



Annual Report

2019-20 Season

Our mission is to produce high-quality operatic entertainment and educational programs that engage Central Florida audiences.

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Executive & Artistic Director Report

Highlights

Opera Orlando's Opera on the Main Stage series at Dr. Phillips Center featured a sold-out run of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, featuring musicians from the Orlando Philharmonic. The Orlando Sentinel praised the production as "a winner. Well sung and delightfully staged with comic flair... this "Figaro" fizzes with fun." Opera Orlando also presented the Orlando premiere of *All is Calm*, with free performances for veterans, lauded as a "profoundly heart-stirring show" by the Orlando Sentinel.

Opera Orlando continued its Opera on the Town series with three other original productions: a remount of *6 of VIII*, which won critic's choice for Best Musical at the Orlando Fringe Festival in 2019, presented at the historic Casa Feliz mansion in Winter Park; a touring production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with free performances for kids; and a site-specific production of Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West* presented at the Cheyenne Saloon on Church Street.

The Opera also provided an in-school program for Orange County at local high schools and middle schools, bringing an opera preview into the schools, inviting those students to an open dress rehearsal, and then returning for a masterclass with the students. After the closure of schools due to CoVid-19, Opera Orlando transitioned these masterclasses to an online platform which enabled the company to reach multiple schools at once and thus reach a larger number of students overall.

Since the organization's inception in January 2016, the company has experienced consistently increased revenue and ended its 2019-20 fiscal year with just over \$1,027,000 in income and approximately \$890,000 in expenses. The company has successfully quadrupled its annual budget in a three-year period while remaining fiscally solvent and in the black and increasing cash reserves in preparation for the move to Steinmetz Hall in the 2020-21 season.

Looking Ahead

Our company goals for the 2020-21 season and beyond have a threefold focus as follows:

- 1) Engage, expand, and diversify audiences with captivating, original productions.
- 2) Maintain fiscal stability and steady growth.
- 3) Increase contributed income to invest in larger productions presented in Steinmetz Hall.

Personal Note

I am proud to lead Opera Orlando as we head into our fifth full season and continue the 400-year legacy of the operatic art form. I am constantly inspired by the passionate commitment of our performers, designers, and production team members, both local and national. I am ever grateful for the dedication of our board of directors, the dedicated work of our staff and volunteers, and the unwavering support of our community, manifested by our growing patron and donor base.

During the 2019-20 season, Opera Orlando reached a total audience of more than 20,000 through our productions, education programs, and ancillary events. Prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Opera Orlando mounted a total of five productions, including a sold-out run of *The Marriage of Figaro* at Dr. Phillips Center, the Orlando Premiere of *All is Calm*, and Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West* at the Cheyenne Saloon. Opera Orlando had to cancel three productions because of COVID-19 and transitioned its Youth Company and in-school program to an online platform while producing a weekly livestream series, entitled "The High Note," to stay in touch with our audience.

Opera Orlando's spirit of collaboration, innovation, and community is truly what sets it apart. We seek to continue to collaborate dynamically throughout the region with other arts groups, performers, artists, and musicians. In addition, we seek to maintain and enhance our ongoing artistic partnerships with the Orlando Philharmonic and the Orlando Ballet as we all prepare for the advent of Steinmetz Hall in the 2020-21 season.

To help prepare for the future, Opera Orlando developed a five-year strategic plan at the end of the 2016-17 season with the assistance of Michael Kaiser. As the 2019-20 season came to a close, Opera Orlando surpassed the financial projections of our strategic plan by 46% and is poised to maintain its enhanced programming and company growth in the upcoming 2020-21 season. As an indicator of our growth, we recently announced that Grant Preisser will be our artistic director for the 2020-21 season and beyond. I am beyond thrilled to have Grant taking on this larger role with the company as he has been with us from the start, and this will provide a more sustainable model for the future of the organization.

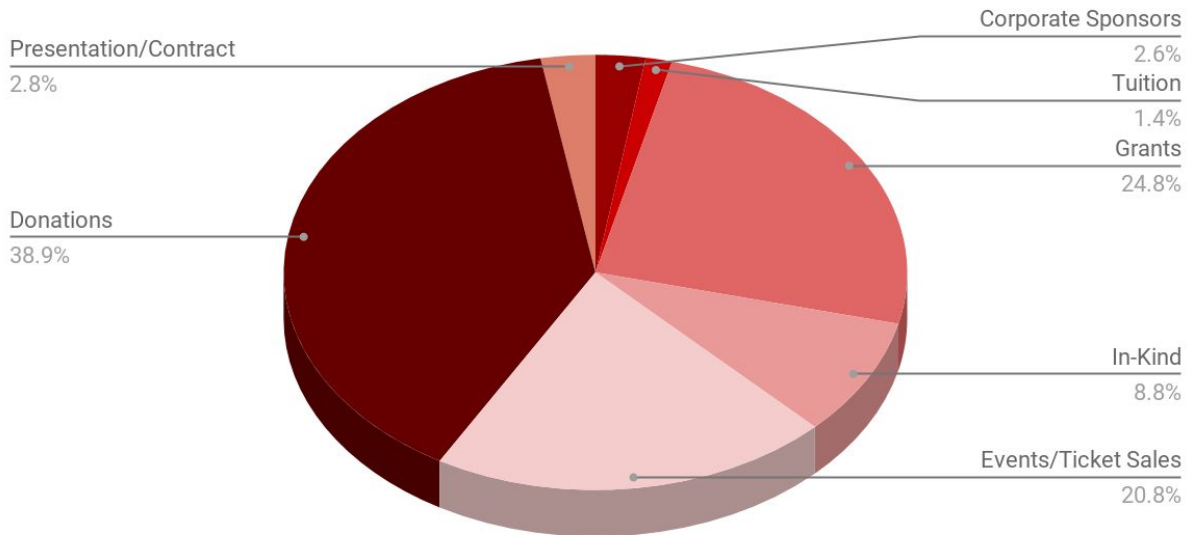
I thank the Central Florida community for its support of Opera Orlando, enabling us to bring world-class talent to Orlando while also showcasing and developing local talent and allowing us to enrich our community with the culture, beauty, and inspiration of the culmination of all art forms. See you at the opera!

