

# SEATTLE OPERA. THANKFUL



**MARCH  
2016**

Annual Fund  
Impact Report



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# DEAR FRIENDS,

Now that we have announced the coming 2016/17 season, it's so exciting to again connect to you, the Seattle Opera donor family. I want to thank you for your unfaltering support during this current season. At this particular time of year, there has been much to celebrate, and there is much to look forward to!

I hope you enjoyed *The Marriage of Figaro* this past month at McCaw Hall. It was certainly a thrill for me, as my first chance to direct Seattle Opera in such a grand capacity! But now we are ready to look forward to the commanding production of Donizetti's *Mary Stuart* and Wagner's captivating *Flying Dutchman*.

If you're a season subscriber, be sure to renew your subscription to secure your seats for the 2016/17 season by March 21, if you haven't already. It's going to be another marvelous year, and it will be here before we know it!

With warm gratitude,

A handwritten signature of Aidan Lang.

Aidan Lang  
General Director

## SUCCESSFUL RETURN OF FROST FEST

oh what fun it is to sing!

Seattle Opera's 2nd annual Frost Fest brought nearly 500 children and adults to the Cornish Playhouse on February 6. This community event is a highly-anticipated celebration of music and fun—a perfect occasion for families with young children.

Participants enjoyed pre-show activities like an instrument petting zoo, backstage noise-making, opera costume dress-up, and more. The concert program took a musical trip around the world with songs from Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, and the Caribbean, presented by our Youth Opera Chorus and Advanced Ensemble members.



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**Thanks to your gifts**, Frost Fest is now a new tradition for the Seattle community, making a terrific impact with our young friends and neighbors. We are so grateful for your support of education and community engagement programs all year long. Thank you!



# DONOR SPOTLIGHT: SALLY WEST SHARES HER LOVE OF OPERA

As a longtime member of our donor family, Sally West has a devoted relationship with Seattle Opera. We are incredibly grateful for her dedication and enthusiastic spirit. If you see Sally and her family around McCaw Hall during the production of *Mary Stuart*, be sure to thank her for her help bringing Italian soprano Serena Farnocchia to the stage!

## HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTRODUCED TO OPERA?

I was introduced to opera by my British father, a fine classical pianist, who favored Wagner and Verdi. And then, on a European trip in my late teens, I was conquered by *Tosca* at La Scala.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SPONSOR MARY STUART SOPRANO SERENA FARNOCHIA?

I sponsored the artist singing the role of *Mary Stuart* because I was offered the chance to do so. I had never sponsored an opera artist before. It's a first for me!

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT SEATTLE OPERA?

I love the fact that Seattle Opera has grown from a small struggling company in the northwest corner of the USA to a world class one. I have followed this pursuit of excellence from its fledgling beginning around the time of the 1962 World's Fair and have had subscription tickets with my friend Lynda Hurst every season since. Through the years we have been joined by family and friends. I have enjoyed the beauty of

opera in practically every major opera house in the world, and Seattle Opera's adventurous spirit and production excellence are rivaled by none.

## WHY DO YOU THINK OPERA IS IMPORTANT TO OUR COMMUNITY?

Opera benefits the community because it's like looking at art, listening to rich and varied music, watching dance, or reading an uplifting book. It benefits the soul and speaks to our deepest emotions and senses.

## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE COMING SEASON?

I heard *Hansel and Gretel* in Vienna in 1995 on Christmas Eve. I saw all the families with their children and grandchildren in the audience and wanted that opportunity for myself someday. Now, in 2016, I can take my four grandchildren. (They love *The Magic Flute* too!) I also adore *La traviata*. It's Verdi at his most lyrical, and it's also one of my father's favorites. We have come full circle from my father's initial influence. This will be a great season coming up!

# THE RICK REPORT: AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR CFO

Rick Johnson has been Seattle Opera's Chief Financial Officer since 2012. Managing all financial functions for the organization, Rick is proud to steward your philanthropic investments to create great opera for our community.

## WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK AT A NON-PROFIT OPERA COMPANY?

Long before my career started, I was a music student at Boston University, happily enjoying opera as a volunteer usher. I really love this art form—both on and off the stage. My 30-year career in finance has been spent with many arts organizations, so it's a joy to combine these two passions.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THE COMPANY FACE?

We have to plan our expenses to match the income projected from ticket sales and donations. This is increasingly a challenge, especially without relying on special campaigns and non-recurring gifts. In the 2014/15 season, Seattle Opera cut back by presenting only four operas instead of five, but the impact was not as positive as had been hoped. We are committed to producing a five opera season in the years ahead at the quality level that our audiences have come to expect. But ultimately, what we can put on stage is directly related to our available resources. Sustainable annual giving from a growing number of individual donors is key to our financial health.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT AS CFO?

I'm looking forward to our move from our South Lake Union headquarters. Seattle Opera at the Center is our initiative to create a new, civic home on the site of the former Mercer Arena, adjacent to our performance home at McCaw Hall. This is incredibly important to the company, allowing us to do so much more to support our artistry and our well-loved and ever expanding education and community engagement programs. There is nothing quite like the excitement of a new facility to inspire and engage a community around the arts.

## ANY FAVORITE MEMORIES YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

While I didn't have my CFO hat on for this one, my favorite Seattle Opera moment was singing in the chorus for *Götterdämmerung* in our 2013 *Ring* Cycle. Seeing the talent of the artists up-close and being a part of that monumental work was something I'll never forget.

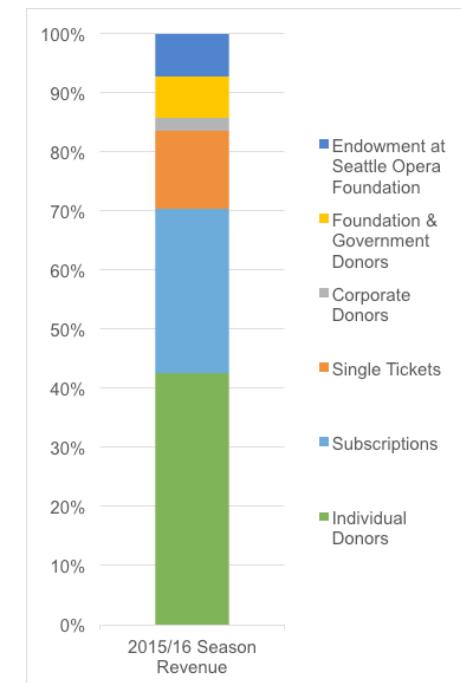


"OUR DONOR FAMILY IS THE BEDROCK OF SEATTLE OPERA."

## HOW HAS SEATTLE OPERA'S FINANCIAL PICTURE CHANGED DURING YOUR TENURE?

We've had three years of balanced budgets that have included some terrific moments, like the 2013 *Ring* which set fundraising and ticket sales records, as well as the 2014 Speight Celebration Concert and Dinner that netted \$1 million. We've made a strategic decision to move away from large periodic campaigns to support operations by building a broader and more sustainable base of community support.

It's abundantly clear that the primary source of contributed support comes from individual donors—more so than from government, foundations, and corporations combined. While it's obvious that subscription and single ticket sales are essential, those \$100, \$200, \$500 gifts make a tremendous impact. As the chart to the right shows, individual donations are the largest single portion of our revenue budget. More than 6,000 members strong, our donor family is the bedrock of Seattle Opera.



# RSVP TODAY!

## GALA FEATURING GREER GRIMSLEY

Saturday, April 16, 2016

A glamorous dinner and auction at the Museum of History and Industry, supporting Seattle Opera's Education and Community Engagement programs.

VISIT [SEATTLEOPERA.ORG/GALA](http://SEATTLEOPERA.ORG/GALA) FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO RSVP.

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