

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN SHARING
THE STORY OF PORTLAND OPERA!

In this brief, we've compiled some FAQs about Portland Opera, our community programs, our strategic progress, and COVID-19 impacts.

Video and photography are available upon request.

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VISION

We celebrate the power of performance, storytelling, and song as an inclusive artistic leader.

MISSION

We gather and inspire audiences, artists, and collaborators to share opera experiences that enliven and connect us all, enhancing the cultural landscape of the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

VALUES

We realize our mission and vision with a constellation of values that guide our work:

THE ART OF OPERA

We are unapologetically passionate about the live art of opera, and are energized by its roots as the people's art form. We believe in its future. We continue the timeless tradition of storytelling, we celebrate the universal language of music, and we honor the brilliance of the human voice.

ENSEMBLE & CULTURAL EQUITY

Our work relies on being an ensemble, and our ensemble only thrives with diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect. We commit to actively confronting and dismantling white supremacy, patriarchy, and exclusion in our company, field, and community. We commit to being inclusive and strive every day to be an anti-racist organization.

OUR SHARED HUMANITY

We sing stories about experiences, emotions, and moments that matter in life. In this practice we, together with audiences, aim to reveal and gain insight into the human condition—as a reflection of ourselves, and ourselves in relation to each other.

FISCAL STRENGTH & STEWARDSHIP

We are committed to the fiscal health of our organization, and its bright future. We are dedicated financial stewards of the community and the philanthropic funding that makes our work possible.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We generate positive impacts for our community, fostering and co-authoring collaborations and programs to achieve meaningful engagement. We contribute to the civic and cultural life of our region, and amplify the contributions and insights of our peers, colleagues, and partners.

IMAGINATION & THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

We accomplish our work with an enthusiasm to be creative, to innovate and transform, to adapt and collaborate. We hold ourselves and each other accountable to achieve sustainability, increase accessibility, and make space for curiosity in attaining our strategic goals.

Portland Opera's vision, mission, and values are intended as adaptive action statements. They may be revised, augmented, and updated by Portland Opera staff and the Portland Opera Board of Directors. They were adopted by the staff of Portland Opera in December 2020; and by the Portland Opera Board of Directors in February 2021.

PORTLAND OPERA

21/22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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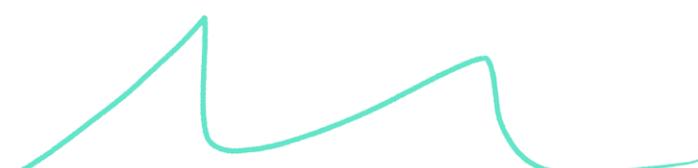
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Photos by Gia Goodrich | VEV Studios

RESIDENT ARTIST PROGRAM

Portland Opera’s Resident Artist program was established in 2005 to provide a bridge from the music conservatory world to the professional opera stage. Admissions are highly competitive for this program, which serves as an intensive residency and training program. Each Resident Artist appears in featured roles in opera productions, and performs a free and public recital, in addition to other community engagement performances. Program alumni perform with opera’s leading companies and have won some of the industry’s most prestigious competitions—including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

THE 20/21 RESIDENT ARTISTS



(in order of vocal range; pictured from the top)

LYNNESHA CRUMP, soprano; JASMINE JOHNSON, mezzo-soprano; DAVID MORGANS SANCHEZ, tenor; MICHAEL PARHAM, baritone; and EDWIN JHAMAL DAVIS, bass.

This season, Portland Opera has expanded the coaching staff and faculty for the Resident Artist Program, and the resident artists have created a “pod” during COVID-19 in order to maintain safety and wellness. Typically held at the Portland Art Museum, the Resident Artist Series is broadcasting live from the Hampton Opera Center. Each recital is artist-driven in programming selections and features collaborative pianist Joseph Williams. Learn more about each Resident Artist at portlandopera.org



PORTLAND OPERA TO GO

For over two decades, Portland Opera to Go (or POGO) has shared inclusive arts experiences with students, educators and community members around the region.

