

Lyric
OPERA OF
CHICAGO

2023 | 24 IMPACT REPORT





FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I am pleased to share with you the Impact Report for Lyric Opera of Chicago's 2023/24 Season.

Lyric presented an extraordinary season of productions to glowing reviews, with an increase in programming of 14 percent over last season. The offerings performed strongly in the audience metrics that matter most, with substantial increases in total ticket revenue, number of households attending, and number of new-to-Lyric patrons. Maestro Enrique Mazzola's third season as Music Director was a season of firsts — including his first-ever Wagner opera and his first Mozart work in Chicago, his first contemporary production at Lyric with Blanchard's *Champion* and his first full-scale production of Verdi's *Aida*.

It was also a year of new growth and outreach in our community.

The 2023/24 Season brought the first year of the Five-Year Financial Plan to a notably successful conclusion. Fundraising exceeded the \$30 million goal with the support of more than 6,200 donors, numbers significantly higher than pre-pandemic figures. More than 1,500 of those were new to Lyric, an enviable metric by any standard.

It was a season, too, of significant transitions in the life of the company.

The entire Lyric family was saddened to learn in April of the passing of Sir Andrew Davis, who served as Music Director and principal conductor from 2000 through the 2020/21 Season. Starting with his debut engagement in the 1987/88 Season, he led 690 opera performances plus nine special concerts. Sir Andrew is recognized as one of the world's most-accomplished conductors and a true legend, and he will be forever remembered in our home.

The conclusion of the season marked the retirement of Anthony Freud who served as General Director, President & CEO for 13 phenomenal seasons, a tenure that saw our opera company reach new heights of artistic achievement and address the unprecedented challenges of the Covid pandemic. I was honored to present Anthony with the Carol Fox Award, our company's highest accolade, together with our exceptional Women's Board, who notably endow the General Director Chair. Our new General Director, President & CEO, John Mangum, was announced as his successor. As we recount this past year, we look forward to his tenure!

The following pages tell all these stories, and more. Above all, they tell a story of extraordinary generosity from our donors, audience, sponsors, partners, and board members, who have made it all possible. The Lyric family extends our heartfelt gratitude.



Sylvia Neil

SYLVIA NEIL

Chair, Board of Directors





A FOND FAREWELL

General Director, President & CEO

Anthony Freud retired from Lyric Opera of Chicago in July 2024, marking the end of a 13-year tenure guiding the company. Since 2011, Lyric has reached new artistic heights, expanded its mission across Chicago and beyond, and positioned itself as a leader for the art form's future.

At the end of the 2023/24 Season, Lyric's Board of Directors presented Freud with the Carol Fox Award, the company's highest honor.

The entire Lyric Opera of Chicago community wishes to express its admiration and gratitude for Anthony Freud's work at the company.



Anthony Freud and the Lyric staff, 2013

DURING FREUD'S TIME HERE,

- Lyric Opera of Chicago presented a broad variety of work — 68 new productions and co-productions, including 32 Lyric premieres, and 9 world premieres.
- The Joffrey Ballet became the resident ballet company at the Lyric Opera House.
- Lyric Unlimited, the company's Learning and Civic Engagement division, was established, and has built awareness of and access to opera within the community.
- Through the *Breaking New Ground* campaign, Lyric raised \$16.3 million over five years to revitalize its facilities, with \$1.7 million allocated for immediate equipment needs.
- Alongside other accessibility initiatives, new seats were installed throughout the house, providing for better sightlines, wider aisles for improved audience flow, and more wheelchair-accessible seating.

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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

