

2020 ANNUAL REPORT





MISSION

Opera Theatre's mission is to shape the future of opera and to connect diverse audiences through its power and beauty. To accomplish our mission, we produce a world-class opera festival, we champion new works, we build new audiences, we educate and engage our community, and we nurture the finest opera artists, artisans, and administrators of each generation. By doing so, we strengthen the cultural and economic vitality of the St. Louis community.

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FROM THE **GENERAL DIRECTOR**

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



As I look back over the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the resiliency of our artists, the innovation of our team, and the overwhelming generosity of our community. We started this year with news of a transformational gift from a very dear friend. By leaving a substantial portion of her estate to Opera Theatre's endowment, Phyllis Brissenden secured the company's future, a gift with even greater meaning in this year of uncertainty. Above all, Phyllis was a beloved friend, and we will cherish our memories of her enthusiasm, humor, and genuine care for all she met.

The pages of this report celebrate the inspiring artists who kept our work alive in 2020 under the visionary leadership of Artistic Director James Robinson. I am grateful to Opera Theatre's Board of Directors, led by our extraordinary Chairman Noémi Neidorff, for encouraging us to create in new ways and I am awed by the support and encouragement from so many that has kept our company strong this year. Thank you for your generosity and for your continued belief in the power of opera and in the work and mission of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Andrew R. Jorgensen

General Director

Artists needed our support in 2020 more than ever and we needed the inspiration that art brings. I am so grateful for the way our community has continued to respond. The Opera Theatre family has shown remarkable support, flexibility, and dedication this year. You are embracing new plans, learning new technologies, and helping us look ahead to a very bright future — all while showing remarkable care for our artistic community.

I want to applaud the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis team. Under the extraordinary leadership of General Director Andrew Jorgensen, the team has worked tirelessly, finding new ways to create and share art with our community.

This has also been a year of listening and learning. As the first step in developing an institutional equity plan, Opera Theatre completed an in-depth Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) assessment and is forming a standing EDI committee to hold the company accountable to advancing these values at every level. You can read more about our commitment to fostering EDI principles across every facet of the company on page 15. Thank you to the many board members, artists, artisans, staff, volunteers, vendors, donors, and community leaders who have given their time, wisdom, and voices to this important process.

Until we can again gather in person, I am sending gratitude and admiration.

Noémi K. Neidorff

Chairman of the Board of Directors



REMEMBERING PHYLLIS BRISSENDEN

"Phyllis was a member of our company from the **very beginning**. She often referred to Opera Theatre as her family, and she always spoke with particular affection of the deep friendships that she built with my predecessors Richard Gaddes, Charles MacKay, and Timothy O'Leary; our long-time Managing Director of Advancement Nicole Freber; and so many other members of our company across the decades. We knew Phyllis was planning to leave a bequest to Opera Theatre, but we had no idea just how significant it would be. We feel deeply fortunate that this gift allows us to reach for even greater levels of artistic excellence and community impact. As we continue our work on our next strategic plan, which will chart a course to our 50th anniversary, Phyllis' passion for this company and this art form will be one of our guiding lights."

ANDREW JORGENSEN,
 GENERAL DIRECTOR



Opera Theatre of Saint Louis lost a dear friend with the passing of life board member Phyllis Brissenden on December 17, 2019. We are inspired by and deeply grateful for her decision to leave Opera Theatre a transformational endowment gift of approximately \$48 million.

A music lover her whole life, Mrs. Brissenden was devoted to Opera Theatre from its very first season in 1976. She also led Opera Theatre's National Patrons Council from 2010–2017, encouraging opera lovers from around the country to support the organization. While Mrs. Brissenden was quick to support exciting productions, her greatest source of enjoyment was getting to know the singers and staff of Opera Theatre. She showed the same kindness to volunteers, ushers, and garden staff as she did to star singers, and often shared news clippings and family recipes with her OTSL friends.

We miss Phyllis Brissenden, and we will continue to honor her incredible legacy in the years to come.