Each year, our POGO company members travel over 5,000 miles, to connect with approximately 13,000 K-12 students. Performances happen in school gyms, libraries, cafeterias, classrooms, and community centers—all with full costumes and portable scenery. Integrated in-class workshops and teacher's guides, highlighting curricular connections aligned to state curriculum standards, are available each year. To date, the program has shared opera with more than 275,000 student and community audience members living in Oregon, southwest Washington, northern California, western Idaho, and northern Nevada; with a focus on schools with barriers to accessing the arts.

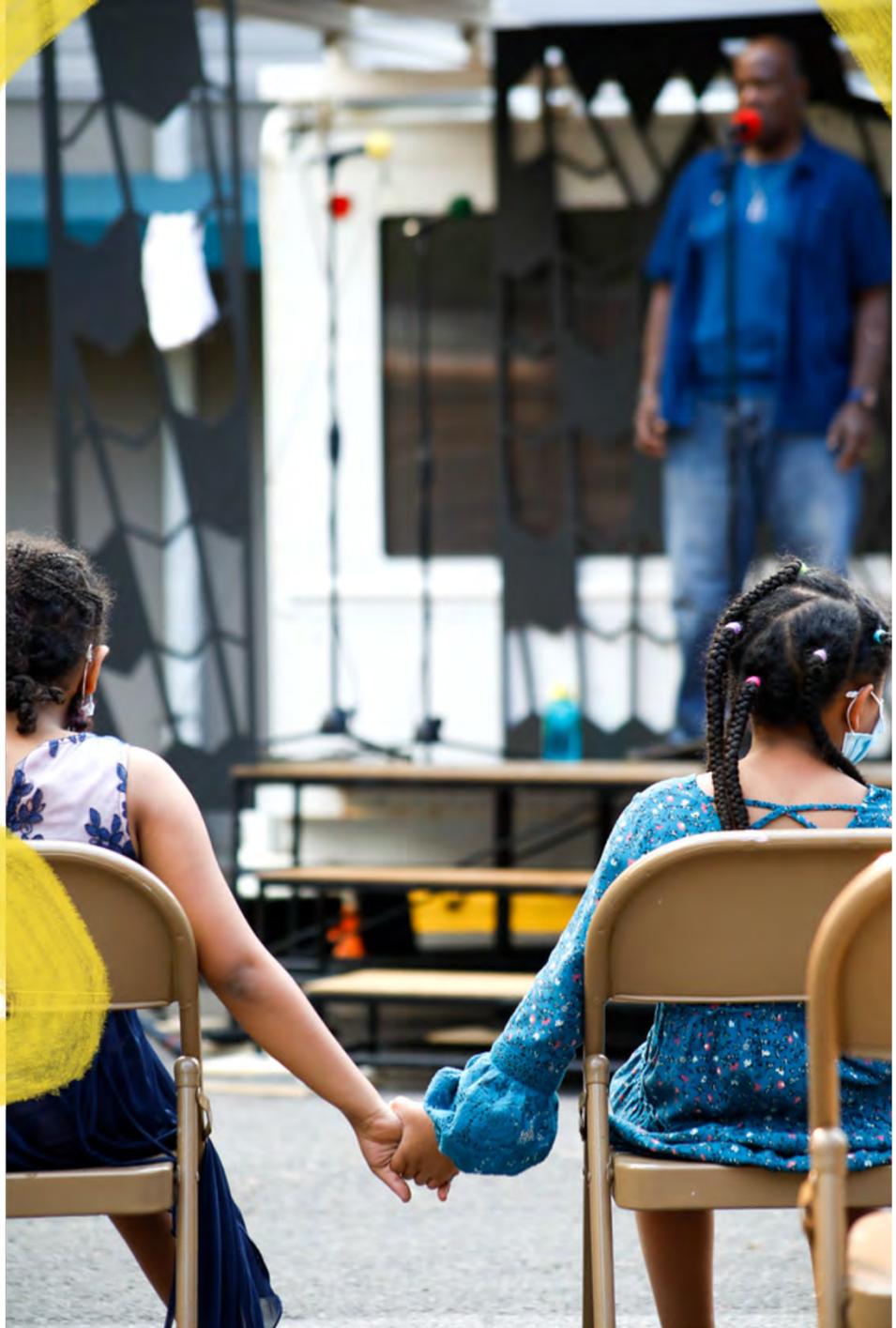
FALL, 2021 PRODUCTION: *In My Own Words / En Mis Palabras*