Fiscal Report

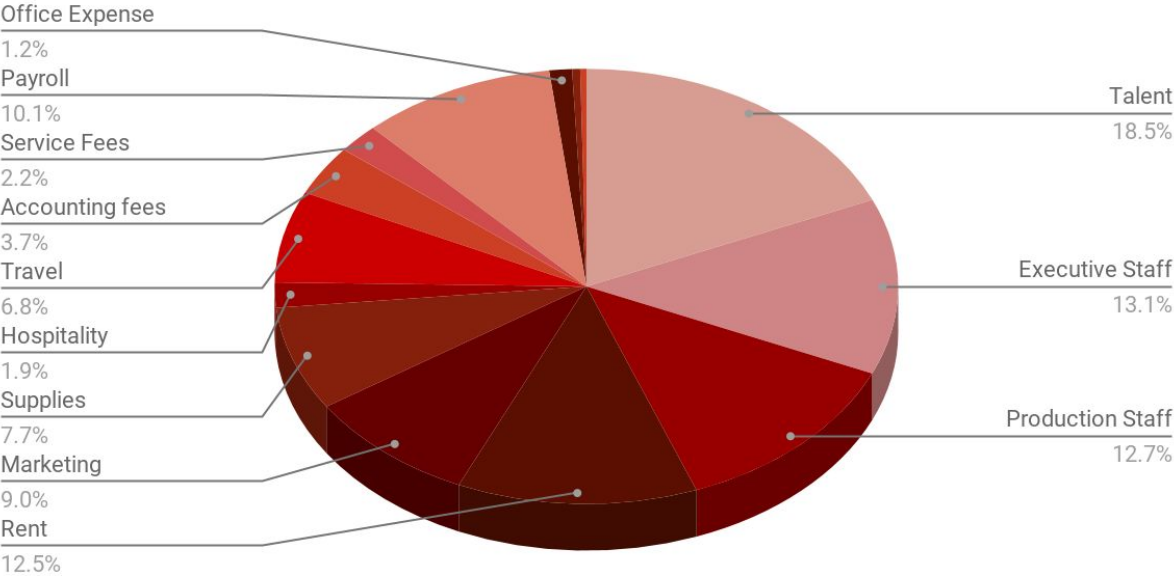
Major Takeaways

Opera Orlando's annual budget has grown yet again, from \$1,007,000 at the end of fiscal year 2018-19 to \$1,027,753 at the end of 2019-20. Opera Orlando ended the 2019-20 fiscal year in the black, with \$250,246 in net assets.

Operating Revenue and Support



Operating Expenses



Marketing Report

Our Team

- Kristin Noble (board of directors marketing chair),
- Spark Social - Kamilah Smith & Francesca Agostino (marketing managers) - *contract ended on April 1, 2020*
- Meghan Hone (social media manager)
- Grant Preisser (creative director)
- Gabriel Preisser (executive & artistic director)
- Lizette Valarino (board of directors, Hispanic liaison)

Year in Review

Total Marketing Budget: 102,450.00
Total Marketing Actual: 76,509.77

Opera Orlando has established itself in the community as the most comprehensive arts organization centered around opera within Orlando and its metro area. The 2019-20 marketing efforts reinforced and celebrated this position while focusing on expanding the Opera Orlando audience across the metro area, as well as targeting the Latinx community in particular.

Marketing spanned print advertising, direct mail marketing, distribution of collateral material, digital advertising, social media, radio advertising, and press and editorial coverage. Success metrics for the season included meeting and/or exceeding 80% of ticket sales for each production, increasing season ticket package sales by 50%, developing cross-promotional partnerships to engage target audiences for specific productions, and growing audience engagement across social media platforms by 50%. Ticket sales were strong throughout the season, exceeding the goal of 80% sales for most productions. This included the added production of *6 of VIII: The 6 Wives of Henry VIII*, the added performances of *All is Calm*, and the unique site-specific production of *The Girl of the Golden West*. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* fell short of expectations financially. However, it met the goal of outreach to the community with performances in Tarpon Springs, Clermont, and New Smyrna Beach. The increased sales from *All is Calm* compensated for the under-performance of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Ticket sales were further supported by a robust season of subscriptions. Opera "On the Mainstage" season ticket packages increased by almost 100%, from 230 packages in 2018-19 to 409 packages in 2019-20. This is a promising trend looking forward to 2020-21, and the move into the much larger Steinmetz Hall, when the Opera will be held accountable for 800 subscriptions each season by Dr. Phillips Center.

Cross-promotional partnerships continued to be a focus during the 2019-20 season, continuing relationships with Casa Feliz for the special presentation of *6 of VIII: The 6 Wives of Henry VIII*, featuring Phantasmagoria in *The Girl of the Golden West*, performing *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at St. John Lutheran Church, performing in Immerse hosted by Creative City Project, and featuring the Youth Company in Maker Faire. *All is Calm* provided a unique cross-promotional opportunity for outreach to the Orlando veteran community. Complimentary performances were added specifically for veterans identified through Veterans Affairs, and the Opera partnered with UCF Restores in their research project about the benefits of music for those dealing with PTSD. The Latinx community has been a consistent focus this past season, with the addition of Lizette Valarino, a stalwart of the Latinx community and avid arts supporter, and Luis Mercado, anchor at Univision, to the board. All press releases were translated into Spanish and gained Opera Orlando better coverage by the Spanish-speaking media. This was a big lead-up to *The Daughter of the Regiment*, with the opportunity to feature both Latinx leads, Carlos Enrique Santelli as Tonio and Camille Ortiz as Marie. Unfortunately, the production had to be cancelled, but not before the Opera had the chance to perform for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Opera has since become a member of the chamber and has increased its focus on diversity and inclusion with the launch of #RepresentationMatters, a monthly feature that provides a platform for minorities and marginalized communities to talk about their experience in the opera world. These

conversations allow for reflection and growth, not only for Opera Orlando as a company, but for the community as a whole.

