

ANNUAL REPORT > 2024/25 SEASON



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.

A Letter from David Bennett

Joann Clark General Director and CEO, San Diego Opera

As we reflect on the 2024–2025 season, I am filled with deep gratitude and pride in all that San Diego Opera has accomplished. This landmark 60th anniversary season was a celebration of our rich history and a bold step forward into our future, marked by thrilling productions, meaningful community engagement, and innovative storytelling.

Our mainstage season opened with Puccini's *La bohème*, followed by Richard Strauss's *Salome*, and concluded with Verdi's *La traviata*—three powerful works brought to life by extraordinary casts and creative teams, to rave reviews. A consistent artistic presence throughout the season was our Principal Conductor, Yves Abel, who led *Salome* and *La traviata* with passion and precision. We're thrilled to share that Maestro Abel has signed a new contract, extending his commitment with San Diego Opera through 2032, ensuring continued musical excellence and artistic leadership for seasons to come.

Beyond our productions, our commitment to community engagement remained steadfast. Our **Learning and Engagement Programs** continued to flourish. **Words & Music** evolved into both 12-week in-school artist residencies and two-week mini residencies embedded in choir and music classrooms, fostering creativity and appreciation for opera among students. Through **Student Night at the Opera**, thousands of students from across San Diego County were invited to attend final dress rehearsals free of charge, giving them a firsthand look at professional opera performance and production.

We also engaged adult learners through **Opera Uncorked**, a series of relaxed wine-and-cheese gatherings offering behind-the-scenes insights into the season's operas. Our **Free Community Concert Series** brought live performances into neighborhoods across the region, ensuring that opera was accessible to all. And our **pre-opera lectures and post-performance talkbacks** deepened understanding and connection for audiences of every background.

This season's achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, patrons, artists, staff, volunteers, board members, and audiences.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to presenting opera that resonates with contemporary audiences while honoring the traditions that define this extraordinary art form.

With gratitude and anticipation,

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

David Bennett

2024/25 PRODUCTIONS



La bohème

November 1-3, 2024

Composer: Giacomo Puccini | Librettists: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
 Rodolfo: Joshua Blue | Mimì: Kathleen O'Mara/Sarah Tucker
 Rodolfo: César Delgado | Marcello: Leroy Davis
 Musetta: Latonia Moore
 Conductor: Lidia Yankovskaya | Director: Keturah Stickann
 San Diego Symphony Orchestra

"Yankovskaya's precise and energetic conducting made this retelling of La bohème come alive" – *Schmopera*



Salome

March 21-23, 2025

Composer: Richard Strauss | Librettist: Hedwig Lachmann
 Salome: Marcy Stonikas/Kirsten Chambers | Jochanaan: Kyle Albertson |
 Herod Antipas: Dennis Petersen | Herodias: Nina Warren
 Conductor: Yves Abel | Director: Jose Maria Condemi
 San Diego Symphony Orchestra

"Salome...showed a company fully capable of recruiting exceptional operatic talent and mounting an intriguingly conceived and well-executed interpretation to a virtually sold-out hall." – *Classical Voice North America*



La traviata

April 25-27, 2025

Composer: Giuseppe Verdi | Librettist: Francesco Maria Piave
 Violetta: Andriana Chuchman | Alfredo: Zach Borichevsky
 Geronte: Giorgio Hunter Enoch
 Conductor: Yves Abel | Director/Choreographer: Kyle Lang
 Set and Projection Designer: Tim Wallace
 San Diego Symphony Orchestra

"San Diego Opera's 'La Traviata' was a triumphant visual and musical feast" – *Times of San Diego*



Making Merry: A Choral Holiday Celebration

December 7, 2024

Featuring the San Diego Opera Chorus

Alisa Jordheim, Soprano | Raul Prieto Ramirez, Organist | Bruce Stasyna,
 Music Director and Pianist

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT: OPERA FOR ALL

At San Diego Opera, learning and engagement are central to our mission of making opera accessible, inclusive, and meaningful for all. Through school-based residencies, public programming, multilingual performances, and community partnerships, we connect people of all ages and backgrounds to the transformative power of opera.

Community Engagement Highlights

Throughout the 2024–2025 season, our community engagement efforts continued to bring opera beyond the stage and into neighborhoods across San Diego. These initiatives help reduce barriers to participation, foster cultural equity, and build lasting relationships throughout our region. Highlights included:

- **Performance programs in English and Spanish**, reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of our city
- **English and Spanish supertitles** for all mainstage performances
- **Opera Uncorked**, a fun, casual series of events exploring everything you need to know about the operas in our season—with wine and cheese!
- A **Free Community Concert Series**, performed at San Diego Public Libraries and senior living facilities across the county
- **Pre- and post-performance talks**, offering deeper insight into each production
- A **Masterclass with Maestro Yves Abel**, a rare behind-the-scenes look into the process that shapes performances on stage
- **Accessibility services**, including audio description and accommodations for patrons with disabilities

These experiences are designed not only to entertain, but to welcome—inviting all of San Diego to participate in and shape our story.

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 the final dress rehearsals of performances. These evenings are tailored to be welcoming, age-appropriate introductions to the world of opera.

We provided tickets to over 4,000 students in San Diego County. Each of the more than 100 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.





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Words & Music: Teaching Artists in Residence

Words & Music empowers students in grades 5–12 to become the authors, composers, and performers of their own original operas. The program is designed to cultivate creative expression, build agency, and uplift student voices, particularly those students with limited access to arts education.

