

OPERA THEATRE **OT&L** of SAINT LOUIS

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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## mission

Opera Theatre’s mission is to shape a vibrant future for opera by connecting, inspiring, and entertaining our communities through the power and beauty of the art form; to foster the next generation by empowering a diverse group of artists, artisans, and administrators at the highest level; and to make opera accessible and inclusive through innovative and collaborative storytelling that reflects, engages, and strengthens the St. Louis community, and attracts national and international audiences.

## table of contents

<b>From the General Director</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>From the Board Chair</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Impact in 2024</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2024 Festival Season</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Our Priorities</b>	
<b>Increasing Access to Opera</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Building the Future of Opera</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Educating and Inspiring Young People</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Reimagining Opera</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Spotlight on the Intermezzo Society</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Financials</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Thank You</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Annual Staff</b>	<b>36</b>

Season photos by Eric Woolsey and Macy White.

## from the **GENERAL DIRECTOR**

I am deeply grateful to each member of the Opera Theatre community for making 2024 such a vibrant year for our organization. In the past year, we achieved a higher membership renewal rate than we have since before the pandemic, signaling that we're continuing to build back from that disruptive period and doing so in a way that anticipates a bright future for OTSL. Thank you for being such an essential part of making Opera Theatre ever more dynamic and impactful. I hope you will go through the pages of this report to see in detail all that we accomplished in 2024.

The 2024 Festival Season exemplified much of what we take most pride in as a company. From the spectacular singing in *Julius Caesar* to the warm audience reception of *The Barber of Seville*, we were delighted to be able to share four exceptional productions. It was even more meaningful to be able to do so while providing a stage for young singers, continuing our long-held tradition of serving as a talent incubator. We are fortunate to have a remarkable Board of Directors — led by our exceptional Board Chair, Kim Eberlein — whose assured leadership fuels our ability to bring you world-class opera.

A few months after the 2024 Festival Season, James Robinson, our Artistic Director for the last 16 years, was appointed General and Artistic Director of the Seattle Opera, one of the leading posts in American opera. His astounding tenure at OTSL concluded with a magnificent production of Philip Glass' *Galileo Galilei*, which one reviewer aptly described as a "tour de force of sight and sound." Jim's artistic journey has been defined by bringing new, often challenging, works from page to stage and he will always be an essential part of the OTSL family.

Your ongoing support allows us to shape the future of opera while making it accessible. Thank you for making 2024 outstanding.



**Andrew R. Jorgensen**  
General Director

## from the **BOARD CHAIR**

Once again I am in awe of the impact Opera Theatre has each year. Nearly 18,000 audience members joined us at the Loretto-Hilton Center to witness world-class performers bringing opera to life. From our 1950s staging of the most beloved of operas, *La bohème*, to our groundbreaking production of the rarely-seen *Galileo Galilei*, the 2024 season had something for everyone.

In 2024, we reached more than 75,000 students in 332 schools across 46 states with our award-winning education programs and over 7,000 people attended our community events. None of this would be possible without the ongoing support of our donors, and our school and community partners.

We are fortunate to have so many supporters at all levels, and are heartened by how many of you renew your contributions each year. This steadfast support enables us to continue our emphasis on excellence and innovation, values instilled in this company by our founders.

Nurturing young talent continues to be a key priority. Every year, more than 1,000 young artists apply for a chance to audition for our Young Artist Programs. The 32 outstanding young artists that made up our 2024 class of Gerdine Young Artists and Richard Gaddes Festival Artists represented the top 3% of that incredibly competitive pool. Behind the stage and in the offices, we welcomed artisans and interns in all disciplines from St. Louis and around the country.

Thank you to all our partners, supporters, and to every single audience member who walked through our doors in 2024. Your continued support ensures that this art form remains vibrant both on our stage and in our community.



**Kim Eberlein**  
Chair, Board of Directors





## OUR IMPACT *in 2024*

**32**

*live  
performances*

**2,444**

*free tickets provided  
through Phyllis' Seats*

**46**

*states and Canada  
reached through  
education programs*

**99,167**

*audience members  
across the year*

**44**

*world premiere operas  
produced by OTSL  
as of the 2024 season*

**47**

*years of partnership  
with the St. Louis  
Symphony Orchestra*

**17,147**

*tickets sold to the  
2024 Festival Season*

**76,135**

*students reached  
in **332** schools*

**500**

*employed during  
the 2024 Festival Season*

*“Opera Theatre of Saint Louis is a prime summer destination for American opera lovers. In its 49th season, the Missouri festival retains an enterprising identity all its own, its annual four-opera lineup mixing repertory staples with new and newish operas, and older works less often staged.”*