In the fall of 2021 we will present *En Mis Palabras* by Roger Ames and Jeffrey Gilden. This English and Spanish opera, created for 7th through 12th graders, is a coming-of-age story about finding your voice.

OPERA ELEMENTS

In response to the pandemic, Portland Opera partnered with Portland Public Schools to create Opera Elements, a series of three virtual lesson plans with activities for students. Made up of both synchronous and asynchronous activities, these lesson plans focus on three main topics: the voice, the building blocks of opera, and composing. Students have the opportunity to engage with the Portland Opera Resident Artists and company members, including composer Damien Geter, Portland Opera's Co-Artistic Advisor.

"It never ceases to amaze me how well the children engage [with POGO]... By allowing children to interact, you give them a voice." – an educator from Ontario, Oregon



OPERA *a la Cart*

Photos courtesy of Portland Opera and Human Solutions

Inspired by Portland's food cart culture, Opera a la Cart is a mobile music venue that brings live opera performances to places where people gather.

Opera a la Cart reaches more than 30,000 people throughout the summer months, at free pop-up performances, farmers markets, city parks, neighborhood festivals, vineyards and wineries, street fairs, and other public events throughout the region.

Designed and built as a collaboration between Portland Opera's production team and architecture students from Portland State University, the cart features a fold out stage and a "menu" of operatic specials of the day. Opera singers sing some of the most beloved songs from opera and musical theatre—including arias, duets, and ensemble pieces.

This season the ensemble of singers, musicians, and technicians who are featured with Opera a la Cart are following guidance from Portland Opera's team of medical advisors and production staff, to share beautiful music when, where, and how it is safe to do.

PORTLAND OPERA



Strategic Progress During COVID-19

Things have changed for performing arts companies during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Portland Opera is not standing still. Here are some highlights of what we've been able to accomplish as we focused on fundamental progress.

ARTISTIC VISION

In 2020, composer and bass-baritone Damien Geter and soprano Karen Slack joined the company as artistic advisors. Working with Sue Dixon and Daniel Biaggi, our advisors contribute to artistic planning upcoming seasons, and continue to inform our ongoing search for a permanent Artistic Director.



CULTURAL EQUITY

In 2019, the company began work with Keryl McCord, and her firm Equity Quotient, to hold learning labs about racism and inequities. Since those initial discovery sessions, a staff and board working group has started bi-monthly meetings to draft a Cultural Equity Plan for Portland Opera, with recommendations for transformation and accountability. Work continues, and the plan will be published later in 2021.

OUR MISSION, VISION & VALUES

The staff, board, and company members of Portland Opera have successfully completed an inclusive process to update our mission, vision, values, and company identity—in order to strengthen our value to the community and region that we serve, and to align our vision for the future with full company activations.

OPERATIONAL INVESTMENTS

We've used the time away from the stage to invest in technology and systems that increases our capacity across numerous departments. We've converted the Hampton Opera Center to a digital studio, in accordance with a team of medical experts, and have pivoted to present free digital and safe community programming in non-traditional ways.

We've been busy making progress with our strategic plan benchmarks. Visit portlandopera.org/strategic-plan for more information and details.