Social media and digital advertising continue to prove to be the most successful means of promoting productions, events, and other offerings throughout Orlando and its metro area. Although the goal of increasing engagement by 50% was not met, considerable growth across Facebook and Instagram, in particular, has given the company an expanding digital footprint, not only locally, but nationally. In addition to increasing its followers across all social media platforms, Opera Orlando continued to increase the diversity and quality of its postings, producing more video and interactive content throughout the season. With the cancellation of productions and the shift to a more online presence, livestreams and digital presentations have been increased. This content will remain an important component to the marketing strategy even in the transition back to in-person performances. *The High Note* is a new monthly online series that will continue through 2020-21, as well as the #RepresentationMatters campaign. Additionally, the Opera's YouTube channel has been greatly enhanced with content from across the Company's five seasons. The YouTube channel and building Opera Orlando's digital content will continue to be a focus throughout the 2020-21 season. With the solid programming and platforms of Facebook and Instagram working for the Company, the focus for 2020-21 will be on engaging more of a Twitter presence.

FACEBOOK:	Followers - 7/1/2019: 5,298	Followers - 7/1/2020: 6,184
	Video Posts Average Reach: 2,296	Average Engagement: 355
	Photo Posts Average Reach: 1,147	Average Engagement: 161
	Link Posts Average Reach: 709	Average Engagement: 78
INSTAGRAM:	Followers - 7/1/2019: 1,575	Followers - 7/1/2020: 1,994
TWITTER:	Followers - 7/1/2019: 417	Followers - 7/1/2020: 455
YOUTUBE:	Subscribers - 7/1/2019: XXX	Subscribers - 7/1/2020: 143

The structure and focus given to the 2019-20 season have provided a great framework which will be built upon in the 2020-21 season. The Opera Orlando website continues to be refined and tailored to the Company's particular audience; a new social media coordinator with a depth of knowledge in social media specific to performing arts organizations has been hired; and stronger relationships and partnerships have been cultivated across Orlando. Marketing strategies and approaches have been tried and tested, allowing the Company to meet and exceed its marketing and sales goals, anticipating the move into larger venues and the production of more elaborate shows.

Development Report

Our Team

Chevalier Lovett (board of directors, development chair)

Alecia Dupont (board, individual giving sub-committee)
Rita Wilkes (emeritus board, production chair, planned giving chair)
Gabriel Preisser (executive director/artistic director)
John Wettach (board, president)
Sherry Bremer (board, VP, nominating chair)
Deede Sharpe (board, ambassador co-chair)
John Parker (board, ambassador co-chair)
Kara Robertson (grants sub-committee)
Nicole Leacock (grants sub-committee)
Nadia Greenidge (grants sub-committee)
Beatriz Ramirez (managing director)
Gayle Wirtz (board, gala committee chair)
Lizette Valarino (board, development committee)
Kristen Noble (board, Forte Society coordinator)

Year in Review

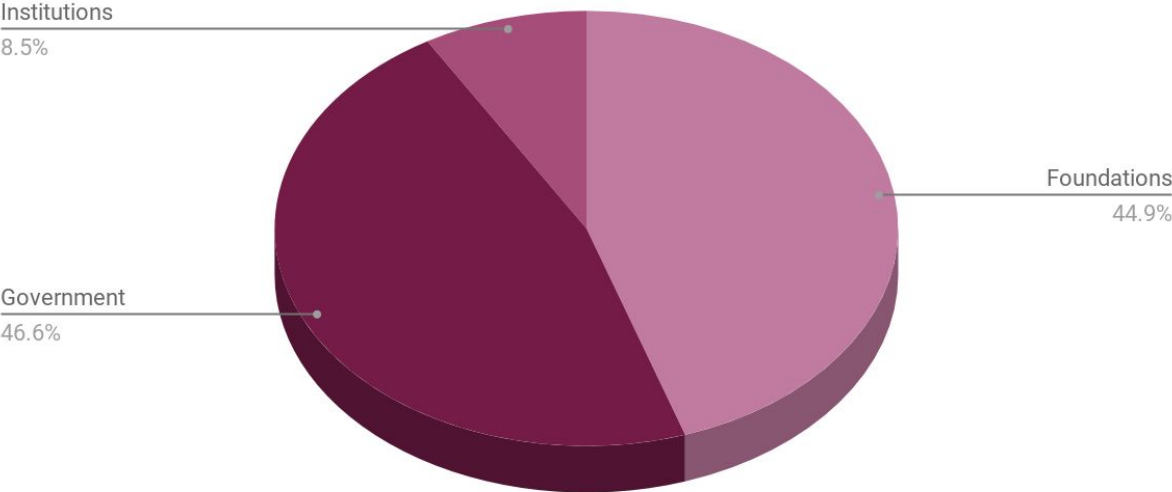
Opera Orlando was experiencing its best fundraising year to date, with substantial increases in contributed income and grants. The COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately meant the cancellation of the 2020 Gala, but despite that, the company was able to acquire Government Payroll Protection Funds and Disaster Relief funds in addition to help from individual donors to keep the company in a strong financial position. Key indicators of success include:

- 1) Fall board of directors matching challenge
- 2) Increase in funding from Orange County via the Tourism Grant and the Venue Subsidy Grant
- 3) Maintaining artist sponsorships
- 4) New grant and foundation acquisitions

Grants for 2019-20 Season

Projected Income: \$155,000.00
Actual Income: \$254,808.98
Difference: +\$99,808.98

