

# SEATTLE OPERA. AT THE CENTER

A group of children, mostly young girls, are gathered on a stage. They are wearing winter hats and scarves. Many of them have their mouths open and eyes wide, looking upwards in awe. The air is filled with small, white, confetti-like particles that appear to be falling. The background is dark, making the children and the falling particles stand out. The overall mood is one of excitement and wonder.

**SO MUCH  
MORE**

Unlocking opera  
for all.

# Unlocking opera for all.

## SEATTLE OPERA AT THE CENTER.

Everyone has their reasons for loving opera: spectacle, dramatic theater, expressive music, soaring vocals. **What's your reason?** Opera is an ultimate expression of the human condition: despair, heartache, injustice, joy, humor, love. It celebrates where we've been, who we are, and who we want to be. **Whatever opera means to you, it's important to us.**



**Seattle Opera is ready to do so much more** in how we share this incredible art. While we present our performances and programs in the dazzling Marion Oliver McCaw Hall and throughout the community, our administrative and production spaces are currently in a building at the end of its useful life. **After careful consideration, Seattle Opera's Board of Directors has found a solution: to replace Mercer Arena, an unused building now blighting the Seattle Center campus, with a world-class civic home for opera adjacent to McCaw Hall and at the heart of our Theatre District.** With a new community resource on the former Mercer Arena site, Seattle Opera can:

- Serve thousands more with dedicated space for dynamic Education and Community Engagement programs to meet the growing needs of our broad community.
- Create an environment for world-class artistry in a new, purpose-built facility.
- Establish a welcoming and accessible community resource on the Seattle Center campus; inviting visitors to explore our city's arts and cultural home.

**IT'S THE RIGHT TIME FOR SEATTLE OPERA,  
AND IT'S THE RIGHT TIME FOR OUR REGION.**

# WHO IS SEATTLE OPERA TODAY?

In the same *New York Times* article that covered Seattle's incredible 2014 Super Bowl victory and our 12th Man parade, Seattle was noted for its opera. A longtime resident from the crowd said, "We have the best *Ring* cycle in the world," going on to point out our many arts and cultural attractions. Since 1963, Seattle Opera's commitment to musical excellence and compelling theater has been our guiding compass. But as the quote from the Super Bowl parade suggests, this mission has translated into real benefits for the city as a whole. **Seattle is an outstanding city, thanks in no small part to key investments in the arts.**

For 53 years, Seattle Opera has enriched the cultural landscape of the Pacific Northwest and earned an international reputation that has delighted people from 50 states, 33 countries, and four continents.



- **More than 95,000 people a year** experience a live opera performance at McCaw Hall.
- Radio broadcasts on King FM reach more than 800,000 listeners each season.
- Our Education and Community Engagement programs serve opera lovers and opera novices ages 2 to 102. **After tripling the number of children and adults served** outside of McCaw Hall from 2012 to 2015 (from 25,000 to 80,000), new space is essential to maintain and increase this growth.
- Deeply embedded in the community, we explore new ways to engage loyal supporters and new audiences. In August 2015 we presented the world premiere of *An American Dream*, a work created by Seattle Opera and based on the true stories of Japanese-Americans interned in the Pacific Northwest during WWII.
- Seattle Opera **supports the entire arts community**. We employ the Seattle Symphony in our pit, develop integrated youth programs with MOHAI and the Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras, and our scenic and costume artisans regularly build elements for organizations like MoPOP and the 5th Avenue Theatre. These artisans even fixed the doors on the Seattle Monorail!

## IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS ONSTAGE.

Seattle Opera is a pillar of our community, affecting both civic life and our regional economy as the largest arts employer in the state. A forecast prepared by Professor William B. Beyers of the University of Washington estimated that Seattle Opera's 2013 *Ring* had a total economic impact of \$39 million, supporting 755 jobs. Opera lovers came to Seattle for an unforgettable experience and supported our economy through travel, dining, accommodations, and other related expenditures.

## OUR CITY IS GROWING.

All of this makes Seattle Opera important in the life of our city. We've all watched the redevelopment of the South Lake Union neighborhood with smart offices for the innovations of tomorrow. More people than ever before call Seattle home, with 2012 census data revealing that urban growth is now outpacing that of the suburbs. Growth provides opportunities to do things differently – to experiment and to invest. Smart growth propels us forward, making a better place for everyone in our community. The company that made Seattle a world-class destination for opera is ready to be at the heart of this transformation.

“It was interesting to hear how this production affected so many of my students emotionally, even my big rough and tough manly guys. The live orchestra, sets, costumes, lighting and vocal performance were incredibly powerful.”

— David Miser, a stagecraft teacher at Shelton Schools sharing about his students' participation in Seattle Opera's Experience Opera program for *La Bohème*.



