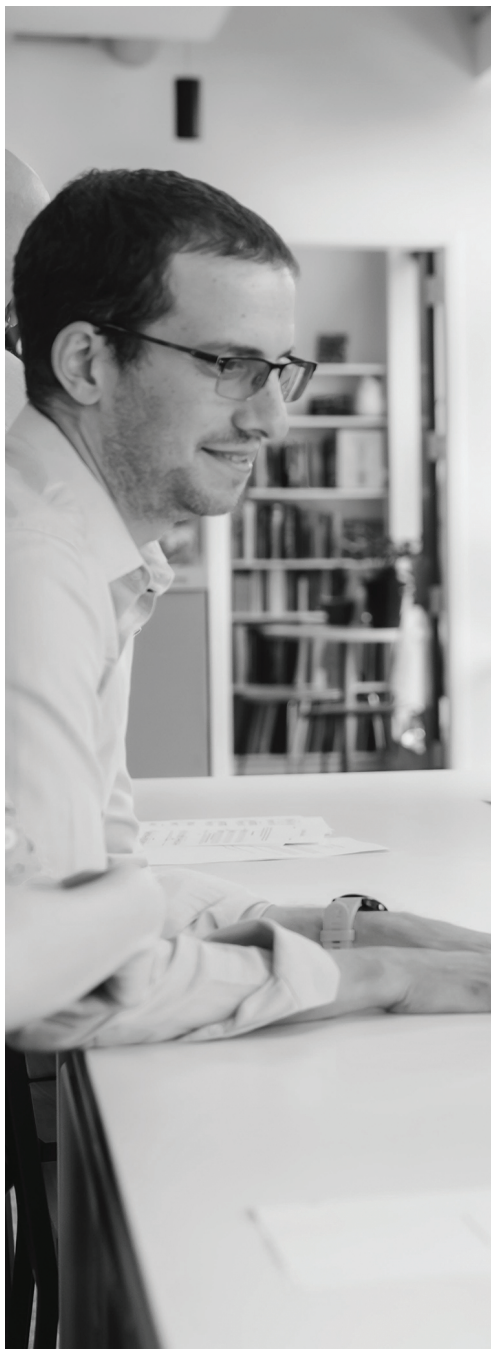
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Robinson".

James Robinson
General & Artistic Director

CREATION LAB

jane lang davis creation lab inspires new creators

Seattle Opera is cultivating the next generation of opera composers and librettists in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho through the Creation Lab. Selected creators—under the guidance of award-winning composers and librettists—develop 20-minute operas that are presented in a concert format.



Creation Lab participants discuss their operas with composer Zach Redler (left). Redler is an award-winning music theater composer whose work has been performed in concert halls, opera houses, and theaters around the world.

Mina Pariseau, composer, and Mateo Acuna, librettist, comment on their Creation Lab experience. The duo created *Blood Dawn in the Inti Sun*, an opera retelling the Andean “Legend of the Ayra Brothers.”



This project has stretched me. Yeah, I've had some moments. I thought, oh, my word, what have I gotten myself into? Which I think is a good sign as an artist. It was wonderful that we have mentors helping us and that Seattle Opera's online classes and performances were available to us. Along with the workshops it was an immersive experience from that standpoint too."

—Mina Pariseau, Creation Lab 2023/24



As the poet laureate in Seattle and in Auburn, I've several writing credits under my belt. And I studied composition, and I once sang in a jazz choir, so I'm familiar with music. Creation Lab was an opportunity to explore writing a libretto. Our mentor was instrumental in helping me reduce the story to the essence of what I'm trying to say—boiling it down to the most important moments, which is similar to writing poetry."

—Mateo Acuna, Creation Lab 2023/24

2024/25 CREATION LAB CREATORS

Librettists

Gabriella Garcia, Washington
Raya Tuffaha, Washington
Ozzy Wagner, Washington
Grace Ward, Idaho

Composers

Jeremy Berdin, Washington
Nehemiah Jones, Washington
Max Mabry, Oregon
Carolyn Quick, Oregon

2024/25 MENTORS

Librettists

Deborah Brevoort
Jerre Dye

Composers

Laura Kaminsky
Zach Radler

Conductors

Matt Perri
Daren Weissfisch

THE JANE LANG DAVIS CREATION LAB WAS ESTABLISHED AND CONTINUES TO OPERATE THROUGH GENEROUS SUPPORT BY THE FRIDAY FOUNDATION.

ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE WELCOMES EVERYONE

More than six hundred guests visited the Opera Center to celebrate all-things opera. The staff welcomed both long-time and new opera lovers to our annual Open House held on Saturday, Sept. 21. Participants toured the Costume Shop, the Props Department, and Classical KING broadcasting studios; saw the premiere screening of a new *Look, Listen + Learn* episode which featured Seattle Opera staff; and saw performances by Lowbrow Opera Collective and Opera On Tap. Visitors attended a Q&A with James Robinson, our new General and Artistic Director. Other activities included watching a live feed of a *Jubilee* rehearsal, hearing a discussion with Artistic Ambassador Kenneth Kellogg, and attending an after party with Opera on Tap Seattle.



Photo © Sunny Martini

A visit to Costume Shop and the chance to try to something on are among the most popular activities for children and adults during the Open House.

Photo © Sunny Martini



Mezzo-soprano Myah Rose Paden and Kenneth Kellogg, Seattle Opera's Artistic Ambassador, discuss the historical, musical, and social impacts of African American Spirituals.

Photo © Sunny Martini



Excerpts of Sweets by Kate were performed by Lowbrow Opera Collective in Tagney Jones Hall.

Photo © Sunny Martini



Several community partners—local organizations that collaborate with Seattle Opera to enrich our communities—participated in the Open House. Classical KING offered tours of its broadcast studios and offices that are located on the second of the Opera Center.

Photo © Sunny Martini



Tasveer Film Festival staff greet visitors at the Open House. The festival, which has office space in the Opera Center, is the only South Asian Film Oscar-Qualifying festival in the world.

JUBILEE: A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Accompanying the world premiere of *Jubilee*, Seattle Opera hosted several community events—activities coordinated with local partners as well as with Fisk University on Nashville. And throughout the run of opera, audience members contributed health and hygiene products and cleaning supplies for residents of Jubilee Women’s Center located in Capitol Hill.



The night before the world premiere of Jubilee, Tazewell Thompson, the opera’s creator, librettist, and director shared the inspirations and circumstances that sparked the creation of the new work.



Seattle Opera Artistic Ambassador Kenneth Kellogg (right) discussed the legacy of legendary Fisk Jubilee Singers with Fisk University President Dr. Agenia Walker Clark (second from right), former Jubilee singer Marlette Buchanan (second from left), and current Fisk Jubilee Singer Director Dr. G. Preston Wilson, Jr. (left). The conversation traced how the original singers introduced spirituals to the world and how that ensemble shaped the future of the university. Buchanan and Wilson also shared memories as members of the Jubilee Singers.

Photo © Stephanie Dore



A musical tribute to the Jubilee Singers took place at Pacific Lutheran University's Lagerquist Concert Hall on October 6, the anniversary of the 1871 launch of singer's historic first fundraising concert tour. The date is commemorated annually at Fisk University. Sound of the Northwest (pictured) along with Acts on Stage, Tacoma Urban Performance Arts Center, Allen A.M.E. Church Gospel Choir, Lifted! Youth Gospel Choir, Speak With Purpose, and Seattle Opera baritone Richard L. Hodges presented a program of spirituals, gospel, and speeches of inspiration.

Photo © Stephanie Dore



Lifted! Youth Gospel Choir, performed at Tacoma's Jubilee Day commemoration at Pacific Lutheran University.

A SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TO THE OPERA

On October 22, more than 1,600 Seattle-area middle and high school students attended a school matinee performance of *Jubilee*. It was the first school performance presented by Seattle Opera since the 1970s. And for many of the students it was their first opera experience and for some their first time in McCaw Hall. Exuberant, emotional, and breathtaking are a few ways the students and the teachers described the performance. Here are other reactions to *Jubilee*.

Photo © Sunny Martini



More than 1,600 Seattle-area students attended Seattle Opera's matinee performance of *Jubilee*.

I don't really know how to explain it. But I had a physical reaction from the singing. I could feel my body tingling, I got goosebumps, and I started crying a little bit. I wasn't sad. The songs and the story were overpowering."

—11th grade student, Ingraham High School

Photo © Sunny Martini



I am so excited that so many of our students were able to attend the opera. It was an opera that was really important to our demographics; many of which did not know this history. The music, singers, and costumes (and wigs!) were amazing...Despite their nonchalance, every single person I asked had an opinion on the opera. Amazing! This experience was a dream come true for me; I am grateful for you all and your hard work."

