

EDMONTON OPERA

2022/2023

Report to the Community



Cover: *Orphée+*, January 2023
Below: *Tosca*, October 2022

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EDMONTON OPERA

OUR VISION

Art that resonates
beyond the final note.

OUR MISSION

Edmonton Opera brings our
community together through
meaningful artistic
experiences that remind us of
our shared humanity.

2022/2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomas Bradley, Board Chair, Director
Irv Kipnes, Chair Emeritus, Director
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Hans Forbrich, Director
Melanie Nakatsui, Director
Bernie Robitaille, Director

Joel Ivany, Artistic Director



**MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIR OF THE BOARD**
Thomas Bradley

Let me begin by thanking you for your continued support of our Edmonton Opera company. Without you, our patrons, donors, sponsors and even the occasional critic, we could not have had the tremendous season we recently completed.

Another year of firsts! First full season after COVID. The first season of the Rumbold vocal prize which will nurture young talent and build the reputation of this company as a first-class incubator for the arts. The first time we have started a performance at the back of house. And the first time we've had artistic aerobatics and artistic singing while suspended upside down accompanied by an electric guitar. It was an amazing and innovative relaunch, and I cannot thank the entire Edmonton Opera team enough for their commitment to the success of this company.

I would be remiss in failing to thank our outgoing board members who will be leaving us at this AGM. Francis Price, whose vision of what an endowment can accomplish is leaving our board with a legacy which will ensure the future of this company. Melanie Nakatsui, whose energy and ideas provided the board with a grounding of both the realities and opportunities. Ken Keenleyside, whose decade-long commitment to our finance committee kept us financially sound even during the most difficult times of the COVID era. The late Hans Forbrich, whose commitment to the art and the artists who were the foundation of this beautiful craft never wavered regardless of the challenge. Hans, you will be missed by so many, and your legacy within this company will continue to bring world-class artistry to the stage.

In closing thank you for being part of our journey. I look forward to sharing the amazing work of our team with you during what promises to be an amazing 60th season for Edmonton Opera.

Thomas Bradley | Board Chair
October, 2023



**MESSAGE FROM THE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**
Joel Ivany

2022/2023 was a great season for Edmonton Opera.

We welcomed Sue Fitzsimmons to our management team and she brought stability, insight and a wonderful energy to our operations.

We mounted Tosca for our patrons in a memorable production. Our breath was taken away during Orphée+ as projections and acrobatic sopranos took over the Jubilee. We ended our season with Pergolesi's moving Stabat Mater, with audience and performers sharing the Jubilee stage and our first venture in collaboration with the Citadel as Andrew MacDonald-Smith and Frances Armstrong performed an intimate cabaret.

It was not a return to normal, rather a new path forward which has given excitement leading into our 60th season serving the community of Edmonton and beyond. Thank you for journeying with us and I look forward to many more.

Joel Ivany | Artistic Director
October, 2023



In Memory of
Hans Forbrich

We celebrate the life of Hans Forbrich. As a member of Edmonton Opera's Board of Directors, Hans's wisdom, ready smile, and sound advice were invaluable to the Board, and to the Edmonton Opera team. Hans was also a beautiful member of the Edmonton Opera chorus. Edmonton Opera artistic director, Joel Ivany, had the joy and honour of directing Hans in the first full opera Joel ever directed, right here in Edmonton at Opera Nuova. Hans is gone too soon and will not be forgotten.