— DALLAS MORNING NEWS



*Galileo Galilei, 2024.*

PHOTO © ERIC WOOLSEY



*"I can't remember hearing more laughter at an opera than I did at OTSL's staging of Gioachino Rossini's The Barber of Seville. The comedy was uproarious; the music was sublime."* — HEC-TV



*"Woeful but wonderful, OTSL's La bohème is a poignant exploration of love, friendship, poverty, and the human condition. Filled with timeless arias and a dazzling score, the opera brings the trials and tribulations of postwar Parisian bohemia to life."*

— REVIEW STL



Leadership support for *The Barber of Seville* comes from **Noémi K. Neidorff**.

*The Barber of Seville* is supported by a gift honoring the memory of **Sally S. Levy** from **The Saucy Foundation** by her children: **Lucy & J. David Levy, Diane & Paul Jacobson**, and **Karen & Mont Levy**.

Leadership support for *La bohème* comes from the **Steward Family Foundation** and the **Berges Family Foundation**.



## JULIUS CAESAR

*“Musically, this Julius Caesar is impeccable and, yes, the singing is spectacular.”*

— BROADWAYWORLD



Major production support comes from **Roy Pfautch**. *Julius Caesar* is underwritten by **Roma B. Wittcoff**. Daniela Candillari's engagement is made possible with generous support from **Kim & Tim Eberlein**.

## GALILEO GALILEI

*“Director James Robinson’s attractive production, anchored by Marco Piemontese’s sumptuous period costumes, celebrated the wonder of scientific discovery.”*

— THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Leadership support for *Galileo Galilei* comes from the **Whitaker Foundation**.  
Made possible in part by the **Fred M. Saigh Endowment at Opera Theatre** and the **Sally S. Levy Family Fund for New Works**.  
This project is supported in part by the **National Endowment for the Arts**.  
James Robinson's engagement is made possible with generous support from the **William T. Kemper Foundation** and **David & Dotty Kemper**.



This event shines a spotlight on Opera Theatre's Richard Gaddes Festival Artist and Gerdine Young Artist Programs as these rising opera stars perform iconic melodies from opera's greatest hits and cherished rarities. The 2024 event was curated by Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs Patricia Racette.

*Center Stage* is supported by a gift honoring the memory of **Sally S. Levy** from **The Saucy Foundation**.

Additional support comes from **Mary Susman & Tom Herm**, **Gene Kornblum**, **Allison W. Roberts**, **Franklin F. Wallis**, **Heidi & Win Reed**, **Frank Jacobs & Marylen Mann**, and **Maria Taxman**.

Patricia Racette's engagement is made possible with generous support from **Tim & Robin Wentworth**.



*Our Songs* features a different guest curator every year, giving artists the opportunity to honor the voices and influences most important to them. From classical music to folk songs to contemporary harmonies, this is a night where every voice has a place, and all are welcome. The 2024 concert was curated by baritone Justin Austin.

Leadership support for Opera Theatre's year-round community programs comes from **Noémi K. Neidorff**.

Justin Austin's engagement is supported by the **Clemence S. Lieber Foundation**.



## INCREASING ACCESS *to opera*

*Opera Theatre is deeply committed to increasing access to opera and convening our communities through operatic storytelling. The following initiatives in 2024 allowed us to show up for our community in meaningful ways.*

### ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMS

Opera Theatre welcomes approximately 20,000 audience members annually to our Festival Season and we sought to make this experience as welcoming as possible for people with disabilities. Services included accessible parking and drop-off area, audio description and sign language interpretation at select performances, disability equity training for Opera Theatre staff, and Braille and large print versions of the Opera Theatre program book.

Leadership support for Opera Theatre's year-round community programs comes from **Noémi K. Neidorff**.

### PHYLLIS' SEATS

Named in honor of the late Phyllis Brissenden, one of Opera Theatre's dearest friends and most generous supporters, the Phyllis' Seats initiative reserves at least 50 tickets for each performance to be offered free of charge. This ground-breaking program, first launched in 2021, is a first for our company and for the national opera scene.

### FREE ACTIVITIES ACROSS ST. LOUIS

Opera Theatre's free community activities in 2024 included Artwork & Arias at the Contemporary Art Museum - St. Louis, the *Belonging in Opera* series at Washington University in St. Louis, a season preview concert at the World Chess Hall of Fame, the St. Louis Place Park Concert, as well as sponsorships of Black Pride St. Louis, Pride Night at the Opera, and Tower Grove Pride. Thanks to the collaboration of more than 40 partner organizations, these programs served over 7,000 participants across St. Louis.