© Alan Alabastro, 2011

## DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS TAKE PLACE IN A BUILDING AT THE END OF ITS USEFUL LIFE.

You probably connect Seattle Opera with our performing home in McCaw Hall. But our day-to-day operations take place in the Fred Rogers Building, a partially-converted warehouse in South Lake Union.

- Most rehearsals take place in a converted warehouse where acoustics are subpar and the space is less than half the size of the McCaw Hall stage with its superb, purpose-built facilities.
- By reducing 200 travel miles each season, we will reduce CO2 emissions by approximately 4,400 lbs.
- Artists make more than 350 trips per production between rehearsal venues, requiring the services of an army of volunteers and managing staff.
- Our Wig Department has no dedicated space; they conduct fittings with artists from around the world in a hallway next to a freight elevator.
- Every season more than 30 52-foot semi-trucks filled with supplies are packed, shipped, and unloaded repeatedly at venues across the city.



“One winter we enjoyed a production with a large chorus, a beautiful set, and captivating dancers. With only two rooms large enough to accommodate each of the three groups, the chorus had to rehearse in an unheated section of the warehouse in the winter.”

— Vinnie Feraudo,  
Seattle Opera Director of Production

# OUR VISION

This project opens many doors for Seattle Opera and for our great city. With a purpose-built home on the Seattle Center campus, **we can do more than ever before to unlock opera for all.**

## INTEGRATED OPERATIONS

Our new facilities will allow Seattle Opera to vastly improve its day-to-day operations and long-term partnership opportunities. The centralized location will enable Seattle Opera both to support other local arts and non-profit organizations (such as KCTS, EMP, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Seattle Repertory Theatre) and to work with performance companies from across the country, generating additional economic opportunity for our city.

## A CORNERSTONE TO THE THEATER DISTRICT

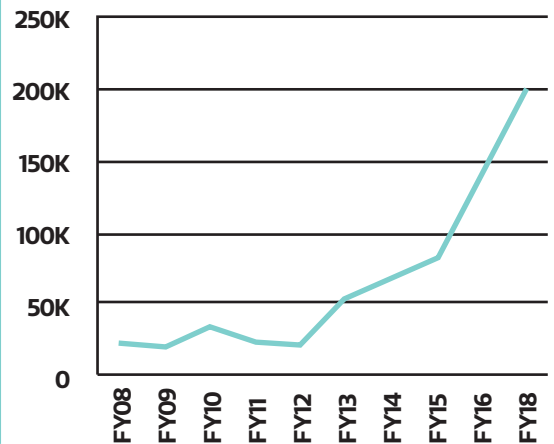
Not only does this project secure an improved community resource facility for Seattle Opera; it brings a whole host of creative enterprises to Seattle Center's Theatre District. With additional capacity that goes beyond Seattle Opera's needs, partnerships and opportunities are being explored with leaders in the creative sector including both non-profit and for-profit organizations.



Photo © NBBJ, Illustration by MOTYW

Our most active and accessible community-wide service, our Education and Community Engagement programs, are bursting at the seams! Total live attendance, excluding radio audiences, is up dramatically to 80,000 in the 2014/15 season alone. And we have plans to grow our service to reach 200,000 by 2018. Seattle Opera at the Center allows more people to experience the magic of opera. With a modern, versatile facility we can serve opera lovers and opera novices through programs of discovery, creation, play, and performance.

### Education and Community Engagement Programs People Directly Served



Arts and cultural institutions like Seattle Opera are fundamental in helping a region to grow with inventiveness and purpose. Investing in Seattle Opera is an investment in all of Seattle.

- Annually, Seattle Opera generates more than \$24 million for our region in direct economic impact from ticket sales, employment, products and services consumed, and an estimated \$3 million in secondary expenditures, such as hotel, parking, restaurant, and taxi fares. Seattle Opera at the Center allows for more opera and community interaction, which in turn generates more economic impact in our region.\*

\*Source: Americans for the Arts Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Calculator.

Lilly, age 10, loves the “creative costumes and cool sets” that she sees at Family Day for operas like *Cinderella* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*. When she goes home, she’s inspired to design her own fantastic costumes, like the one you see here. Opera unleashes Lilly’s imagination, and offers the mother-daughter time that Ellen, her mom, treasures.



# Education and Community Engagement: **INVESTING IN ARTS FOR ALL**

As a leading arts organization in both the Puget Sound region and international arts arena, **Seattle Opera has a civic responsibility to enrich the lives of our community to our utmost capacity.** However, we are limited in advancing this mission because of our current facilities. With a new purpose-built community resource, we can make aggressive strides in the growth and development of our Education and Community Engagement programs.

Our programs:

- Reflect and inspire creativity
- Foster lifelong learning
- Provide multiple points of entry into the world of opera
- Facilitate meaningful exchange
- Build capacity for opera

These guidelines take those we serve beyond traditional classroom and dress rehearsal settings, and into the heart of community connection. A new, purpose-built space will act as a “home base” for further developing our wonderful education programs.