"Phyllis championed Opera Theatre from its very beginnings, and remained a loyal, devoted fan and supporter throughout her life. Smart, knowledgeable, witty, and extraordinarily humble, Phyllis truly considered Opera Theatre her family. Every season, she made frequent trips from her home in Springfield, Illinois so as not to miss any performances, board meetings, master classes, rehearsals, or workshops. My fellow board members and I count ourselves fortunate to have known Phyllis. We will forever cherish her memory."

- NOÉMI K. NEIDORFF, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2020 GERDINE YOUNG ARTISTS

1,091 **APPLICANTS** FROM AROUND THE WORLD

35 **GERDINE YOUNG** ARTISTS SELECTED

> 219 VIRTUAL **COACHINGS**

As artists found new ways to create and

inspire during this time of separation, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis continued a longtime commitment to cultivate and foster promising young talent on stage and behind the scenes.

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN: A VIRTUAL YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM

OTSL's Gerdine Young Artist and Richard Gaddes Artist Programs continue to be among the country's most sought-after programs for young singers, consistently receiving over 1,000 applications for approximately 30 positions. Although the young artists were not able to travel to St. Louis in 2020, the program adapted under the leadership of Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs Patricia Racette to include year-long virtual training and professional development opportunities.



Angel Azzarra



Sydney Baedke



Olivia Cosio



Gregory Feldmann



Tshegofatso Clement Baloyi



Avery Boettcher



Susanne Burgess



CELEBRATING **OPERA THEATRE ARTISTS**

Katrina Burton



2020 GERDINE YOUNG ARTISTS

Annie Chester







Shelen Hughes Christopher Humbert Ryan Johnson







Evan Lazdowski





Jordan Lovd



CELEBRATING **OPERA THEATRE ARTISTS**2020 GERDINE YOUNG ARTISTS





Kyle Miller



Dylan Morrongiello



Myka Murphy



Bianca Orsi



Elliott Paige



Murrella Parton



Meridian Prall



Lindsey Reynolds



Angel Riley



Zaray Rodriguez



Moisés Salazar



Ganson Salmon



Hayden Smith



William Socolof



Luke Sutliff



Boris Van Druff



Jasmin White



Tyler Zimmerman

BEHIND THE SCENES:DEVELOPING TECHNICAL TALENT

The Emerson Behind the Curtain and Browning Technical Fellowship programs train and develop the next generation of technical artists every year. Opera Theatre was proud to continue this program virtually in 2020, providing sessions with professionals across the field to more than 15 young, aspiring technical artists. Virtual technical work included costumes, scenery, lighting, wigs, projection, stage direction, budgeting and finance, and stage management.

CELEBRATING THE OTSL COMMUNITY -

In April 2020, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis announced the cancellation of the 2020 Festival Season due to the COVID-19 pandemic and made a commitment to honor 50% of expected income for each of the 258 seasonal members of the company — including singers, artisans, production crew and staff, front of house staff, administrative interns, and our partner, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

This commitment would not have been possible without the support of the Opera Theatre community. We remain deeply grateful to all who supported the 2020 Season Challenge by donating tickets, making new or additional gifts, or reallocating gifts to support our artists.

876
HOUSEHOLDS
DONATED
THEIR TICKETS

■ 2020 TICKET DONORS

2020 ticket buyers were given the choice to convert their ticket into a donation, a refund, or a credit for future seasons. The response was overwhelming — most households either donated their tickets or converted the funds into a future season credit.

2020 SEASON CHALLENGE

Following the season cancellation, a coalition of Opera Theatre supporters pledged to match up to \$800,000 in ticket donations or new gifts. Their challenge was met and exceeded with more than \$836,000 in ticket donations and new gifts received prior to June 30th. The 2020 Season Challenge was funded by the inspiring generosity of Noémi & Michael Neidorff, the Steward Family Foundation, Sally S. Levy & Family, the Berges Family Foundation, and Andrew Jorgensen & Mark Stuart-Smith.