Grant Income

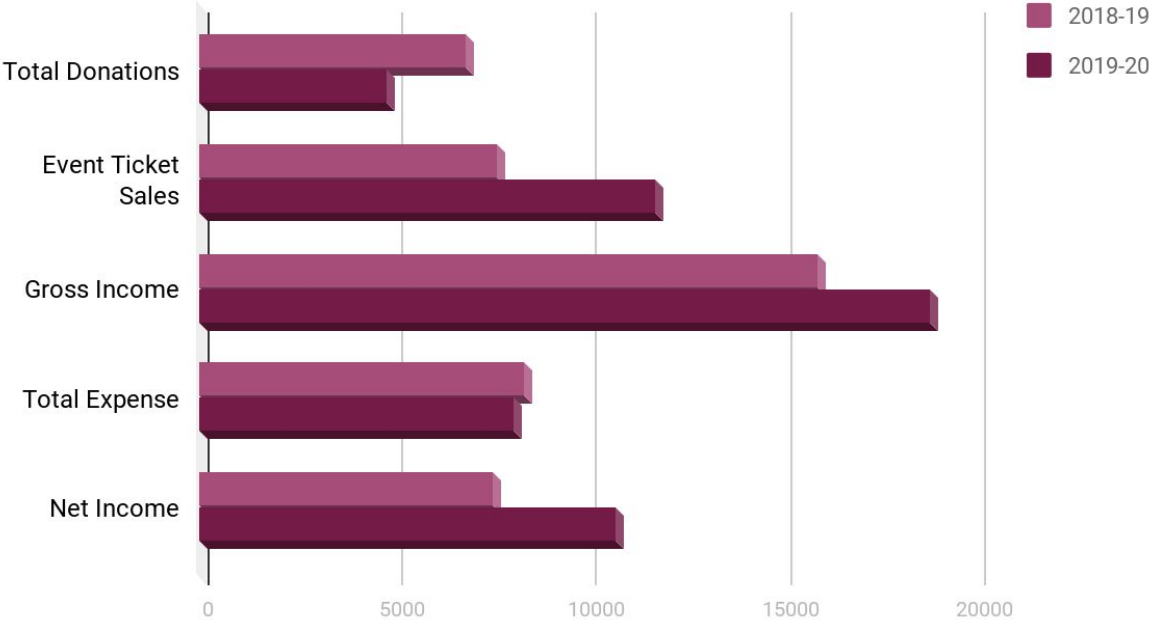


ANNUAL GALA - MAY 16, 2020 - CANCELLED DUE TO COVID19

Total Expense:	\$1,006.53
Budgeted Expense	\$58,500.00
Gross income:	\$40,639.00
Budgeted Gross:	\$180,000.00
Net income:	\$39,632.47
Budgeted Net	\$121,500.00

Opera on Park	
Expenses:	\$8,095.96
Gross income:	\$18,817.78
Net income:	\$10,721.82
Audience attendance:	386

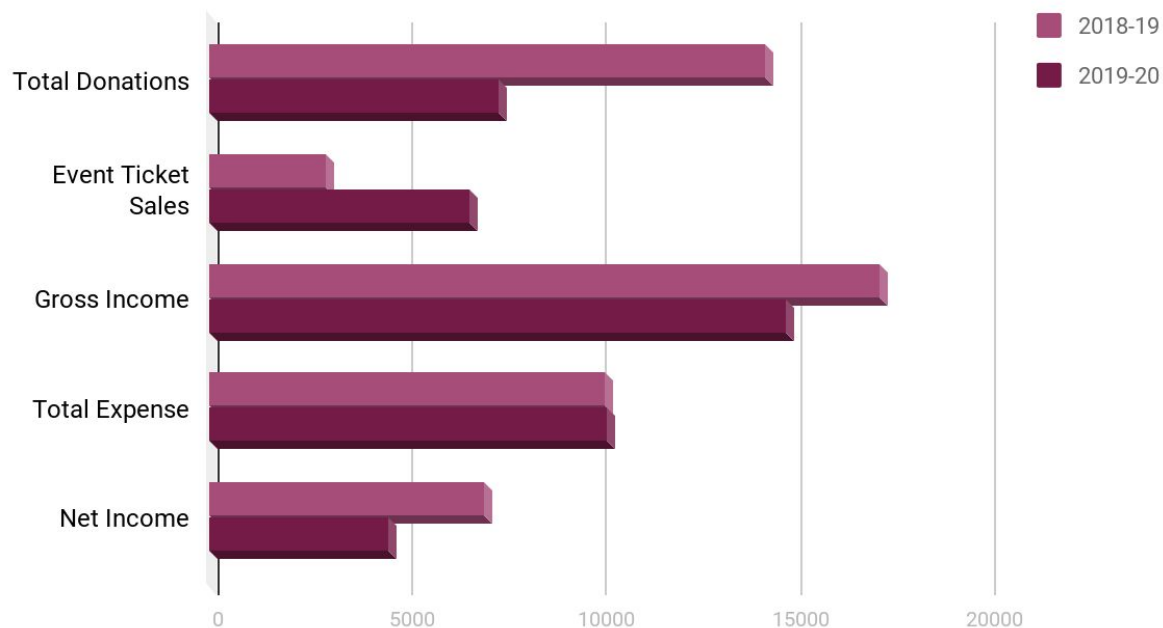
2018-19 & 2019-20 Opera on Park Comparison



Ambassadors

Expenses:	\$10,240.23
Gross income:	\$14,836.00
Net income:	\$ 4,595.77
Total events:	4
Total memberships:	259

2018-19 & 2019-20 Ambassador Comparison



Special Events (Opera Salons & Cabarets)