This year, San Diego Opera delivered Words & Music in two formats:

- **Three 12-week Full Residencies** where students engaged deeply in the creative process—from team-building and brainstorming to writing librettos, composing music, rehearsing, creating costumes and sets, and performing their own original works.
- **Three two-week Mini-Residencies** which served as an accessible introduction to opera and songwriting for middle and high school music and choir students. Participants collaborated to write, compose, and perform a song inspired by personal or collective experiences.

Across both formats, students explored songwriting, scriptwriting, acting, singing, and design. More than **150 instructional hours** were delivered by a team of **twelve professional teaching artists**, culminating in showcases that reflected the diversity, resilience, and creativity of our region’s youth.

Culturally responsive and emotionally resonant, Words & Music supports social-emotional learning and self-expression, giving students the tools to tell their stories, build community, and step into the spotlight with confidence and pride.

Discovering Voices: Careers Paths in the Arts

Discovering Voices is a workforce development initiative for alumni of the **Words & Music** program who are exploring careers in the arts. Participants receive **paid, hands-on experience**, mentorship from professional artists and staff, and behind-the-scenes exposure to the workings of a professional arts organization.

In August 2024, nine alumni collaborated with professional Teaching Artists to create and perform **DREAMS!**, a new mini-opera based on their personal stories. This project provided students with the opportunity to perform alongside professional opera singers, and helped them build confidence, stage presence, and collaborative skills.

Discovering Voices not only builds skills and confidence but creates pathways for young artists to imagine—and pursue—their futures in the creative industries.

TESTIMONIALS FROM TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATION PARTNERS

“As teacher at a Title I school, *Student Night* holds special importance to me because it’s a rare and valuable chance for my students to experience the arts in a way they might not otherwise have access to. Many of my students come from families that can’t afford to attend performances at places like the opera or even the movie theater. These experiences are more than just entertainment—they’re a powerful way to expand their understanding of the world, help them see different perspectives, and even ignite new interests and passions.” –A fourth/fifth grade teacher who brings her students to *Student Night at the Opera*.

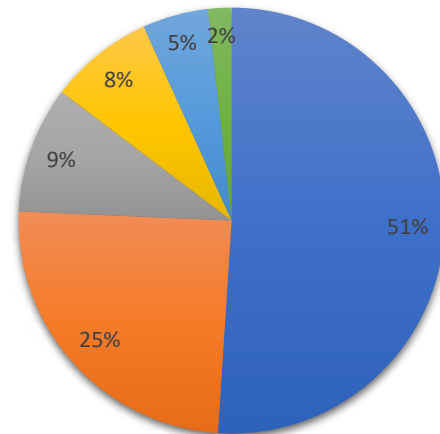
“Personally, my first experience with the opera was through *Student Night* over 20 years ago. As a result, I’ve attended almost every season of the opera since then, and I’ve gained an appreciation for not only the opera, but for other performance arts and theater. I think it’s important to pass on the appreciation of the arts to the future generations.” –A current teacher and former student attendee of *Student Night at the Opera*.

“I love how I was able to make up my own story and spread my creativity. I used to not like sharing ideas, now I love sharing and showing off my creativity with everyone.” –A fifth grade *Words & Music* student.

2024/25 OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENSES

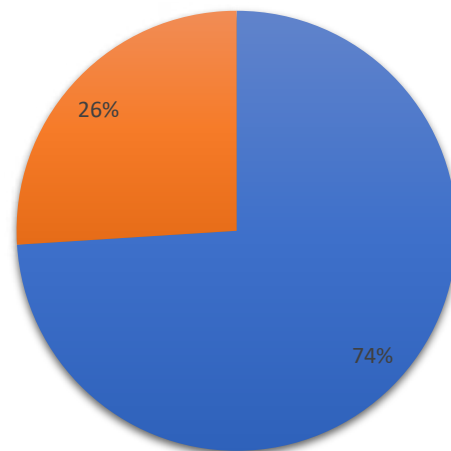
TOTAL REVENUE: \$8,321,585

- \$4,246,534 Contributed Revenue*
- \$2,051,901 Ticket Revenue
- \$800,994 Special Events
- \$658,396 Scenic Studio Revenue
- \$416,315 Government Grants
- \$147,445 Co-Production and Other Revenue



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$9,821,526

- \$7,072,493 Productions & Programs
- \$2,554,322 Administration and Supporting Services



*Includes individual contributions, bequests and estate gifts, corporate contributions, and private foundation grants.



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2024/25 SALES AND AUDIENCE GROWTH

ATTENDANCE: 18,415
TICKET SALES: \$2,051,901

During the 2024-25 season, San Diego Opera sold over 15,000 performance tickets across our productions. **Paid admissions increased by 8%** over the previous year, signaling renewed enthusiasm for live opera and the continued strength of our artistic offerings.

Subscription growth was particularly encouraging. **Season subscriptions rose by 37%**, demonstrating deepening loyalty among our core audience. Notably, 346 households became brand-new subscribers—an extraordinary **196% increase in new subscribers** compared to the previous year. This surge reflects both expanded community awareness and the success of our efforts to cultivate lasting relationships with first-time attendees.

In total, 1,361 individuals purchased tickets who had never attended the opera before. Of those first-time buyers, 6% have already committed to season tickets for next year—an early and promising indicator that new audiences are not only discovering opera but choosing to make it a recurring part of their lives.

Our reach extended well beyond downtown San Diego. We welcomed guests from across **San Diego County, 26 additional California counties, 35 other states and the District of Columbia, and six foreign countries**. This broad geographic draw underscores San Diego Opera's growing reputation as a cultural destination and highlights its role in contributing to the region's vibrancy and tourism economy.