WORDS OF THANKS FROM OTSL ARTISTS AND SEASONAL STAFF

The following notes came from Opera Theatre artists and seasonal staff who received settlement payments following the 2020 season cancellation. Without the support of the Opera Theatre community, these payments would not have been possible.

"I wanted to thank you for taking care of your year-round staff and OTSL's seasonal artists and staff. OTSL has already paved the way by making opera accessible to all, as well as its commitment to new voices and new works, but your announcement today made me especially proud to be part of the OTSL family. I hope many other companies and organizations will follow your leadership."

"Thank you especially for supporting us financially — this means so much and is truly appreciated. This gesture defines OTSL as a company and community and makes all of us proud to be associated with you."

"Even as I join the rest of the OTSL family in grief over losing the 2020 season, I want to thank you and the Board of Directors for the care and solidarity you are showing to the entire community in such an unprecedented time. In spite of such loss, your response makes me feel like we are genuinely all in this together."

"I just want to thank you! My family and I are truly grateful for you and everyone at Opera Theatre for the support for my family during these hard times. I am thankful to be part of a company that cares about their employees and goes above and beyond when times are tough."

(

#THISISOTSL: PIVOTING TO A DIGITAL SEASON

Inspired by the steadfast support of the OTSL community, Opera Theatre pivoted quickly to a reimagined 2020 season: #ThisIsOTSL, a Digital Festival. These programs provided an opportunity to connect with our audience during a time of separation while celebrating the artistry of the 2020 season and shining a spotlight on OTSL artists.



◄ FRONT & CENTER

Hosted by Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs Patricia Racette the "Front & Center" series showcased the talents of OTSL's young artists with mini recitals on Facebook. Intended as a professional development opportunity for young artists and a chance for the Opera Theatre audience to enjoy performances reminiscent of the annual *Center Stage* concert, viewership for this program had one of the widest reaches of the Digital Festival.



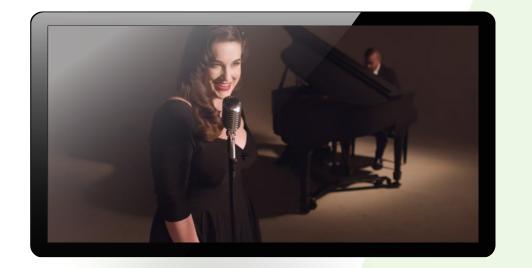
■ ILLUMINATING OPERA

Hosted by St. Louis Symphony Chorus Director Amy Kaiser, this popular lecture series moved to the radio in 2020 through a partnership with Classic 107.3. Each episode explored the music and history of the planned 2020 season productions.

OPENING NIGHT SPOTLIGHTS ▼

Inspired by Opera Theatre's Spotlight on Opera series, the Digital Festival's Opening Night Spotlights brought together 2020 season directors, designers, and singers with General Director Andrew Jorgensen.

Each spotlight provided an opportunity to celebrate the planned productions of Carmen, Die Fledermaus, Awakenings, and Susannah.



THE REACH OF THE DIGITAL FESTIVAL

24

PUBLIC EVENTS

35+

DONOR & VOLUNTEER EVENTS

157,927PEOPLE REACHED

197,156

TOTAL MINUTES
OF CONTENT VIEWED

1,760
TOTAL
COMMENTS

CONNECTION AND HOPE FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Opera Theatre's education programs achieved astonishing reach this year. All in-person programs were reimagined for virtual delivery in the spring of 2020, thanks to the innovation and resilience of the Opera Theatre Education department and dedicated voice faculty. The virtual programs became especially important for students during this time of separation.





\$590,000
IN SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
260 99%
STUDENTS GRADUATION

RATF

■ 30 YEARS OF AIT: THE BAYER FUND ARTIST-IN-TRAINING PROGRAM (AIT)

In March, OTSL quickly moved weekly vocal lessons online for students in the Bayer Fund Artist-in-Training Program, which is dedicated to discovering and nurturing talent in local high school students. The AIT Spring Recital, celebrating 30 years of this nationally recognized program, was streamed to more than 3,200 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

OPERA ON THE GO!