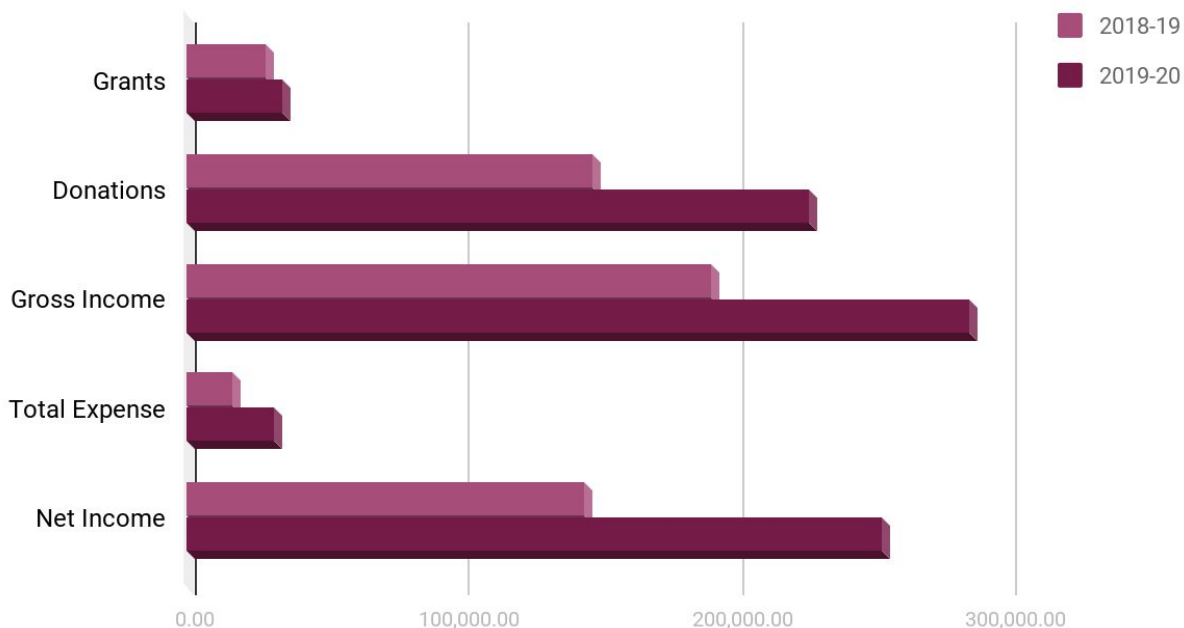
Expenses: \$21,503.34
 Gross income: \$42,613.45
 Net income: \$21,110.11

Total events: 2
 Audience attendance: 78

Annual Campaign

Expenses: \$ 31,647.48
 Gross income: \$285,660.79
 Net income: \$254,015.26

2018-19 & 2019-20 Annual Campaign Comparison



Production Report

Year in Review

Opera Orlando's 2019-20 season continued its ambitious expansion from the previous year, with the unfortunate and abrupt need to cancel three of its spring productions due to COVID-19: *The Daughter of the Regiment*, the Youth Company production of *The Very Last Green Thing*, and *Death of Ivan Ilych*. The season kicked off with an encore presentation of the original production *6 of VIII: The 6 Wives of Henry VIII*, which was awarded Critic's Choice for Best Musical at the 2019 Orlando International Fringe Theater Festival. This was a special "On the Town" event at Casa Feliz Historic House Museum, with an opening act of a mash-up between Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*.

The Opera "On the Mainstage" 2019-20 season launched with *The Marriage of Figaro* in the Alexis and Jim Pugh Theater at Dr. Phillips Center. Artistically, this was a success, given the strong cast, delightful stage direction by Robert Neu, and support of the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of maestro Nicholas Giusti. Unfortunately, from a production standpoint it proved extremely problematic. It was difficult finding a local carpenter and technical director for the production, which delayed construction. This was further exacerbated by a lack of experience and quality

in the build. Unfortunately, this put an immense strain on the tech schedule for the show, underlining the need for more qualified production staff and more depth in the team.

The Marriage of Figaro was followed by concurrent productions of a touring *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and the Florida premiere of *All is Calm* "On the Mainstage". *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was a new production that utilized the 2017 production's costumes. A touring set was designed, and a complete, discrete props package was developed. The full production toured four locations in and around Central Florida. All of these assets now create a full production package owned by the Company for subsequent productions of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, with the potential to rent the production out for a respectable fee.

All is Calm was presented in the Opera's home, the Alexis and Jim Pugh Theater, but in a new configuration. The theater was transformed into a three-quarter thrust arrangement, putting the audience at stage level. This was extremely successful for the more intimate and immersive piece. Artistic quality and production quality were equally matched with a wonderful troupe of performers, as well as a tight production team, creating magical stage effects, as well as the integration of and investment in body microphones and live sound, which was necessary for the a capella piece. The added asset of body mics has proven helpful not only for Opera Orlando events, but also in support of the Youth Company.

Opera Orlando went "On the Town" for its February production of *The Girl of the Golden West*. Utilizing the Cheyenne Saloon and Ceviche Ballroom and partnering with Phantasmagoria, this progressive site-specific production was a huge success based on the audience response, exposure, and accolades. The scope of this project was extremely ambitious, given the venues and the audience number to be accommodated. The Company was able to deliver the experience promised to the audience. However, the production team was pushed to its limit. What worked for the previous season's *The Barber of Seville* proved insufficient, given the expansive nature of the spaces and the travel from one venue to the next versus from room to room. As the Company looks to other site-specific offerings, the big take-away from *The Girl of the Golden West* is to plan for the production as well as the venues, as each requires a unique approach to make it successful on all levels.

As Opera Orlando prepared for its final "'On the Mainstage'" production, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, all lessons learned and feedback from the season's previous productions were taken into consideration. The Company was poised to deliver the most organized, best supported, and most aesthetically cohesive production to date. Andrew Nienaber, stage director, proved to be a true collaborator, and in addition to the stand-out production management of Michelle Engleman, the team consisted of a fantastic master carpenter and prop master, who was to serve as technical director, a new-to-the-company costume designer, and a wonderful local scenic artist. Planning, construction, and implementation were well under way before the production had to be cancelled. All production assets are currently maintained by the Company. Whether this show is

revived and rescheduled is yet to be seen, but the elements built will be kept and/or repurposed into other shows.