2022/2023

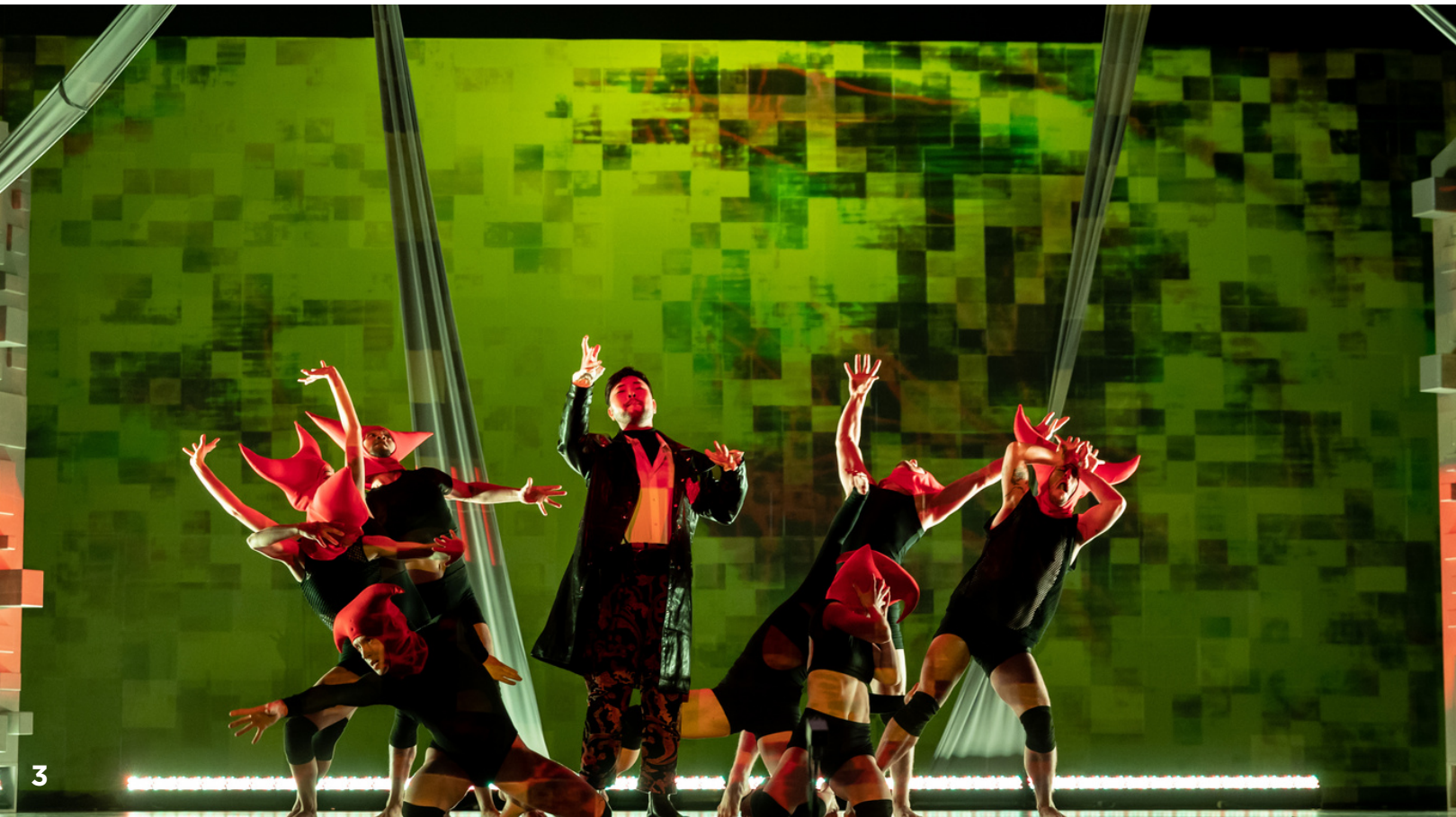