RED ALERT: COVID-19 AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IN OREGON

Creativity, arts, and culture are big business in Oregon, but the unique nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis has made the nonprofit creative sector **the hardest hit sector in the country**.¹ Research shows that investment in the arts directly improves the health of the broader economy.ⁱ Without investment and incentives from federal and state governments, the creative engine driving our local and national economies will continue to struggle.²

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IS BIG BUSINESS IN OREGON

THE U.S.'S CREATIVE ECONOMY	
\$878 billion	generated annually in the United States by the creative economy ⁱⁱ
4.5%	of GDP generated annually in the United States by the creative economy ⁱⁱ
673,656	creative businesses in the United States ^{iv}
5.1 million	creative workers in the United States ⁱⁱ

OREGON'S CREATIVE ECONOMY	
\$8.1 billion	generated annually in Oregon by the creative economy ⁱⁱⁱ
3.6%	of GSP generated annually in Oregon by the creative economy ⁱⁱ
11,606	creative businesses in Oregon ^{iv}
67,958	creative workers in Oregon ⁱⁱⁱ

COVID-19 HAS DEVASTATED OREGON'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

RIGHT NOW, IN THE UNITED STATES...	
\$150 billion	lost revenue for creative economy businesses through July 2020 (est.) ^v
67%	creative businesses severely impacted by COVID-19 ^{vi}
2.7 million (52% unemployed)	creative workers made unemployed by COVID-19 ^v
62%	of creative workers have experienced a drastic decrease in work ^{vii}
\$77.2 billion	total loss of revenue for creative workers in 2020 (est.) ^v
\$15,140 (a 43% loss/person)	average loss of creative revenue per creative worker in 2020 ^{v, vii}
55%	creative workers now have no savings ^{vii}

RIGHT NOW, IN OREGON...	
\$1.6 billion	lost revenue for creative economy businesses in 2020 in Oregon (est.) ^v
70%	Oregon creative businesses severely impacted by COVID-19 ^{vi}
43,332 (64% unemployed)	creative workers made unemployed by COVID-19 in Oregon ^v
59%	of creative workers have experienced a drastic decrease in work ^{vii}
\$1.1 billion	total loss of revenue for creative workers in Oregon in 2020 (est.) ^v
\$15,421 (a 41% loss/person)	average loss of creative revenue per creative worker in Oregon in 2020 ^v
63%	creatives in Oregon now have no savings ^{vii}



¹ According to [analysis](#) from Johns Hopkins University, the Arts, Culture, and Recreation sector experienced job losses at three times the rate of the next-most-impacted sector from January to August 2020.

² **What is the creative economy?** An \$878 billion economic ecosystem of for-profit and nonprofit creative industries, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policymakers and funders that produce and distribute creativity- and arts-based goods and services. They use their creativity to create jobs, revenue, community resources, and cultural engagement.

THE CREATIVE SECTOR MAKES COMMUNITIES HEALTHIER AND STRONGER

72% of Americans believe the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, or ethnicity.^{viii}

73% of Americans agree that art helps them understand other cultures better.^{viii}

\$31.47

average amount each arts attendee spends *beyond the ticket cost* on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs. These dollars provide vital income to local merchants, energize the downtown, and pay salaries and wages in non-arts sectors. **That is over \$100 billion in ancillary spending in American communities directly because of cultural events.**^x

CREATIVE WORKERS AND BUSINESSES STAND READY TO AID RECOVERY

76% of artists have used their art to raise morale and create community cohesion during the pandemic.^{vii}

83% of creative workers are ready today to put their creative practice to use as part of the national recovery.^{vii}

89% of arts nonprofits boosted morale through their art during the pandemic.^{vi}

THE CREATIVE ENGINE CAN POWER AMERICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Any investment in infrastructure, community, and workforce recovery must include the creative economy.

Additional Relief for Creative Workers and Companies

To address the devastating long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the creative economy, and to preserve cultural infrastructure and capitalize on the economic and social rebuilding benefits of the arts, creative workers and creative businesses seek additional investment in relief efforts to support the sector.

