

ANNUAL REPORT > 2023/24 SEASON

A Letter from the General Director

David Bennett, General Director, San Diego Opera

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the 2023/24 season, I'm struck by the profound resilience, creativity, and joy that defined our return to a full slate of performances and community programming. This was a season of reconnection: of voices raised in song, of stories that moved us, and of audiences old and new discovering the magic of opera together.

We opened our season with a thrilling concert that united GRAMMY®-winning artists Latonia Moore and J'Nai Bridges in a night of transcendent music-making. From there, we honored tradition and celebrated cultural heritage with *El Milagro del Recuerdo*, revisited the timeless power of Mozart with a provocative rendition of *Don Giovanni*, and brought Puccini's tragic masterpiece *Madama Butterfly* to life with heartbreaking beauty. Our season concluded with a stunning concert by Joshua Guerrero and Andrea Carroll that reminded us just how powerfully opera can connect people through shared emotion.

But opera is more than what happens on our stage—it's about who we serve and how we serve them. Through programs like Student Night at the Opera, Words & Music, and Equal Voices, our free community concert series, we reached thousands across San Diego County, many of whom experienced opera for the very first time. This is central to our mission: to make opera accessible, inclusive, and relevant to all.

More than 40% of our audiences this season were first-time ticket buyers. That is not just a statistic; it's a signal that opera, when nurtured and shared thoughtfully, remains a vital and growing force in our cultural landscape.

This season would not have been possible without the dedication of our artists, staff, board, volunteers, and generous supporters. To all of you who stood with us, thank you. Your belief in the power of opera fuels everything we do.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building a future for opera that reflects the full spectrum of human experience. One that uplifts diverse voices, embraces innovation, and creates unforgettable moments of connection.

With gratitude and anticipation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Bennett".

David Bennett

2023/24 PRODUCTIONS



GRAMMY® Greats Unite: Latonia Moore and J'Nai Bridges in Concert with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra

October 25, 2023

Latonia Moore, soprano | J'Nai Bridges, mezzo-soprano
Bruce Stasyna, conductor

"Bridges' performance brought a tear to my eye... Moore gave us her singing punctuated with the muffled sobs of a grieving and devastated mother." — *San Diego Reader*



El Milagro del Recuerdo (The Miracle of Remembering)

December 1 and 3, 2023

Composer: Javier Martinez

Librettist: Leonard Foglia

Renata: Sishel Claverie | Laurentino: Federico de Michelis | La Mujer: Guadalupe Paz | Aba: Héctor Vásquez

San Diego Symphony Orchestra

"The production was a heartfelt celebration of family and tradition, resonating deeply with audiences." — *OperaWire*

"A moving narrative that beautifully captures the essence of cultural heritage and familial bonds." — *San Diego Union-Tribune*



Don Giovanni

February 2 and 4, 2024

Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Librettist: Lorenzo Da Ponte

Don Giovanni: Germán Enrique Alcántara | Donna Anna: Tasha Koontz | Donna Elvira: Megan Moore | Leporello: Ethan Vincent

San Diego Symphony Orchestra

"The most impressive singer was tenor Alex McKissick. His tone was even from top to bottom... his two arias were spectacular testaments to his vocal abilities." — *San Diego Reader*



Madama Butterfly

April 26 and 28, 2024

Composer: Giacomo Puccini

Librettists: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Cio-Cio-San: Corinne Winters | Lt. Pinkerton: Adam Smith | Sharpless: Kidon Choi

San Diego Symphony Orchestra

“Corinne Winters’ convincing portrayal of the naïve 15-year-old Cio-Cio-San brought bravas and enthusiastic applause at curtain call.” — *BroadwayWorld*



Joshua Guerrero and Andrea Carroll in Concert

June 8, 2024

Joshua Guerrero, tenor | Andrea Carroll, soprano | Stephen Hopkins, pianist

“Their chemistry on stage was palpable, delivering a memorable evening of operatic excellence.” — *San Diego Arts Review*

“A captivating performance that showcased the duo's remarkable vocal prowess and emotive expression.” — *San Diego Union-Tribune*

Every voice tells a story.