Prior to the pandemic, Opera on the GO! visited thousands of students in schools across the St. Louis area with an adapted version of Rossini's *Cinderella* in fall 2019. Accompanying workshops immersed students in music, movement, and stage makeup.

21

AREA SCHOOLS

4,350
STUDENTS
SERVED

SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCES FOR STUDENTS WITH

SPECIAL NEEDS

67%

OF STUDENTS ARE CITY RESIDENTS **57%**

STUDENTS OF COLOR 2,660

STUDENTS WERE FROM LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS (ACCORDING TO FREE/REDUCED PRICED LUNCH STATS)

OPERA CAMP FOR KIDS ▶

Opera Camp is a week-long, high-energy exploration of music and stagecraft for kids. The program was held virtually in 2020, connecting campers from across the country with special guests who introduced students to Shakespeare, costumes, stage makeup, and comedy in opera.

Students from Across the Country: For the first time, OTSL welcomed students from five states for virtual Opera Camp.

Resources for the Virtual Classroom: Teachers who participated in the program reported the experience was an excellent opportunity that helped to prepare them for the virtual classroom later in the fall.



A COMMITMENT TO GREATER EQUITY

In addition to economic and health crises in 2020, our country also witnessed tragic losses that continued a long history of racial injustice and systemic inequities. In June, Opera Theatre made a public statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement:

"...we stand with you and we will use our voice to amplify yours. Allyship is not an identity — it is an action, requiring the work of constant growth and improvement. We commit ourselves to that work today and always. We promise to listen, to educate ourselves, and to change so that we help create a world that is equitable, just, and safe for all. And we encourage you, our community, to hold us accountable now and in the future..."

Since making this statement, the company has continued to identify opportunities for greater equity through a thorough audit and assessment of the company's EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) practices. Through this audit, OTSL heard from more than 150 individuals and examined all levels of the company to study, assess, and develop a comprehensive report detailing broad recommendations for advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion at Opera Theatre.





In September 2020, Opera Theatre announced two new initiatives to further the company's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, both onstage and in administration. The Clayco Future Leaders Fellowship will cultivate future leaders in arts administration who identify as BIPOC or other backgrounds that are historically underrepresented in opera. Opera Theatre also announced the creation of the Voices Fund: A Path for Empathy, Dialogue, and Change.

We are encouraged by the momentum of these first steps in an ongoing journey, and are committed to continuing this work in the months and years ahead.

A COMMITMENT TO GREATER EQUITY INTRODUCING THE **VOICES FUND** ▼





In September, Opera Theatre announced the creation of the Voices Fund: A Path for Empathy, Dialogue and Change. Launched with the

generosity of OTSL's 2020 gala donors who chose to direct over \$800,000 toward this purpose following the cancellation of the in-person event, the Voices Fund will provide financial resources to ensure Opera Theatre pursues innovative, impactful projects celebrating the bold voices within our community. It aims to amplify voices in St. Louis and beyond by supporting initiatives that create dialogue with the diverse voices and concerns of our region now and for years to come. On behalf of our 2020 Gala Chairman Cindy Brinkley, Chairman of the Board of Directors Noémi Neidorff, and General Director Andrew Jorgensen, we thank the Voices Fund's Inaugural Sponsors — their generosity will have a lasting impact on OTSL's work!

■ The first project supported by the Voices Fund was Songs for St. Louis: A Concert in the Commons, a co-production by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Nine Network, which aired on Nine PBS in November 2020.

▼ ARTS UNITED STL: COMING TOGETHER THROUGH ART

In St. Louis and across the country, individual artists saw their livelihoods disappear overnight. Performing arts were among the first public events to be cancelled due to the pandemic and will be among the last to return to full operation. The Regional Arts Commission's Artist Relief Fund was set up to protect the most vulnerable in our arts community until it is safe for all of us to return to the work we love.