Improved Conditions for Independent Contractors

91% of all arts, culture, and recreation businesses are solo entrepreneurs, and millions of creative workers are independent workers.^{ix} This locks them out of unemployment benefits, affordable health insurance, and access to capital—which must change to ensure a sustainable living.

Restart Funds & Hiring/Retention Incentives

Both directly and by redistribution to local and state government, the creative sector seeks financial runways to allow cash-strapped creative businesses to restart and produce new sellable creative products and incentives for businesses and schools to accelerate rehiring and encourage retention of creative workers.

Changes to Inequitable Federal Policies

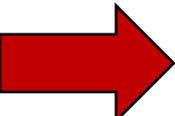
At no additional cost to the government, the creative sector seeks adjustments to various existing federal policies that disallow or discriminate against creative workers and other independent workers. These are outlined in the CREATE and PLACE Acts.

Federal Investment in Residencies, Commissions

Echoing previous federal works programs, the creative sector seeks artist and creative worker residencies within federal departments, direct commissioning of individual artists and cultural organizations, and the integration of creative workers into health, safety, education, and community development programs.

Stronger Representation within Government

To coordinate the policy relevant to the creative economy, with a particular focus on recovery and relief, the creative sector recommends the installation of an Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy senior advisor to maximize the impact and recognition of creative enterprise.



These recommendations are from a [combined policy proposal](#) that merges the [Put Creative Workers to Work platform](#), which has been endorsed by over 2,300 creative businesses and workers in all 50 states, and the [Defend Arts Workers Now \(DAWN\) Act](#).^{xi}

ⁱ Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), 2020

ⁱⁱ Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), 2017

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis - State Profiles](#), 2017

^{iv} Source: Americans for the Arts, [Creative Industries](#), 2017

^v Source: Brookings Institution, [Lost Art](#), 2020

^{vi} Source: Americans for the Arts, [COVID-19 Impact on the Nonprofit Arts Sector](#), 2020, as of December 20, 2020

^{vii} Source: Americans for the Arts, [COVID-19 Impact on Creative Workers](#), 2020, as of December 20, 2020

^{viii} Source: Americans for the Arts, [America Speaks Out About the Arts](#), 2018

^{ix} Source: CERF+, [Pandemic Assistance Falls Short for Self-Employed Workers](#), 2020

^x Source: Americans for the Arts, [Arts & Economic Prosperity 5](#), 2017

**PORTLAND
OPERA**

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
FY 2020–2024

In September 2018, Metropolitan Group was contracted to develop a strategic plan for Portland Opera. Portland Opera has been part of the community since its founding in 1964. It has seen many ups and downs, and changes, and remains a cornerstone of the arts and cultural landscape in Oregon.

We learned that the organization has faced operating shortfalls for the past several years. Cumulative operating cash flow losses since the FY 2015–16 change to a summer season could result in the opera drawing down its endowment completely in seven years if decisive action is not taken now.

We also discovered multifaceted solutions and organization-wide strategies to make improvements.

Staff and Board members felt strongly that their voices needed to be heard throughout this process. We designed an approach to give adequate space for this while seeking new ideas and perspectives. Following a review of existing research, reports, literature, and assessments from Portland Opera, we implemented a research phase that engaged internal and external stakeholders, including subscribers, funders, partners, businesses, and other admired arts organizations in Portland and other markets across the country, to solicit their input on the areas of opportunity they felt that Portland Opera should pursue. We also engaged with OPERA America (the national opera service organization) to provide a larger regional perspective.

We presented our research findings and recommendations to the Board's Strategic Planning Committee and executive staff over the course of the 18/19 season. Our thinking and strategies reflect input from the strategic planning committee, as well as Portland Opera staff and other local and national experts.