Production was much more involved this season throughout all events and initiatives outside the MainStage and “On the Town” productions. It provided support for development and community engagement projects that included the Opera on Park Summer Concert Series and More of the MainStage events, and they were prepped for the company’s Fifth Annual Gala, “A Grand Night for Singing.” With the cancellation of the spring offerings, the production staff pivoted along with the Company to support online offerings: *The High Note*, #RepresentationMatters campaign, the Mayflower digital highlight reel, and in-depth planning and preparation for the 2020-21 season.

The 2019-20 offerings continued to strengthen and expand existing and new partnerships. The Company moved out of its existing shop space, which had been donated by Sunburst Shutters for the past three seasons. With the need for a new scenic shop and storage space, the Opera partnered with the Orlando Ballet, Creative City Project, and Mad Cow Theater to share a new warehouse space. The new space includes a fully-functioning scenic shop and paint space. Each organization also has dedicated storage space, which has allowed Opera Orlando to save more of its assets, while also leveraging the stock of the other companies to assist in productions. Opera Orlando also expanded its physical footprint at Broadway United Methodist Church, taking over what was the childcare center. The new space has allowed for proper costume storage and wardrobe workspace, along with secured production storage for electronics and audio/video equipment. This space is also shared with Orlando Ballet with the hope of sharing costume resources and staff in future seasons.

Opera Orlando continues to partner with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra for MainStage productions and also continues its partnership with the Vocational Academy of Makeup and Prosthetics (VAMP) to provide hair and makeup support and donations of supplies. Additionally, partnerships have continued with Disney, Dixie Textile and Supply, Stage Equipment and Lighting (SEAL), and Steinway. The productions have expanded to include more staff and greater support in each production team. A dedicated props master and scenic artist was hired for each MainStage show, with wardrobe, lighting, and hair and makeup assistants as required by the scope of the production. The Company has consistently hired outside Orlando for various aspects of production, including stage management, lighting design, costume design, and hair and makeup design, providing more diversity and variety of aesthetics onstage.

With the addition of a full-time production manager, this past season was better organized, and communication was more consistent and much improved. Even with the need to cancel almost half the season, great strides were made in continuing to invest in the company’s infrastructure and assets. Opera Orlando is in a solid position to deliver an impressive fifth anniversary season.



6 of VIII – September 13-15, 2019 at **Casa Feliz**

Audience attendance: 190

PRODUCTION TEAM:	Director	Sarah Barnes
	Stage manager/props	Connie Williamson
	Music director/conductor	Lynn Peghiny
	Lighting designer	Jon Whiteley
	Costume, hair, & makeup	Alison Reid



The Marriage of Figaro – November 1-5, 2019 at **Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater at Dr. Phillips Center**

Audience attendance: **900**

PRODUCTION TEAM:	Conductor	Nicholas Giusti
	Chorus master	Chevalier Lovett

Stage director	Robert Neu
Scenic designer	Grant Preisser
Costume designer	Kim Welborn
Lighting designer	Jon Whiteley
Lighting assistant	Heather Sladick
Hair & makeup	Georgianna Eberhard
Hair & makeup assistant	Amber Sandora
Stage manager	Michele Engleman
Assistant stage manager	Patrick Martin
Technical director	Sean Powell
Props master	Annalycia Franklin
Supertitle operator	Laura Zalneraitis
Scenic artist	Elisabeth Buck
Producer	Gabriel Preisser



All is Calm – December 3-15, 2019 presented in the round at **Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater at Dr. Phillips Center** with outreach performances at **Opera Orlando on Broadway**

Audience attendance: 1,350

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Music director	Robin Jensen
Stage director./Production design.	Grant Preisser
Costume designer	Kim Welborn
Lighting designer	Nate Wheatley
Hair & makeup	Amber Sandora
Stage manager	Michelle Engleman

Sound engineer
Production assistant

Peter Sorrel
Annalycia Franklin



Amahl and the Night Visitors– November 23 - December 13, 2019, presented as a touring production. **Winter Park, Clermont, New Smyrna, and Tarpon Springs**

Audience attendance: 525

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Music director/pianist
Stage director
Scenic designer/props
Costume designer
Hair & makeup
Scenic artist
Production manager
Stage manager
Asst. stage manager
Master carpenter
Sound consultant
Lighting designer

Deniz Uz
Rebekah Lane
Grant Preisser
Kim Welborn
Erma Sandora
Elisabeth Buck
Michelle Engleman
Patrick Martin
Hope Griffin
James Erwin
Peter Sorell
Jon Whiteley



Girl of the Golden West – February 7 & 9, 2020 presented at the **Cheyenne Saloon and Ceviche Ballroom** in downtown Orlando

Audience attendance: 305

PRODUCTION TEAM:	Music director/pianist	Robin Jensen
	Stage director	Alan Bruun
	Production stage manager	Michelle Engleman
	Costume designer	Alison Reid
	Production assistant	Annalycia Franklin
	Hair and makeup designer	Amber Sandora
	Hair, makeup, wardrobe asst.	Justine Montoya
	Hair, makeup, wardrobe intern	Hallye Jones

Daughter of the Regiment– March 2020 **CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19** - Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater at Dr. Phillips Center

PRODUCTION TEAM:	Conductor	Joshua Horsch
	Stage director	Andrew Nienaber
	Production stage manager	Michelle Engleman
	Production assistant	Jihyun Choi
	Costume designer	Matsy Stinson
	Wardrobe assistant	Caitlin Durrance
	Scenic designer	Grant Preisser
	Scenic artist	Sarah Allen
	Hair and makeup designer	Rebecca Kravetz

Rehearsal pianist	Elizabeth Kriger
Choreographer	Mila Makrova
Hair and makeup asst.	Justine Montoya
Lighting designer	Jon Whiteley
Lighting assistant	Heather Sladick
Technical dir/carpenter/prop	Tyler Thomas
Supertitles operator	Laura Zalneraitis

***The Death of Ivan Illych* - May 2020 CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 - Orlando Fringe Festival.**