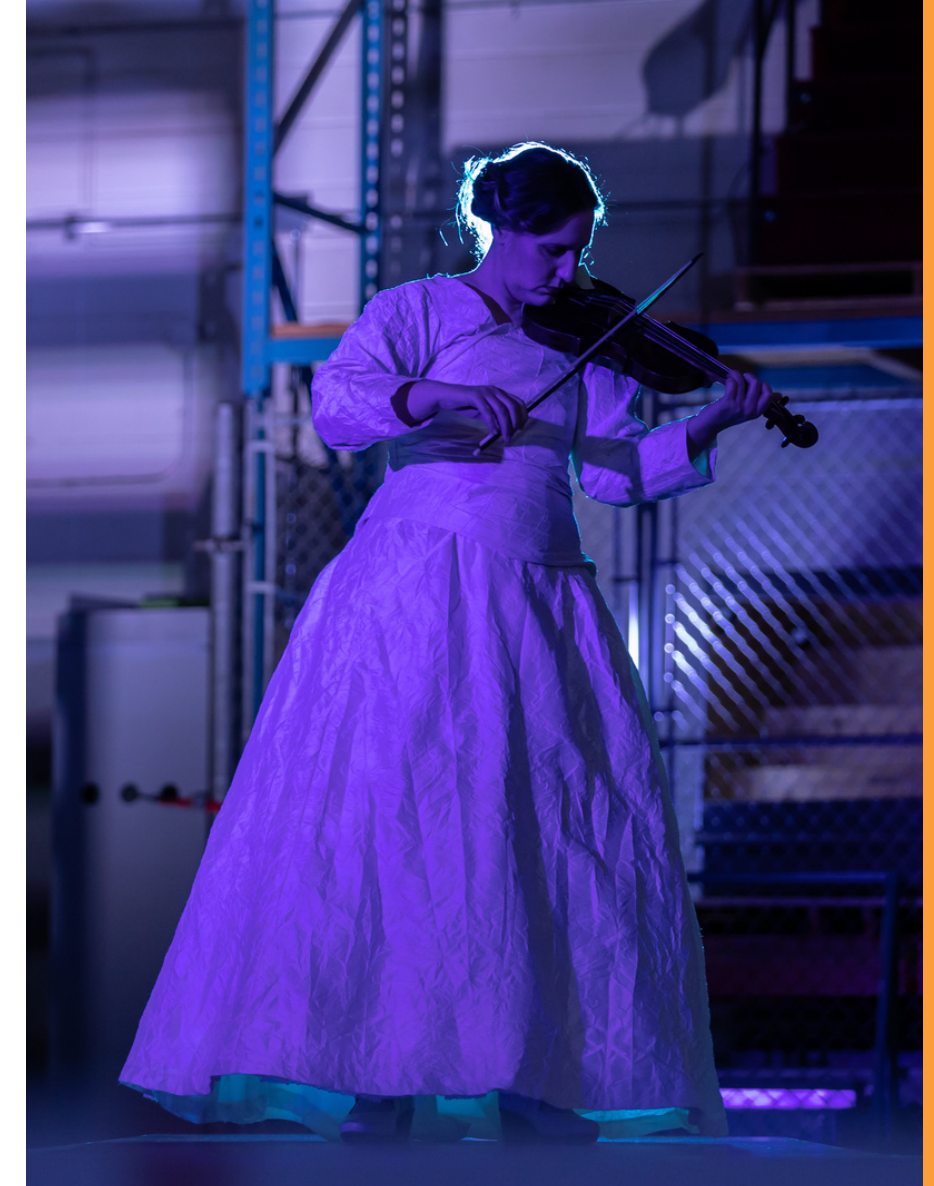
A brief overview of the year