This plan includes three interrelated strategies, starting with the concepts that will have the fastest impact. Metropolitan Group believes that if Portland Opera just implemented strategies one and three, Portland Opera could extend its financial viability by a number of years. However, the ceiling to truly grow and serve the community will be limited, and the ability to create a sustainable operating model and the size and diversity of a support-base needed is less likely without strategy two. Strategy two includes larger longer-term strategies (beyond the five-year duration of this plan), that could catapult Portland Opera into a new level of community connection and leadership. Patience, flexibility, collaboration, and shared determinations will be vital to achieving the fullest potential of this plan.

–Metropolitan Group

SUMMARY

Portland Opera | Strategic Plan

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**PORTLAND
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Strategy One: Immediate Impact – Patron Experience

Our first category contains relatively short-term actions that Portland Opera can take to align more closely with patron and community feedback, and impact revenue.

Specific actions to take in this strategy:

- Move back to a fall–spring primary schedule, starting with the 20/21 season, in response to overwhelming community, audience, and patron feedback; collaborate with chorus and orchestra members to determine how this will work.
- Adopt a venue mix that reflects the desire for both grand and intimate experiences while improving the annual performance gross margin, and continue to present repertoire that balances classic and contemporary work.
- Invest in technology and systems in order to build clearer paths for ticketing and donation operations and company functionality.

Strategy Two: Positioning Portland Opera for the Future

The next strategy in this plan is part of a vision down payment for the future.

The first set of actions is around amplifying the Portland in Portland Opera:

- Transform and define an artistic point of view that is a reflection of community, through production and ancillary programming choices that celebrate classic and contemporary works.
- Curate collaborations or commissions that harness the creativity and spirit that is unique to this place.
- Explore different opera experiences that may serve new and existing audiences in new ways, while continuing to honor the traditional repertoire that our art form is built upon.

The second big strategy in this section is exploring a longer term vision and feasibility to redevelop the Central Eastside waterfront property that Portland Opera owns, through opportunities that could mutually benefit Portland Opera, other arts organizations, and the entire community.

Strategy Three: Fundamental Progress

The final set of strategies are closely linked to the success of the first two strategies, and strengthen the organization by building on our existing efforts to connect with the community and deepening these relationships.

Specific steps in this category include:

- Strengthen connection to the community. This might mean:
 - Developing new methods of volunteerism, and sharing a more active role in support of other community organizations and causes.
 - Bringing opera experiences into unexpected places to meet people where they are, and continuing to break down barriers to experiencing the beauty and breadth of the art of opera—and its power to inspire our imaginations and change our lives.
 - Exploring enhanced civic, social, and artistic practices.
- Update Portland Opera’s mission, vision, values and brand identity to better reflect the work of the entire organization.
- Activate an organizational commitment to equity, diversity & inclusion—in order to create the opera, and the Portland Opera, of the future.

Metropolitan Group believes that these three interrelated strategies will lead Portland Opera down a path of growth, service to the community, national prominence, and enhanced financial stability. The elements of each strategy will require time, effort, collaboration, and investment to evaluate and pursue, and the details of the strategies should be modified over time as progress towards their goals is measured. Growth will require ongoing attention, but Metropolitan Group believes if these strategies are followed, Portland Opera will be a major artistic leader for the community for many years to come.

The leadership team of Portland Opera is so grateful to the board members, staff members, artists, musicians, community members, patrons, movers and shakers, and everyone who shared feedback about where we've been as an organization, and where we're headed. Our plan is to build upon the successes that we've already created together, while adjusting course to align with patron and stakeholder feedback. We are inspired by the exciting thinking and ideas that forged this plan. We look forward to creating a more sustainable financial path forward so that we can continue to serve the community for decades to come.

Portland Opera's commitment while we embark on this work is simple: we will continue to listen to the community and artistic voices that remain at the heart of our future. We are a company that belongs to this amazing community, and we intend to grow.

For more information, please contact
press@portlandopera.org.

CONCLUSION

Portland Opera | Strategic Plan
FY 2020–2024

**PORTLAND
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