As of June 30, 2024 and 2023

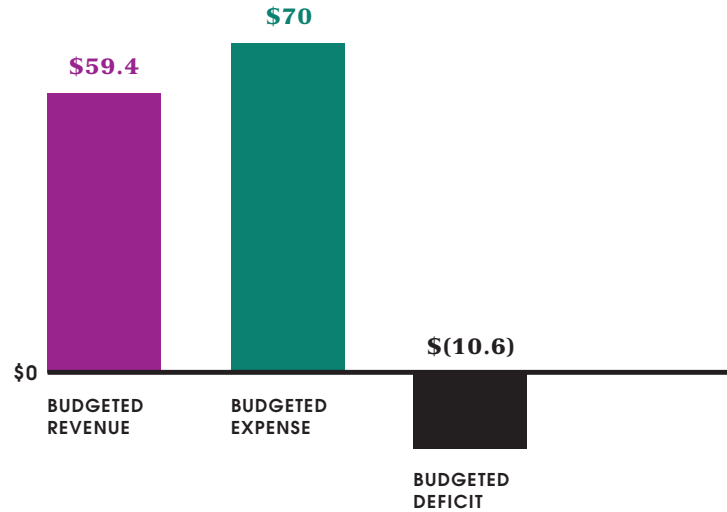
Operating Results	2024	2023
Ticket Sales	\$12,949,434	\$18,743,399
Other Operating Revenue	\$26,277,649	\$27,981,048
Total Operating Revenue	\$39,227,083	\$46,724,447
Total Operating Support	\$32,381,344	\$34,158,919
Total Operating Revenue and Support	\$71,608,427	\$80,883,366
Total Operating Expenses	\$71,608,427	\$80,883,366
Net Operating Expenses	\$0	\$0
Balance Sheet Highlights	2024	2023
Long-Term Pledges	\$14,023,006	\$20,724,334
Long-Term Investments	\$183,461,779	\$181,730,963
Total Assets	\$266,250,685	\$269,504,193
Total Net Assets	\$184,944,534	\$185,899,111
Operating Revenue as a percentage of Operating Expenses	55%	58%

THE FIVE-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

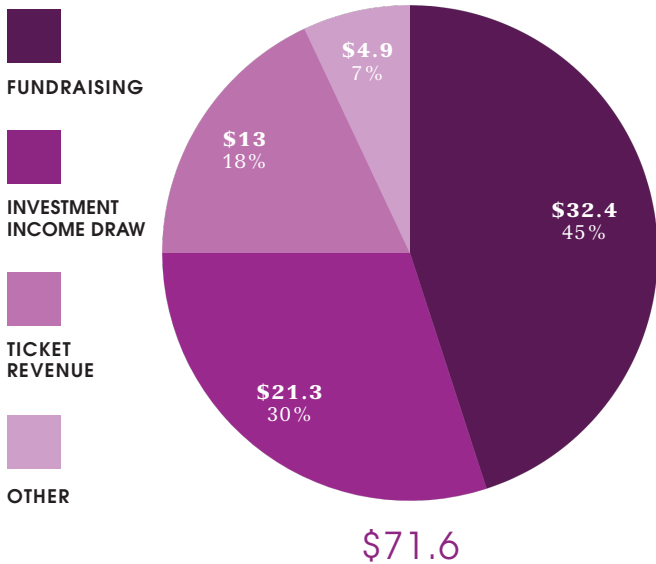
The 2023/24 fiscal year marked the completion of Year One of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Five-Year Financial Plan, an ambitious series of financial benchmarks designed to bring the company to profitability.

The efforts thus far have proven remarkably successful, with contributed and earned revenue meeting budgeted targets.

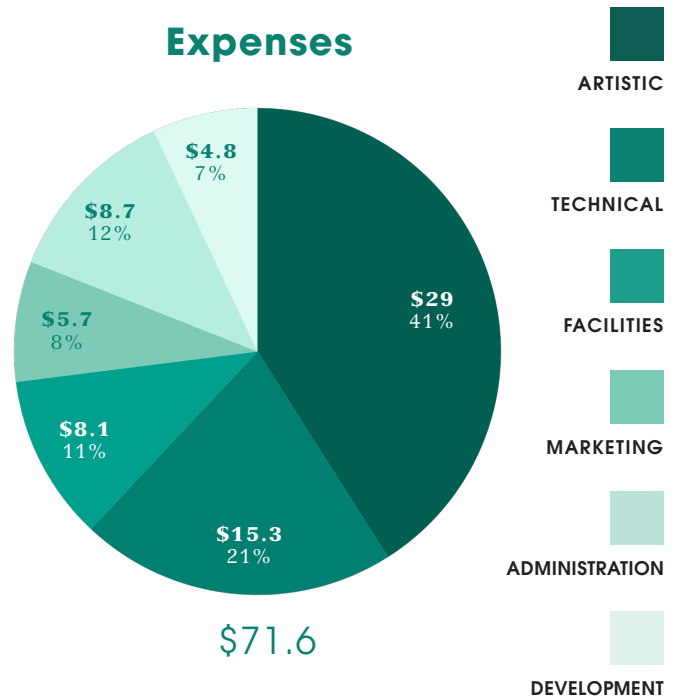
All \$ in millions



Revenue



Expenses





WOMEN'S BOARD

The Women's Board is composed of 63 of Chicago's most influential women and dedicated Lyric supporters. Karen Gray-Krehbiel, a leader of extraordinary dedication and grace, was recently elected the group's new president.