In 2022/23 Edmonton Opera continued its long history of creating and performing high quality live performances. With the support of our talented and committed team, volunteers, donors, sponsors, partners, funders, and Board of Directors, Edmonton Opera:

- **produced a season that received numerous accolades**
- **began work on a new strategic direction to embrace both tradition and innovation**
- **offered opera experiences that appealed to a range of audiences**
- **transitioned to a new facility for the short term, with an eye to long term sustainability**
- **enhanced support for emerging artists**
- **provided significant employment for onstage and backstage talent; and**
- **contributed to the economy of Edmonton and region.**

Of critical importance, the company continued to engage with and support organizations within Edmonton's arts community such as the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the Orange Hub, the Westbury Theatre, and the Citadel Theatre, and worked to create new, more efficient business and artistic processes.

Through our efforts, Edmonton Opera seeks to evolve opera in Edmonton, and within the genre itself, to ensure this amazing art form remains relevant and accessible for people from diverse walks of life for years to come!



Left: *Orphée+*, January 2023
Right: *Tosca*, October 2022
Top Right: *Stabat Mater*, April 2023

A renewed strategic direction

2022/23 saw the continued evolution of Edmonton Opera and the creation of a renewed strategic direction, to be released early in the 2023/24 season.

Foundational to this were a set of guideposts provided by artistic director Joel Ivany:

1. Edmonton Opera is collaborative and brings the artistic community together.
2. Edmonton Opera performances exist in varying spaces and space can be part of the experience.
3. Edmonton Opera celebrates both traditional and new music and performers.
4. Edmonton Opera believes the combination of text and music lies at the heart of opera.
5. Edmonton Opera shares opera with diverse audiences from Edmonton and beyond Edmonton.
6. Edmonton Opera blurs the boundaries that historically separate opera, musical theatre, recital, and other musical performances that have text and music at their heart.
7. Edmonton Opera embraces both physical and virtual performance opportunities.

With input from Edmonton Opera's internal team and feedback from the Board of Directors, the new draft strategic direction highlights the importance of community connection while honouring the traditions, exploring the boundaries, and embracing the evolution of opera.

The renewed strategic direction anticipates a reimagined vision and mission – building on and extending from previous versions. It acknowledges the foundations of our work, including people, finances, facilities, and strategy. And, it identifies 7 priorities:

1. Grow our audience
 2. Innovate our programming
 3. Champion justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
 4. Rekindle community engagement
 5. Evolve partnerships and collaborations
 6. Reimagine artist support and development
 7. Rethink our spaces
-

Tosca, October 2022



Financials

Edmonton Opera began the 2022/23 season with an approved deficit operating budget, anticipating audiences would return in greater numbers than has been the case. Despite a slower than anticipated recovery within the opera sector and resulting reductions in ticket revenue, Edmonton Opera concluded the year in a better operating position than planned.

While the 22/23 fiscal year concluded with a small operational deficit, Edmonton Opera continues careful oversight of its budget and is committed to returning to a balanced operating position over the next several years. We remain careful stewards of the resources provided to us by patrons, donors, supporters, and major grant funders including Canada Council, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Edmonton Arts Council. Our Endowment Fund, administered through the Edmonton Community Foundation, and its annual contribution to the company, continues to increase, bringing further financial sustainability to Edmonton Opera.

Edmonton Opera's 2022/23 audited financial statements can be found at edmontonopera.com/our-story.



National Opera Directors Recognition Award for Francis Price!

We were thrilled by the recognition of long-standing Board member, Francis Price, who was chosen as Canada's recipient of the National Opera Directors Recognition Award! Francis has been a member of the Edmonton Opera Board of Directors for over 20 years and has raised millions of dollars over the last 10 years as Chair of Edmonton Opera's Endowment Campaign. In addition, Francis supports the company as a donor, season sponsor, and host for visiting artists. His insights to the management team and Board, and his work to champion developing partnerships with other arts organizations, including the Edmonton International Fringe Festival, have been invaluable to the company. Thank you Francis!

This is the second such award received by a Director of Edmonton Opera; former board member and ongoing supporter Richard Cook previously received this award!



An expanded artistic team

Edmonton Opera continues to prioritize the quality of artistry on the stage. In 2022/23, the company welcomed conductor Simon Rivard into the position of music director for a 3-year term, beginning in 23/24 - the first music director in our company's history. From 2018 - 2022, Rivard held the title RBC Resident Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and recent highlights include his debut at Edmonton Opera with Puccini's La Boheme, subsequent re-engagement for Puccini's Tosca, as well as Handel's Messiah with both the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre Classique de Montreal.

Rivard will work alongside artistic director Joel Ivany, vocal coach and répétiteur Frances Armstrong, and choir director Shannon Hiebert to continue to elevate the artistry of Edmonton Opera!

Evolving where and how we work

In 2022/23 Edmonton Opera moved into a smaller facility. It will remain our home for the foreseeable future, recognizing our continued desire to optimize our space, maximize our resources, and innovate our creative and business processes.