### IN THE 2024 SEASON...

**2,444**

*free seats given away during the 2024 Festival Season*

**609**

*patrons reserved Phyllis' Seats tickets*

**19.5%**

*of Phyllis' Seats users were new to OTSL!*

**New Works Collective:  
Mechanisms, 2024.**

PHOTO © ERIC WOOLSEY

## BUILDING THE FUTURE *of opera*

*Opera Theatre is committed to nurturing the next generation of artists, artisans, and administrators. The Mabel Dorn Reeder Young Artist Education & Development Programs help aspiring opera professionals develop their skills and fuel their creativity.*

### **GERDINE YOUNG ARTISTS**

Named after Opera Theatre's founding board chairman, Leigh Gerdine, and his wife Alice, the Gerdine Young Artist (GYA) Program is one of the most sought-after training programs for young opera singers in the country. Each season, just 30-36 young singers are selected from over 1,000 applications. In addition to singing in the mainstage production choruses, GYAs are featured in supporting roles, cover all roles in mainstage productions, and are featured soloists in the annual *Center Stage* concert.

### **MABEL DORN REEDER FOUNDATION PRIZE**

The Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation Prize recognizes extraordinary artistic potential in early-career artists and provides support for their continued artistic development. The award was made possible by a \$2 million gift from the Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation to help endow the company's acclaimed professional development programs.

### **EMERSON BEHIND THE CURTAIN**

Opera Theatre celebrated the 21st year of this technical training program in 2024, made possible with generous support from Emerson. Each year, the program gives 22 students the hands-on experience and skill sets necessary for successful careers in theater production. Students receive a competitive hourly salary, a housing stipend, and lifelong connections in the technical theater field.

*Donors to these programs are recognized on pages 26-33.*



Justin Austin receiving the Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation Prize, 2024.

PHOTO © MACY WHITE




## educating YOUNG PEOPLE

*Each year, thousands of students across the St. Louis region and beyond learn how to appreciate and even create opera through Opera Theatre's nationally recognized education programs.*

### BAYER FUND ARTISTS-IN-TRAINING PROGRAM

The Bayer Fund Artists-in-Training Program (AIT) is a nationally acclaimed program that identifies, coaches, and encourages promising young high school singers both on and offstage. Each year, approximately 24 local students are selected through an open and free audition process. In the decades since the program's inception, more than 290 students have participated in the AIT Program and over \$700,000 in scholarships has been awarded.

Special thanks to lead sponsor,  **Bayer Fund**.

Special thanks to **Ann Carole Gaspar** and the late **Peter Gaspar** for establishing the **Dee Pavelka Scholarship**, honoring Ms. Pavelka's 20 years of exemplary and inspired teaching.

Special thanks to **Mr. and Mrs. Jermaine Smith** for their generosity in supporting the **Jermaine Smith First Prize Award**.

### OPERA ON THE GO!

Opera Theatre's annual education program, Opera on the Go!, introduces students to the world of opera through fun and accessible performances, interactive workshops, and comprehensive classroom resources. In 2024, *Treemonisha* reached over 1,500 students in nine St. Louis area schools. Additionally, a digital adaptation of *The Pirates of Penzance* was re-released and experienced by over 76,135 students in 46 states and Canada.

Made possible in part by the **Bayer Fund** and the **Saigh Foundation**.

 **Bayer Fund** the**SAIGH**foundation

The abridged adaptation of *Treemonisha* for student audiences is underwritten by **Excel Business Concepts**.

Free access to Opera on the Go! is generously provided by the **Engelhardt Family Foundation**. The production of *The Pirates of Penzance* was produced in 2020 with generous support from the **Fred M. Saigh Endowment** at Opera Theatre, the **Bayer Fund**, and the **Engelhardt Family Foundation**.

### ARTS INTENSIVES

Opera Theatre teaching artists spent semester-long residencies at Bel-Nor School, Loyola Academy, Grand Center Arts Academy, Sumner High School, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Marian Middle School, St. Francis Cabrini, McKinley Classical Leadership Academy, and Carr Lane Visual and Performing Arts Middle School. Students created and performed their own world premiere operas including *Murder at Midnight* at McKinley Classical Leadership Academy and *Knights* at Loyola Academy.