At the end of the 2023/24 Season, Lyric's Board of Directors presented the Women's Board with the Carol Fox Award, the company's highest honor.

The Women's Board completed another successful year under the expert leadership of President Nancy Santi.

Not only does the Women's Board raise significant funds for Lyric, but they are also committed to welcoming new audiences. Their successful Civic Night, led by Nancy Santi in partnership with the Lyric Unlimited team, welcomed over 200 guests from 12 different corporate and community partners to a performance of *Champion* in February.



Season Opening Gala

The Women's Board Season Opening Gala featured the radiant talent of Audra McDonald in a one-night-only concert with the Lyric Opera Orchestra. The spectacular event, chaired by Alison Wehman McNally, welcomed more than 270 guests.

The Women's Board members, attendees, and sponsors of the annual gala raised \$983,000.



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Past Presidents are designated in bold type.

2023/24 SEASON & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The 2023/24 Season at Lyric Opera of Chicago featured a 14% increase in the number of performances in the opera house, year over year, growing from 35 to 40.

Ticket Sales



Revenue



Total Households

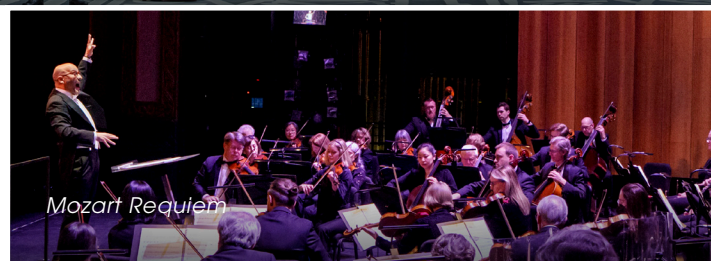


First-Time Ticket Buyers



37% New-to-Lyric patrons

63% Returning patrons



A THIRD SEASON FOR MUSIC DIRECTOR **ENRIQUE MAZZOLA**



In what became known as Music Director Enrique Mazzola's "Season of Firsts," the maestro conducted *The Flying Dutchman* (his first Wagner production at Lyric), Blanchard's *Champion* (his first 21st century work here), *Aida* (his first full-scale production of the Verdi masterpiece), and an all-Mozart concert including the *Requiem*, Mazzola's first performances at Lyric by the composer.

***Aida* marked the 100th work in the conductor's ever-growing repertoire.**

Mazzola, who made his Lyric debut in 2016 with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, continues to build a legacy as Lyric's third music director, conducting a wide variety of repertoire, ranging from established classics to contemporary work.



Lyric wishes to express its enduring gratitude to the members of the **Enrique Circle**:

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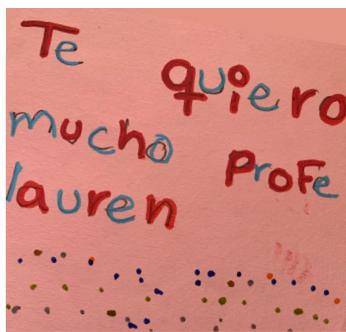
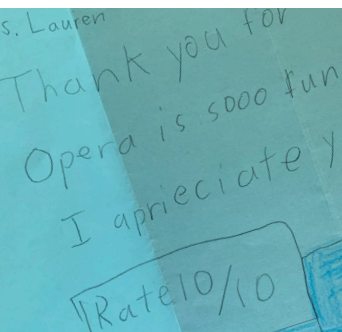
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Lyric



LYRIC UNLIMITED: LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The company's Learning and Civic Engagement division had a banner year in 2023/24, expanding its reach across the city with numerous robust programs.



Opera Residencies

In the 2023/24 Season, the Opera Residencies programs in total reached more than 1,100 students across Chicago. Bringing together Lyric teaching artists and classroom teachers, the program took place in 17 elementary and high schools during the 2023/24 school year, with 15 of those schools serving primarily Black or Hispanic students.