As our company continues to evolve, we will seek to invest in a future rehearsal space. This is a critical resource for Edmonton Opera and for Edmonton's broader arts community, since rehearsal spaces, particularly for large scale productions, are few. Our priority is to create a rehearsal space that can be used by both Edmonton Opera and other arts organizations in the city.

Our vision is that it be a technologically enabled space that promotes innovation in the performing arts, and within the opera sector.

2022/23 also saw the formalization of the company's flexible work model. The company embraced a hybrid model that sees staff in the office 3 days per week during core hours, with flexibility to work from home or elsewhere at other times. Edmonton Opera continues to offer highly flexible work hours, recognizing the rhythms and cycles of work during active production periods are much different than during non-production periods.

2022/2023

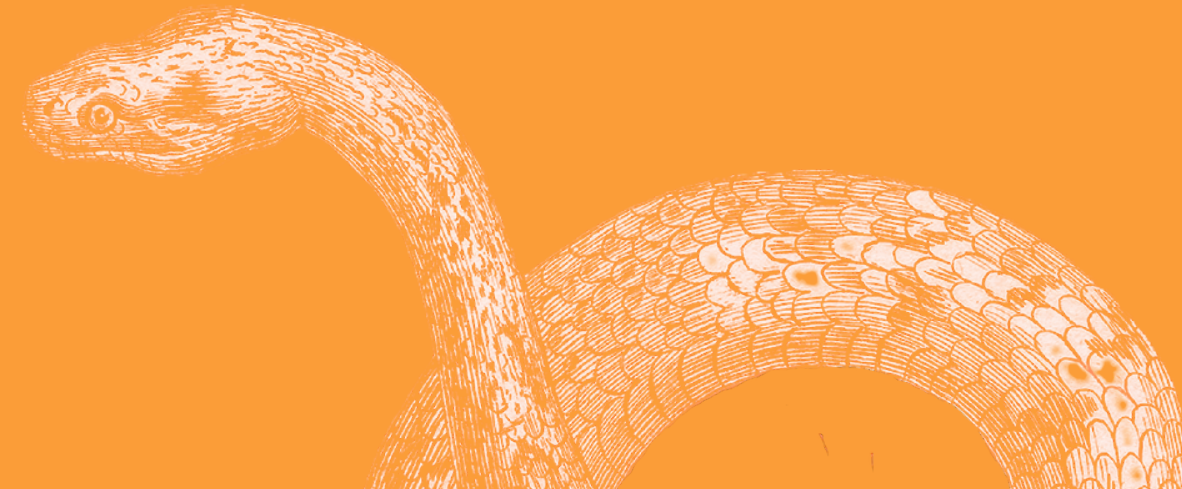
PRODUCTIONS

The 22/23 season was delivered as planned to wonderful accolades, despite continued concerns and market research indicating audience reluctance to return to live performance within the arts sector. Nonetheless, Edmonton Opera audiences enjoyed 4 productions at the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium: Tosca, Orphee+, Stabat Mater and Home for the Holidays, with sold out performances of Stabat Mater!

Rounding out the season was a return of Opera al Fresco at the University of Alberta Botanic Garden, which saw record attendance of over 700 patrons, and Andrew MacDonald Smith's: My First Hundred Years, a charming cabaret-style production held at the Citadel's Rice Theatre. We also launched the prestigious Rumbold Vocal Prize, made possible by a generous donation by Grace and Arnold Rumbold.

TOSCA

A divided Italy, threatening authority, a talented painter, and a singer whose voice transcends weave throughout this piece of love and deception and cruelty in 19th century Rome. Giacomo Puccini's masterwork, based on the play by Victorien Sardou, has dazzled audiences with its music and setting since premiering over 100 years ago. Described as "thrilling and engrossing", Edmonton audiences enjoyed this return to grand opera - featuring the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra & The Edmonton Opera Chorus - with renowned American soprano Karen Slack making her company debut as Tosca!