Education Report

Our Team

Robin Jensen-Education director
 Timothy Williams- Drama instructor/stage director
 Amado Bobadilla- Collaborative piano/vocal improvisation
 Becky Lane- Movement instructor
 Amy Cofield- Vocal coach

Year In Review

We had a great year! We averaged between 30 and 35 singers this year. We met Mondays and Saturdays with Monday classwork covering the tools one needs to be a singer/actor and Saturday classes providing the actual application of these tools through participation in opera rehearsals and performances. Amy Cofield worked with the young singers in the fall, coaching them musically for their “24 Italian Art Songs” performance, and Becky Lane worked with them in the spring, holding movement classes for our upcoming opera. We also featured guest artist Claire Hodge, who worked extensively with the singers on breath technique and Alexander Technique. After COVID-19 curtailed our face-to-face classes, the classes went online, focusing on the individual singers and their performances. Timothy Williams and Amado Bobadilla’s work included learning the techniques of video recording and presenting and communicating a song through a lens. Robin Jensen worked with the singers providing individual music coaching outside of the regular classes. We had two wonderful guest artists, Dr. Isai Jess Munoz, from the University of Delaware, worked with the young singers on vocal presentation, and Rolann Owens, from Music Theatre Bavaria, worked on demeanor and physical appearance. The year ended with the singers featured on the Opera Orlando’s weekly livestream program, “The High Note,” on May 29th.

Fall performance schedule included:

“Home for the Holidays” with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra,
 (Two Performances, November 30 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.)

"Soup Opera," St. John's Lutheran Church, December 14 at noon

Spring performance schedule:

"The Very Last Green Thing," May 2 and 3, (cancelled due to COVID)
Virtual Showcase on The High Note, May 29

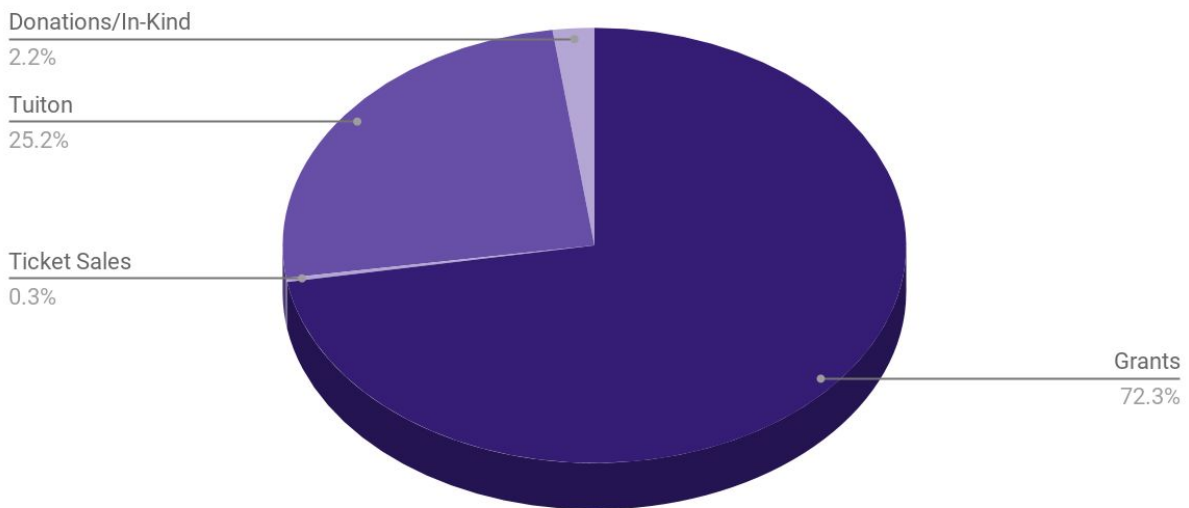
Youth Company

Income totals for 2019-20 Season

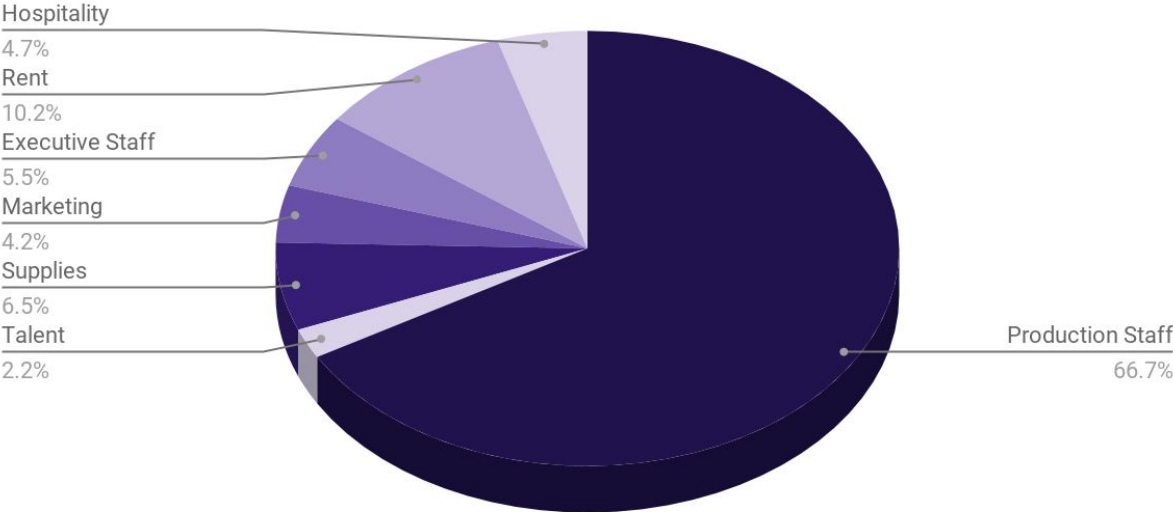
Projected income:	\$67,000.00
Actual income:	\$57,060.63
Difference:	- \$9,939.37