### TRAILBLAZERS IN OPERA

This interactive lesson series spotlights groundbreaking past and present Black opera singers and composers who blazed the trail in both opera and in American history. This year's Trailblazers curriculum included modules on Grace Bumbry, the first Black artist to perform at Germany's Bayreuth Festival, and Scott Joplin, the "King of Ragtime" and composer of the opera *Treemonisha*. In-person classroom visits focused on the life and legacy of Scott Joplin as well as Grace Bumbry and Robert McFerrin, Sr.

Trailblazers tour,  
2024.

PHOTO © MACY WHITE



*Donors to these programs are recognized on pages 26-33.*



**New Works Collective:**  
***On My Mind*, 2024.**  
PHOTO © ERIC WOOLSEY

## THE NEW WORKS COLLECTIVE

From our beginnings, Opera Theatre has been dedicated to expanding the American opera canon with original, innovative productions. We are committed to not only creating new works, but to creating these works in a way that authentically represents the stories of our community. To accomplish this, in 2022, Opera Theatre launched the New Works Collective — a dynamic group of St. Louis-based artists, activists, and educators. We asked them to commission works that felt relevant and relatable for the broader St. Louis region. The second group of commissions — chosen from over 100 submissions — premiered in March 2024. These performances continue to bring in higher-than-average numbers of new audiences for Opera Theatre, a testament to the power that new voices and stories have in uniting different segments of the community through art. All three operas were directed by Kimille Howard.

***On My Mind***, by composer Jasmine Barnes and librettist Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton. Traversing the hardest times with empathy and hope can create the sweetest friendships. Melodee and Lyric are both caregivers for elders in their respective families, struggling to balance their personal and professional duties with the irrepressible longing to laugh, live, and exist without guilt. When their worlds converge, they recognize a kindred spirit in one another. Their budding friendship leads to an unmatched sisterhood where strength, vulnerability, and joy go hand-in-hand.

***Mechanisms***, by composer J.E. Hernández and librettist Marianna Mott Newirth. Neurodivergence, often invisible to the casual observer, can be deeply misunderstood. In math class, fifth grader Roe struggles to keep up; numbers only make sense to her when they're a mesmerizing swirl of colors. Her teacher chides her for disrupting class and her mother tells her to try harder, but Roe's father knows she isn't doing anything wrong — Roe just has a different way of understanding numbers. In the end, Roe's parents, teacher, and classmates come to realize the importance of empathy, adaptability, and hidden strengths.

***Unbroken***, by composer Ronald Maurice and librettist J. Mae Barizo. *Unbroken* tells the resilient journey of single mother Grace and her three sons. Grace loves her children fiercely, but she is sick and wants to prepare them for a possible future without her. Ezra, the oldest son, contemplates what it means to carry on his mother's legacy and raise his two younger brothers. Grace and her sister, Aunt Susan, must teach the boys to see beauty in the midst of tragedy and to treasure the seeds that we all plant for future generations.

Leadership support for the *New Works Collective* comes from the **Mellon Foundation** and the **Edward Jones Foundation**.



Accessibility enhancements for the *New Works Collective* are made possible by **PNC Arts Alive**.



Additional support for the *New Works Collective* comes from **Sara Burke, Annemarie & Matt Schumacher, Susan & David Young, and Dr. Pamela Stuerke**.



## SPOTLIGHT *on the* INTERMEZZO SOCIETY

Since 2021, the Intermezzo Society has been changing the face of our off season. Dedicated to supporting and celebrating new voices in opera, the Intermezzo Society hosts multiple events throughout the year, providing a chance to gather and share in the love of the art form while supporting talented artists starting to make their mark on the opera world.

Led by Crystal Allen Dallas and Marcela Manjarrez, the Intermezzo Society is one of the most dynamic spaces within OTSL. Signature events like the Winter Brunch and Toast to Opera feature specially curated programs by uniquely talented artists. Mezzo-soprano Lucy Evans, bass-baritone Jesús Vicente Murillo, mezzo-soprano Gabriela Linares, bass-baritone Phillip Lopez, and soprano Laura Santamaria all performed during 2024 events.

Members are among the first to learn about OTSL's upcoming productions and meet the company's talented artists in a warm and personal setting, which also provides a space for attendants to make new connections throughout the St. Louis community.

Excitement around the Intermezzo Society has been steadily growing since its inception. Since 2022, the number of member households has jumped from 23 to 60 and more than 500 tickets were sold in 2023 and 2024 for Intermezzo Society events. If you are not yet part of the Intermezzo Society, please consider joining. Members enjoy free admission to four delightful annual events and gifts made to the Intermezzo Society directly support the engagement of new and diverse voices in opera.