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Edmonton Opera presented our annual holiday concert on the main stage of the Jubilee Auditorium. Patrons experienced classical and traditional holiday favourites, performed by Edmonton Opera and members of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. This affordable, family friendly night out featured co-hosts Edmonton Opera artistic director Joel Ivany and his son Sammi, conductor Karl Hirzer, and artists Spencer Britten and Jamie Groote. It was a family friendly, fun-filled evening!



ANDREW MACDONALD SMITH: MY FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

Edmonton Opera proudly presented a new, charming cabaret, written by highly acclaimed Edmonton-based talents Andrew Macdonald Smith and Stewart Lemoine, in collaboration with pianist Frances Armstrong. Audiences experienced the intimacy of the Citadel's Rice Theatre for masterful storytelling and captivating music, as Andrew's stories - told as if he were there - invited listeners on a journey through time, back to the memorable melodies of the roaring twenties when Kurt Weill, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and others who composed on the edges of opera and revolutionized the music industry!



ORPHEE+

Audiences joined Edmonton Opera on a journey into the depths of the underworld in an opera that has riveted audiences around the world for centuries: Orphée in search of his beloved Eurydice! Director Joel Ivany took an opera rooted in tradition and gave it an unforgettable contemporary spin audiences won't soon forget. Described as "bold and breathtaking", this production of Orphée+ was first premiered by Against the Grain Theatre in 2018 and has won five prestigious Dora Awards. Orphée+ featured members of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, countertenor Siman Chung, coloratura soprano Sharleen Joynt, and silks aerialist Etta Fung.

STABAT MATER

One of the world's most beautiful pieces of music, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's work based on the 13th-century hymn Stabat Mater saw a haunting debut with Edmonton Opera. Company singing debuts by UK countertenor Magid El-Bushra and soprano Mireille Asselin, accompanied by raw, emotion-filled choreography, anchored this bold, unique production directed by Jennifer Tarver. Innovatively staged, multiple sold-out audiences literally travelled through backstage hallways to the mainstage of Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium for an unforgettable experience of salvation. Described as "a truly amazing feat".



A COMMITMENT TO **Emerging Artists**

1ST ANNUAL RUMBOLD VOCAL PRIZE

Edmonton Opera launched the prestigious Rumbold Vocal Prize, thanks to a generous gift from Arnold and Grace Rumbold. This inaugural event saw nearly 150 emerging artist applicants and 5 award winners - representing a diverse group of emerging opera professionals! This prize has been endowed to ensure stable funding for this event for years to come. 2022 award winners were Lauren Margison, soprano (1st); Vartan Gabrielian, bass baritone (2nd); Madison Montambault, mezzo soprano (3rd) and Spencer Britten, tenor (3rd); and Alla Salakhova (University of Alberta student award).

RBC EMERGING ARTISTS

Through a multi-year donation from Royal Bank Canada augmented by donations from the community, Edmonton Opera supported 14 onstage emerging artists as understudies and 2 backstage apprentices. These artists were mentored by highly skilled Canadian and international artists and backstage professionals over multiple weeks of collaboration for each opera. As these emerging artists train for new roles, they are challenged to develop as professionals through a variety of opportunities including outreach events, working with the Edmonton Opera chorus, and on the job learning.

BROADENING OUR EMERGING ARTIST VISION

This season saw Edmonton Opera seek to expand its vision to grow the next generation of Canadian opera talent. In February of 2023 we sought funding from the Azrieli Foundation to pilot an extension of our understudy program to provide opportunities for artists to develop critical entrepreneurial skills alongside their artistic skills - with the goal of building stronger bridges from training to sustained employment for opera singers. With this funding in place, augmented by a generous donation from Richard Cook, we look forward to launching this addition to our emerging artist programming in the coming year!