MISSION

The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community partnerships and the transformative and expressive power of the human voice.

VISION

San Diego Opera will be recognized globally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability, promoting diversity on stage, in our repertoire, and in our staff and leadership, with a commitment to world-class and emerging talent and innovative use of technology.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the heart of our mission lies a deep commitment to making opera accessible, inclusive, and resonant for all members of our community. Through multilingual performances, free public concerts, and immersive audience experiences, our community engagement initiatives are breaking down barriers and creating lasting connections—ensuring that opera is not just seen, but truly felt across San Diego. Some of these initiatives include:

- Performance programs in English and Spanish
- English and Spanish supertitles projected above the main stage
- “Equal Voices” Free Community Concert Series performed in five San Diego libraries
- Pre-opera talks and post-opera talk-backs with the cast
- Audio describers and accessibility measures to ensure inclusivity for all

EDUCATION PROGRAMS: OPERA FOR ALL

San Diego Opera served more than 6,000 young people in San Diego County this season.

Student Night at the Opera

Thousands of students experienced the magic of live opera through Student Night at the Opera, which offers free access to mainstage performances. These evenings are tailored to be welcoming, age-appropriate introductions to the world of opera.

We provided tickets to approximately 6,000 students in San Diego County. Each of the more than 125 participating groups received comprehensive study guides tailored to students’ grade levels and aligned with school curriculum that provided pre-show introductions to the opera’s story, music, and cultural context.

Student Night at the Opera continues to be one of San Diego Opera’s most far-reaching and impactful access programs, inspiring curiosity and creativity in young people who may be experiencing the performing arts for the first time.



Words & Music: Teaching Artists in Residency

This year, our flagship program *Words & Music* reached more than 250 students across San Diego County. Through a powerful combination of writing, music composition, and performance, students from diverse backgrounds found and shared their voices.

- Over 1,000 hours of instruction in music, theater, and creative writing
- Five culminating showcases where students performed original plays, music, and spoken word for peers, families, and the community
- Employed ten teaching artists

Students not only learned artistic skills, but also practiced collaboration, confidence, and self-expression, building essential tools for academic and personal success.



Discovering Voices: Careers in the Arts

Discovering Voices supported alumni of the *Words & Music* program (ages 16–24) as they explored potential career paths in the arts. Participants engaged in creative workshops, met with professionals working in diverse arts fields, and collaborated to produce original interdisciplinary performances that reflect their personal stories and artistic visions.

This program bridged the gap between arts education and professional development, building leadership, storytelling, and critical thinking skills in emerging artists and arts professionals.

KEY EDUCATION PARTNERS

La Maestra Foundation Center for Youth Advancement | Lincoln High School | Logan Memorial Education Campus | City Heights Performing Arts Annex

TESTIMONIALS FROM TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATION PARTNERS

“For many of my students, [Student Night at the Opera] is the only opportunity they will have to attend the opera. The vast majority of my classroom not only lacks the means to transport themselves to the San Diego Opera, but they also live below the poverty line. This becomes their first exposure to the arts of any kind and opens themselves up to just how impactful the Opera can be.”

“Working with the students through *Words & Music* and *Discovering Voices* was a revelation about how much art can touch people's hearts and minds. Not only are we giving the students the tools to appreciate the beauty of music, theater, opera and literature, but we are helping them explore new talents inside of them, and giving them tools to interact with society around them in a new way.”