ELEMENTARY OPERA RESIDENCIES

11 SCHOOLS 24 CLASSROOMS 513 STUDENTS

OPERA DISCOVERY PROJECT (GRADES 6 - 12)

6 SCHOOLS 15 CLASSROOMS 317 STUDENTS

HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR RESIDENCIES

5 SCHOOLS 13 CLASSROOMS 359 STUDENTS



**22
Schools**



**52
Classrooms**



**1,189
Students**

CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE



LYRIC UNLIMITED: LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Opera in the Neighborhoods

The touring production of *Jason and the Argonauts*, the 2023/24 Season's *Opera in the Neighborhoods* offering, was a great success, taking place in five venues with nine performances over six days reaching more than 4,000 students and their families.

EmpowerYouth!

This annual collaboration with the Chicago Urban League, completing its 7th year, offered 30 Chicago teens a 26-week, fully immersive experience in theatrical performance, culminating in a final performance presented at Lyric!

The program featured mentorship from industry professionals, including Tanji Harper, Shawn Wallace, and Mbali Guliwe.

Other School Engagements

Lyric Unlimited has an ongoing partnership with the nonprofit Merit School of Music. Music Director Enrique Mazzola and other professionals from Lyric visit the school for rehearsals, seminars, production previews, and other interactions. In the 2023/24 Season, Maestro Mazzola and Chorus Director & Head of Music, Michael Black, gave a preview presentation of *Aida* to 275 students.

In March 2024, Ryan Opera Center Ensemble tenor Travon D. Walker gave a seminar to 20 voice students at The People's Music School.

1,403 students attended dress rehearsals at Lyric in the 2023/24 Season.





THE PATRICK G. AND SHIRLEY W. RYAN OPERA CENTER

The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center's 49th season featured numerous remarkable performances by a diverse, superbly talented Ensemble. The Ryan Opera Center pianist, conductor, stage director, and stage manager served behind the scenes throughout Lyric's 2023/24 Season.



14

ROLES PERFORMED DURING LYRIC'S MAINSTAGE SEASON

20

ROLES UNDERSTUDIED BY THE ENSEMBLE

7

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI APPEARED IN FEATURED ROLES

2

MEMORABLE MOMENTS WHEN RYAN OPERA CENTER UNDERSTUDIES STEPPED IN TO LEADING ROLES:

Kathryn Henry in the lead role in *Jenůfa*, and incoming baritone Sankara Harouna as Benny Paret for two performances of *Champion*.

The 9th Annual Ryan Opera Center Gala, co-chaired by Ryan Opera Center Board Members, Pamela Crutchfield and Cherilyn Murer, was held on Monday, February 12, 2024, at The Casino Club. Themed *Carnivale!*, the event welcomed 185 guests as it brought together New Orleans Mardi Gras, Venetian Carnevale, and Brazilian Carnival for a night of wonderful music, food, and enjoyment. The performance featured members of the Ryan Opera Center Ensemble with Craig Terry and special guest and alumna, Whitney Morrison.

The night surpassed its fundraising target, raising \$340,225 (136% of the night's goal) for the Ryan Opera Center.



INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & ACCESSIBILITY

Lyric has remained steadfast in its commitment to diversify both the stories presented on the main stage and the artists who tell them. The company continues to define inclusion and accessibility in the broadest terms, with notable successes in a variety of areas.



HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE 2023/24 SEASON INCLUDE:

- A number of special activities were programmed around *Champion*, including the *concrete, rose.* exhibition from Chicago artist and collector Patric McCoy, and *Drag Night OUT at the Opera* with Dr. Lady J, the world's first drag queen with a Ph.D. in musicology.
- Two of three guest conductors engaged for mainstage productions were women, both making highly anticipated Lyric debuts at the podium. *Aida* was also led by some of opera's most preeminent women, director Francesca Zambello and choreographer Jessica Lang.
- The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center continued to attract diverse talent, with 62% (10 of 16) of its 2023/24 Ensemble identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).
- Lyric's Internship & Career Readiness Program, launched in 2022, is designed to break down financial barriers and provide meaningful opportunities to emerging talent. In 2023, the program attracted more than 1,400 applicants, selecting 22 diverse interns, 58% of whom identify as BIPOC.
- Lyric became the world's first opera company to bring audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing a real-time, fully immersive touch sensation of live music with the introduction of the *SoundShirt* program. In partnership with the City of Chicago's Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, *SoundShirt* is a groundbreaking fusion of fashion and technology.



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^o Deceased

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The Ardis Krainik Society is composed of supporters who have committed to leaving gifts to Lyric in their estate plans. Currently, there are over 600 members in the society, including 36 Aria Benefactors, who are leaving planned gifts to Lyric of \$1 million or more.

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