## **SO MANY LIVES ARE ALREADY IMPACTED BY OUR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS**

- Elementary students exploring music and natural sciences by participating in Seattle Opera’s *Our Earth* children’s opera
- High school teens learning hands-on stagecraft and performance technique in our opera camps and workshops
- Community members of all ages joining in our Adult Education & Trivia series with Seattle University.

With your help, Seattle Opera at the Center will foster elements of discovery, creation, play, and performance through new and expanded programs, providing more diversity in the ways our community members can connect to the arts and to each other.





# OUR CHALLENGES

We benefit today from the generous community investments made throughout Speight Jenkins' extraordinary, three-decade tenure as General Director. Now, building on this strong artistic foundation, **our new General Director Aidan Lang has a vision to take Seattle Opera beyond the mainstage.** We aim to connect every child and adult in our region to the magic of opera. But our facilities stand in the way of making these dreams a reality.

## LACK OF PURPOSE-BUILT, RELIABLE SPACE FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

- We are unable to provide year-round programming. Without suitable space for opera camps, youth chorus rehearsals, discussion groups, recitals, workshops, etc., every initiative requires a unique search for a venue that too often is not an ideal setting.
- Due to obscure and inconvenient access, the main administrative and rehearsal spaces are challenging for those with mobility concerns.
- Youth programs require the transportation of children, a costly and liability prone endeavor.
- Synergy is limited without a central space for all programs. When offerings do not take place where the art is created, we miss opportunities to inspire and educate our community.
- Partnerships are uneven as we cannot offer space to co-host programs with our colleagues in the arts and non-profit communities.



Philip Newton

## BENEFITS OF SEATTLE OPERA AT THE CENTER INCLUDE:

- A **multimedia community room**, designed with flexibility in mind for diverse programming and engagement.
- Multiple coaching rooms, to **enhance individual learning** and artistic growth.
- Upgraded and additional **rehearsal space**, to advance our professional operatic services and provide improved event settings.
- **Visibility** into the building, upholding our principles of openness and accessibility to our neighbors and visitors.
- Collaborative programs and services through **partnership** with other community organizations.

Our goal is to reach at least 200,000 children and adults



“Students need to experience the arts in a way that is accessible and age-appropriate through programs such as this one... It prepares them for future learning, and sets the stage for more positive arts experiences in the future.”

— Sarah Samuelson,  
Music Specialist at Lakeland  
Hills Elementary, on Seattle  
Opera’s Opera Goes to School  
program.

through direct engagement programs by 2018. This higher level of access and inclusion can be achieved through Seattle Opera’s commitment to improving the region’s livelihood through artistic collaboration and lifelong learning. With free and affordable programs, we ensure that no one is turned away due to budget or opportunity gaps. And with the advantages of a new building, we will be able to connect with our community like never before!

# THE TIME IS NOW

Since McCaw Hall opened in 2003, there has been a desire to unite the company's operations in one centralized, efficient location next door to our artistic home. There has never been a better time to act:

- **Two critical lease agreements require action.** Seattle Opera's lease on its main administrative and rehearsal facility (the Fred Rogers Building located at 1020 John Street) will expire in 2018 with no viable option to renew. And the Board of Directors voted unanimously to take possession of the Mercer Arena site on July 1, 2014 to prevent dramatic rate increases. This provides the opportunity to transform the location into a welcoming resource for Seattle Opera before the lease on the Fred Rogers Building expires.
- **Seattle Opera at the Center will help grow our service at the same pace as the community.** Seattle Center has entered its next 50 years, ready to continue its role at the center of our region's arts and cultural life. But the north end of campus feels disconnected and lifeless, in large part due to the shuttered Mercer Arena. With SDOT's completion of the Mercer Corridor project in 2018, Seattle Center, and especially its Theatre District, will be open to more visitors than ever before. Seattle Opera at the Center aligns closely with this opportunity, extending the Theatre District to the point of entry for many visiting the campus. As our neighbors grow and expand, from the Gates Foundation to the apartment dwellers of Lower Queen Anne, Seattle Opera at the Center will unlock opera for all.



“The Opera is an essential part of the arts landscape. That’s a big reason why Seattle is such a desirable place to live. We want to keep it that way.”

— Dow Constantine, King County Executive, Seattle Opera subscriber and donor since 2005



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# A WISE INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

This opportunity is about joining together to secure Seattle Opera as a world-class company in a world-class city. Seattle Opera at the Center will propel your opera company into its next 50 years, revolutionize service to our community, and revitalize the Seattle Center Theatre District. It will make our city more livable and each of our lives more vibrant.

**Your support is essential. We can't wait to join forces with you and the rest of our community to ensure a bright future for our families. Together, we can make a lasting impact through our shared experiences in opera and art.**

For more information, email [SOATC@seattleopera.org](mailto:SOATC@seattleopera.org) or call 206-389-7669.