—Teacher, Glacier Middle School

This was my first time in McCaw Hall and my first ever opera. The performance was very impactful. I didn't know anything about the Fisk Singers. This is history that I didn't know about; this is a part of [Black] history—my history—that I'd not heard before. What the singers did seems impossible, but they did it. They saved their school so they could get an education."

—9th grade student, Ingraham High School

Thank you so much. We were so thrilled to be able to come to yesterday's performance. It was an amazing experience for our students. I've been telling all the teachers here how much we loved our time at Seattle Opera. We will definitely be back for student matinees in future seasons. Thank you for providing access to the arts for students!"

— Teacher, St. Matthew's School



The singing was amazing. I couldn't believe how high their voices could reach. I was impressed how the singers punched the music into me. It was magical."

—12th grade student, Nathan Hale High School

It was truly an incredible, once in a lifetime experience for our students. Thank you SO MUCH for putting all of this together! We look forward to returning in the future"

—Teacher, Seattle World School

A DAY TO REMEMBER



Seattle Opera Board Member and subscriber Sue Burke recalls her first opera experience, a school matinee.

It was 1971 or '72, I was in junior high school. The only thing I knew about opera was that it was a form of entertainment for rich people. I signed up to go anyway. That performance was like nothing else I had ever experienced. It was a eye opener. Electric! There was just so much going on—the voices, how did the singers do that? And the sets and costumes were amazing! Now, after dozens and dozens of operas, there's still a lot of excitement and electricity."

NEWS AND NOTES

Photo © Philip Newton



GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

On October 2, previous General Director Christina Scheppelmann was awarded the Leadership in Opera Award at the 2024 International Opera Awards in Munich, Germany. With over three decades of leadership experience, this award recognized Scheppelmann's many career achievements. Under her leadership, Seattle Opera thrived through unprecedented challenges like COVID-19 to provide unique, virtual opera experiences for its 2020/21 season, making it one of the few opera houses in the United States to do so. What's more, the company embraced contemporary opera during Scheppelmann's tenure. The company staged two world premieres—*A Thousand Splendid Suns* ('23) and Tazewell Thompson's *Jubilee* ('24). In addition, we produced many other new works, including *Blue*, *Malcolm X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, and *Bound*.

BY THE NUMBERS

our 2023/24 impact

Photo © David Jaewon Oh



STATE RECOGNITION

The Washington State Arts Commission has selected Dennis Robinson, Jr., our Director of Programs and Partnerships, as the 2024 Governor's Arts & Heritage Award—Young Leader Award recipient. The Young Leader Award recognizes an individual between 18–35 who has shown outstanding impact through artistic practice or cultural heritage activities. Appointed in 2022, Robinson has expanded the opera's community outreach. Last season, Programs and Partnerships initiatives engaged more than 35,000 participants across the state.



51,219

Tickets Purchased



1,000+

**Tickets Distributed to
Community Partners**



60

**School Opera Tour
Performances**



24,000

Students Engaged



750+

**Artists, Craftsperson,
Staff Employed**



182*

Community Partners

**includes schools and community centers*

OTHER NEWS



The Mariner Moose poses with soprano Tiffany Townsend, one of our 2024/25 resident artists.

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLPARK

Seattle Opera Resident Artist Tiffany Townsend was featured during Opera Day at T-Mobile Park on July 21. A soprano, Townsend sang the “National Anthem” and “God Bless America.” Dozens of Seattle Opera fans enjoyed a day at the ballpark and received a special Mariners/Seattle Opera T-shirt to commemorate the day!

Photo © Philip Newton



During the dedication, Dr. Laura Kafka-Price, sister-in-law to Leontyne Price, reads a letter from Ms. Price addressed to the Black Administrators of Opera.

COMMUNITY STAGE DEDICATED

As part of the Black Administrators of Opera conference held in August, Seattle Opera dedicated the Leontyne Price Community Stage in the Opera Center's Tagney Jones Hall. The modular stage is an adaptive resource used for the staging of *Bound* ('23), *Orpheus and Eurydice* ('22), and, most recently, *Lucidity* ('24), in addition to Youth Opera Project performances, community events, and Opera Talks. We are deeply grateful to Lynn Manly, Lex Lindsey, and the Chisholm Foundation, for the gift honoring their friend Leontyne Price. Lex Lindsey grew up in Laurel, Mississippi, the same hometown of Price. Price's first piano teacher was Lex's grandmother and both families remain close.

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entertaining...

from the downbeat to the final note.

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