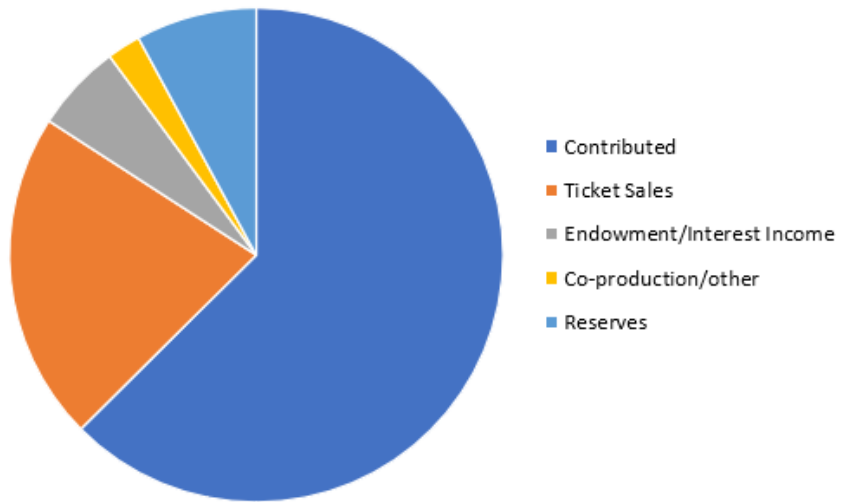
“Because of the *Words & Music* program, this theater class ... became a vibrant context for developing awareness, confidence, and trust. Students moved from a fear of self-expression to a confidence and trust that their storytelling voices would be well-received. They became aware of the relational dimension of creativity and developed a clearer image of who they are and who they have the potential to become.”

“Our regular individualized attention to students’ creative, storytelling voices developed in each of them a sense of belonging to the creative world of opera. It’s hard to imagine this kind of attention in another space in the high school curriculum that might create such a sense of belonging.”

2023-2024 OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENSES¹

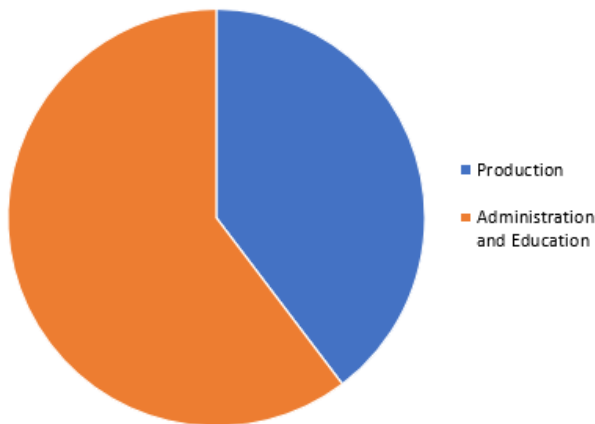
TOTAL REVENUE \$8,232,772

\$5,303,509 Contributed Revenue
 \$1,826,158 Ticket Revenue
 \$486,813 Endowment and Interest Income
 \$186,734 Co-Production and other Income
 \$671,552 Reserves



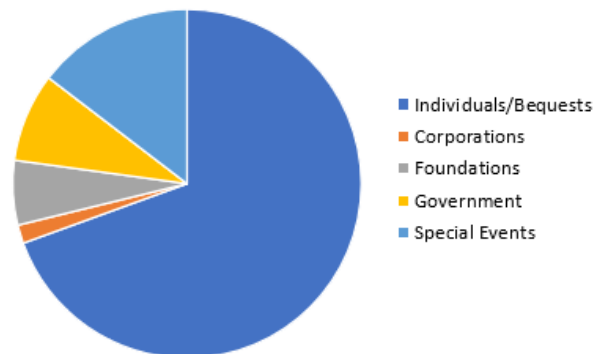
TOTAL EXPENSES \$8,232,772

\$3,266,476 Production
 \$4,966,296 Administration and Education



PHILANTHROPY RAISED \$5,303,509

\$3,683,701 from Individuals and Bequests
 \$91,000 from Corporations
 \$317,218 from Foundations
 \$436,742 from Government
 \$774,847 Special Events



ATTENDANCE: 21,680 – Including 40% first-time ticket buyers
TICKET SALES: \$1,826,158

¹ These totals include pledge payments that fall outside the date range used to compile our audited financials.