Intermezzo's Hispanic  
Heritage Event, 2024.

PHOTO © MACY WHITE

# FINANCIALS

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION\*

### ASSETS

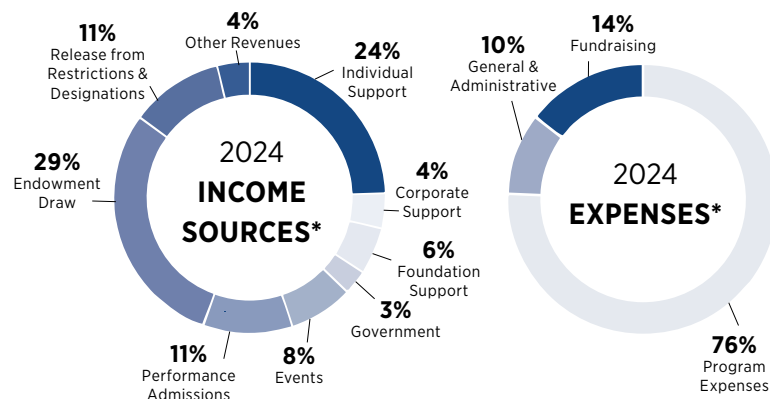
Cash and cash equivalents.....	\$1,945,878
Investments .....	\$105,500,077
Contributions receivable, net .....	\$2,135,804
Notes and other receivables.....	\$402,798
Beneficial interest in lead trust .....	\$261,582
Prepaid expenses .....	\$22,935
Right of use asset - operating lease, net .....	\$555,377
Facilities and equipment, net .....	\$3,192,341
<b>Total assets .....</b>	<b>\$114,016,792</b>

### LIABILITIES

Accounts payable and accrued expenses.....	\$145,931
Box office liability.....	\$23,102
Deferred revenue.....	\$1,008,457
Annuities liability .....	\$17,998
Operating lease liability .....	\$655,101
<b>Total Liabilities .....</b>	<b>\$1,850,589</b>

### NET ASSETS

Without donor restrictions .....	\$5,367,343
With donor restrictions.....	\$106,798,860
<b>Total net assets .....</b>	<b>\$112,166,203</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets.....</b>	<b>\$114,016,792</b>



\*As of September 30, 2024

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES\*

### REVENUES AND SUPPORT

	w/o Donor Restrictions	w/Donor Restrictions	Total
Grants, contributions, and bequests	\$3,845,386	\$924,834	\$4,770,220
Performance admissions	\$1,360,575	-	\$1,360,575
Benefits	\$935,241	\$43,205	\$978,446
Program advertising	\$29,749	-	\$29,749
Rentals and other activities	\$400,307	\$847	\$401,154
Net assets released from restrictions	\$4,018,870	(\$4,018,870)	-
<b>Total Operating Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$10,590,128</b>	<b>(\$3,049,984)</b>	<b>\$7,540,144</b>
Program services	\$10,476,672	-	\$10,476,672
General and administrative	\$1,339,892	\$7,707	\$1,347,599
Fundraising	\$2,015,437	-	\$2,015,437
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$13,832,001</b>	<b>\$7,707</b>	<b>\$13,839,708</b>

### NON-OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES

Investment return, net	\$471,767	\$19,785,288	\$20,257,055
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### CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

	<b>(\$2,770,106)</b>	<b>\$16,727,597</b>	<b>\$13,957,491</b>
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$8,137,449	\$90,071,263	\$98,208,712
Net Assets, End of Year	\$5,367,343	\$106,798,860	\$112,166,203

\*As of September 30, 2024



# THANK YOU

## 2024 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

*This list represents contributions of \$1,000 or more made to the Annual Fund in the 2024 fiscal year (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024). 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 Donor (1)	The Saigh Foundation
Jim Berges & Elizabeth Mannen Berges	Ted & Lori Samuels
Berges Family Foundation	Dr. Jeanne & Rex Siquefield
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### DIRECTORS' CIRCLE: \$50,000-\$99,999

Anonymous Donor (1)	The Levy Family and Saucy Foundation
Bayer Fund	J. David & Lucy S. Levy
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# THANK YOU

## 2024 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

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

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Professor Adrienne Davis			



THANK YOU

2024 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

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

Anonymous Donor (1)	Elaine Coe	Kit & Patricia Heffern & Elleard Heffern Fine Jewelers	Jack Austin Miller	Mr. & Mrs. E. R. Thomas, Jr.
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