Projected expense:	\$44,800.00
Actual expense:	\$26,362.58
Difference:	+ \$18,437.42

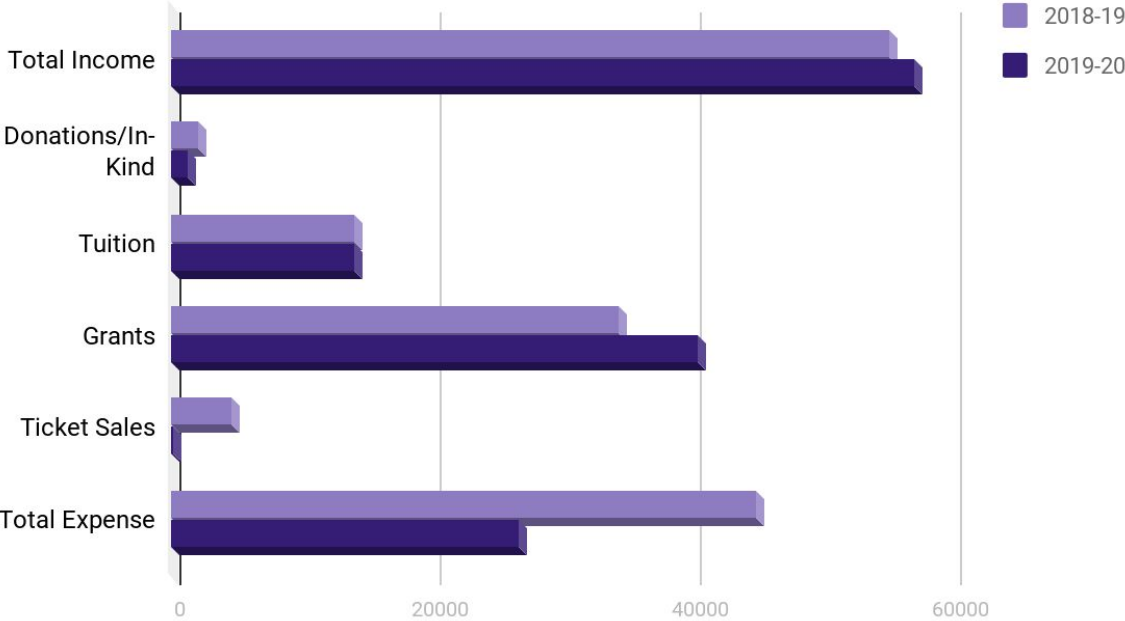
Youth Company Income Breakdown



Youth Company Expenses Breakdown



Youth Company Totals 2018-19 vs 2019-20



Youth Production

The Very Last Green Thing – May 1-2, 2020 **Cancelled due to COVID-19** - Lake Eola Amphitheater

PRODUCTION TEAM:	Music director	Robin Jensen
	Stage director	Timothy Williams

Studio Artist Program, In-School Programs, and Educational Outreach

Program director: Sarah Purser

Studio Artists:

Anna Eschbach, soprano
Adriana Nieves, soprano
Gloria Palermo, mezzo-soprano
Brent Doucette, tenor
Sean Stork, baritone

Overview

We had a very enthusiastic and talented group of studio artists this season who all brought high levels of professionalism and musicianship to the company. All singers were well prepared for their roles and assigned duties, making this a particularly wonderful team to work with.

The in-school opera previews and retirement center performances were very successful this fall. Opera Orlando received great feedback from residents, teachers, and students about the presentations, and the United Arts evaluations, which are completed by teachers after the presentation in their schools, reflect the impact these programs have on students in our community. This year we provided two different in-school presentations: opera previews and masterclasses. The in-school previews served to introduce students to the art of opera. Studio artists presented an hour-long, mostly Mozart operatic program in the fall, including arias, duets, and ensembles. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and engage with the artists during their performances. All students who took part in our opera previews were invited to attend the final dress rehearsal of *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Dr. Phillips Center. Many students took advantage of that offer, and a large group of music students from Freedom High School

in Orange County purchased tickets to attend an evening performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Unfortunately, our outreach concerts in both the retirement communities and schools were interrupted this spring because of the pandemic. We were able to present only one preview this spring at Wekiva High School before the schools were closed. Fortunately, however, we did secure a separate grant through United Arts of Central Florida to continue bringing educational programming into the schools. We presented five online masterclasses to high school and middle school students in OCPS, using the online platform "Big Blue Button." These masterclasses were presented by Opera Orlando studio artist Anna Eschbach, former studio artist Samantha Barnes Daniel, and tenor Alex Mansoori. All OCPS high schools were invited to participate, and each had a student representative sing for one of the five masterclasses. This unique experience provided the opportunity for students from various schools to hear each other performing and receive valuable feedback from Opera Orlando teaching artists. Traditionally we are able to present masterclasses for only up to three or four schools each season, so this unexpected opportunity actually allowed us to reach many more students than we normally would with the traditional masterclass format.

Teachers were very appreciative of the opportunity for students to workshop their solo repertoire with a professional singer during this time of isolation. Many of the students who participated missed the opportunity to perform these pieces at the state music performance assessments for adjudication, so we were able to creatively fill that void. The feedback on this series was overwhelmingly positive, and teachers have already reached out asking to schedule more for next year. Next season, the Studio Artist team would like to continue to present the community programming in the retirement communities and schools as we have in the past, but we are fully prepared to present these programs in an alternative format or online, if necessary, in order to keep everyone safe.

Along with their outreach and mainstage performance responsibilities, studio artists were also provided with the opportunity to sing a masterclass with maestro Nicolas Guisti (conductor for *The Marriage of Figaro*), participate in an Alexander Technique workshop with Tami Bulmash, and receive vocal coaching from Robin Jensen and Gabriel Preisser. They worked with our pianist, Julie Tompkins, to prepare their repertoire for outreach performances and were called upon throughout the season to sing for special events, salons, and recitals.

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