Connecting to our community

OPERA AL FRESCO

New and yet-to-be discovered opera fans celebrated summer at Opera al Fresco, an elegant outdoor party featuring hors d'oeuvres, wine, and captivating musical performances! Held at the University of Alberta Botanic Garden, this annual event is the perfect summer date night or family outing, allowing audiences to experience breathtaking music with nature as the backdrop. In 2022/23 Opera al Fresco saw more patrons than ever before, with over 700 people experiencing this sold out, unforgettable event!



VALENTINE GALA

Edmonton Opera held its annual fundraising gala on February 14, 2023. The sold-out event was held at the Fairmont Hotel MacDonald, and featured Jens Lindemann, celebrated Canadian trumpet soloist, and a surprise performance by the Edmonton Opera chorus.



OPERA PUB AT BLUE CHAIR CAFE

Opera Pubs are improvised, casual and highly entertaining evenings that offer up new and favorite operatic arias and ensembles, art songs, and the occasional standard, performed by established and emerging opera talent. Presented with our friends Against the Grain Theatre, Edmonton Opera treated audiences to monthly opera pubs at Edmonton's Blue Chair Café, a long-time community establishment offering wonderful food and refreshment along with unwavering support for Edmonton's arts scene!

OPERA TALKS

Before each of our performances, patrons are invited to attend an opera talk to learn more about what they're about to see. Our 2022/23 opera talks were hosted by our very own artistic director Joel Ivany, and by outstanding Edmonton-based voice teacher Ron Long.

EDUCATION DRESS REHEARSALS

Edmonton Opera's education dress rehearsals are open to students of all ages. They are a wonderful opportunity for students to experience the rehearsal process and experience the joy of opera!



Stabat Mater, April 2023

Our Impact

Edmonton Opera boasts nearly 6 decades of economic and social impact!

Arts and culture improve the lives of people and communities.

Arts and culture are key to maintaining healthy communities and attracting new residents and tourists. Not only that, but according to research, engagement with the arts leads to improved academic attainment, early literacy, and enhanced cognitive abilities for children and youth, and improves mental well-being and life satisfaction overall. Edmonton Opera is proud to be a contributor to these important social outcomes.

Arts and culture improve economic outcomes.

Edmonton Opera has been operating within the province of Alberta for nearly 60 years. We contribute to Alberta's multi-million-dollar arts and culture industry, one that employed nearly 50,000 arts and culture workers according to 2020 data. That same year, Alberta's culture-related GDP was over \$4.7 billion, and that number is likely growing. Within Canada, live performance accounts for approximately 5% of the country's total culture-related GDP or over \$23 million.

Edmonton Opera has a significant impact on Alberta's arts, culture, hospitality, and tourism industries.

We are proud of our contributions to the Alberta industries that support arts, culture, hospitality, and tourism. Edmonton Opera:

- contributes over \$3 million to economic activity within the Edmonton region each year;
- contributes over \$2 million per year employing arts workers including artists, directors, designers, skilled artisans, administrators, stage crew, and technicians;
- provides over \$500,000 per year of economic activity related to 100+ private-sector vendors, including hospitality, tourism, event services, venue rentals, flights, hotel accommodations, insurance, media, telecommunications, utilities, transportation, and trucking;
- sees 10,000 patrons each year attend Edmonton Opera productions, with knock-on impacts to the hospitality economy, for example, as patrons enjoy Edmonton's burgeoning food scene before and after the show; and
- employs over 100 full-time, part-time and contract employees each season.

Partners & Sponsors

GOVERNMENT & FOUNDATIONAL SUPPORT



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Francis Price & Marguerite Trussler

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We wish to thank the following Sustainability Fund individuals, corporations and foundations who have committed to Edmonton Opera's sustainability.

Each of the following contributors to the Sustainability fund have committed a minimum of \$25,000 over five years.

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EDMONTON OPERA Friends of the Edmonton Opera

This year we have chosen to list names alphabetically within the Friends of Edmonton Opera donation group. Every contribution, large or small, harmonizes with the others to sustain Edmonton's opera legacy. Your generosity, in any form, plays a vital role in keeping the operatic arts vibrant and thriving in our community. Thank you for being a valued part of this enduring legacy.

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Household
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Household
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