In the spring of 2020, Opera Theatre convened a group of 16 local arts organizations for an at-home benefit to support local artists. Produced by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Arts United STL was streamed free to the public on Sunday, May 31 and raised over \$360,000 for local artist relief.

> **785** DONORS

GRANTS FOR

LOCAL ARTISTS

\$360,000













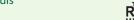


























STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION*

ASSETS

Cash & cash equivalents	\$3,012,877
Investments	\$77,543,293
Contributions receivable, net	\$3,441,477
Bequests receivable, net	\$6,411,382
Note and other receivables	\$169,297
Beneficial interest in lead trust	\$509,728
Prepaid expenses	\$584,427
Facilities and equipment, net	\$3,690,382
Total assets	\$95,362,863

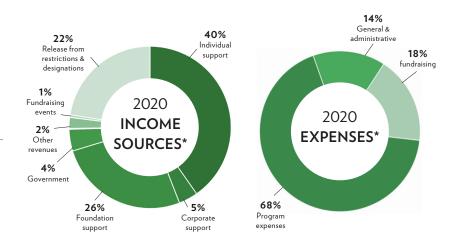
LIABILITIES

Accounts	payable and accrued expenses	\$304,004
Box office	liability	\$219,138
Deferred	revenue	\$13,160
Annuity li	ability	\$29,300
Notes pay	vable	\$362,400
Total liab	ilities	\$928.002

NET ASSETS

19

Without donor restrictions	\$9,938,953
With donor restrictions	\$84,495,908
Total net assets	\$94.434.861



*As of September 30, 2020. All FY2020 ratios were significantly influenced by the pandemic and season cancellation.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES*

	w/o Donor	w/ Donor	
REVENUES AND SUPPORT	Restrictions	Restrictions	Total
Grants, contributions, and bequests	\$5,100,254	\$51,116,810	\$56,217,064
Performance admissions	\$13,801	-	\$13,801
Benefits	\$43,577	-	\$43,577
Program advertising	\$2,360	-	\$2,360
Rentals and other activities	\$196,883	\$194	\$197,077
Change in value of split interest agreements	\$580	(\$9,758)	(\$9,178)
Net assets released from restrictions	\$2,848,162	(\$2,848,162)	-
Total operating revenue and support	\$8,205,617	\$48,259,084	\$56,464,701
EXPENSES			
Program services	\$4,545,922		\$4,545,922
General and administrative	\$977,981		\$977,981
Fundraising	\$1,181,008		\$1,181,008
Total expenses	\$6,704,911		\$6,704,911
NON-OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES			
Investment return, net	\$290,048	\$952,109	\$1,242,157
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$1,790,754	\$49,211,193	\$51,001,947

^{*}As of September 30, 2020. All FY2020 ratios were significantly influenced by the pandemic and season cancellation.

2020 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

This list represents contributions of \$1,000 or more made to the Annual Fund in fiscal year 2020 (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020). We are deeply grateful to our donors at all levels — and to those who supported capital and endowment projects — and regret that we do not have space to recognize all donors here.

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE: \$100,000+

Anonymous Donors (2)

Arts & Education Council

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DIRECTORS' CIRCLE: \$50,000-\$99,999

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PRODUCTION UNDERWRITER PATRONS: \$25.000-\$49.999

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SPONSOR PATRONS: \$10,000-\$14,999

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& In Memoriam

* In-kind

2020 Ticket Donor

♪ Intermezzo Society

continued on page 23

2020 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

continued from page 22

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24

Donna Wilkinson

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PATRONS: \$2,500-\$4,999

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	Peter J. Wender #
	Stuart & Susie Zimmerman
	& In Memoriam
	* In-kind
	# 2020 Ticket Donor

♪ Intermezzo Society

GUARANTORS: \$1,000-\$2,499

357 H7 H7 T 3 H3. \$1,000 \$2,177			
Anonymous Donors (3)	Sally Brayley Bliss & Jim Connett #	Mr. 🞗 & Mrs. Don R. Carlson	
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