

PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA 2017-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

October 20, 2017

Introduction

The years since Pacific Opera Victoria's last strategic plan in 2013 were distinguished by numerous organizational and artistic successes, including the launch of the Baumann Centre, the establishment of a comprehensive community agenda, as well as a national and international collaborative production model, growth in attendance and participation, advancement of artist and professional development, and a successful leadership transition.

The 2017 - 2020 strategic plan outlines strategic priorities for the next three years, grounded in a 10-year vision to create more opera. POV's focus will be to create the conditions for continued excellence in our artistry by building a robust financial foundation, growing and developing audiences for opera, creating opportunities for artists, and building our internal capabilities.

In developing this strategic plan, we consulted a broad array of stakeholders including audiences, artists, youth, educators, arts partners, donors and funders. Staff and board reviewed the current environment through SWOT analysis. The strategic plan makes recommendations in the areas of Capitalization, Audience Development, Artistic Opportunity, and Internal Capabilities.

Pat Schneider of Macro Consulting and Margot McLaren Moore facilitated strategic planning sessions and led a strategic planning task force. CEO Ian Rye provided analysis of the critical factors impacting the organization and Artistic Director Timothy Vernon offered his vision of a future for opera in Victoria. Marc A. Scorca, the President and CEO of Opera America provided context from the international opera sector.

Confidence in our Future

As a result of our consultation with external and internal stakeholders we feel confident that the goals in our strategic plan can be met given these strategic assumptions:

- We have an inspired artistic vision for the future.
- We have a reputation for artistic excellence.
- We continue to attract accomplished artists to create with us.
- We have a welcoming and inclusive character that distinguishes us.
- We are a recognized leader in the arts community and in the opera sector.
- We have passionate audiences who place their trust in us.
- We have a capable staff and an accomplished board who are committed to success.
- We have loyal donors who are passionate about the art form.
- We have cultivated favourable conditions for financial success.

Our Guiding Principles

Artistic Practice We strive to present a diversity of repertoire and create high quality original productions to engage seasoned operagoers and welcome newcomers to opera.

Artist Development We nurture our artists and provide opportunities for them to develop their artistic expression and showcase their gifts.

Audience Experience We create meaningful experiences with our audiences, build knowledge, and make space for genuine engagement.

Inclusivity We foster a welcoming environment and are inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, seeking ways to engage in meaningful ways.

Civic Practice We address cultural, civic, and social needs through our work as a community convenor and as an active arts leader.

Collaboration We seek opportunities to collaborate with cultural organizations regionally, nationally, and internationally to bring greater benefits to our work and to theirs.

Applauding Philanthropy We encourage philanthropy, celebrate the contributions that patrons, foundations and funders make to our company, and carefully steward their gifts.

Good Governance We operate with sound governance and business practices, demonstrating accountability in all that we do.

Leadership We demonstrate leadership in our local community and within the North American opera community.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to create dynamic operatic experiences, and to inspire our audiences, artists and the community

- **Our Artistic Mission** is to pursue excellence in the presentation of diverse repertoire through innovative original productions and detailed performance practice, and to provide opportunity to artists throughout Canada at all stages of their careers, from student to mentor. In doing so, we will preserve and advance the traditions of our art form.
- **Our Community Mission** is to engage diverse audiences from Vancouver Island and beyond in the communicative power of opera at performances and imaginative community events, and to encourage the use of opera as a resource for educators to enrich the learning of young people. In doing so, we will play a leadership role in the vitality of the cultural life of Vancouver Island.
- **Our Financial Stewardship Mission** is to invite wide public and private investment in our activities by building strong relationships with our supporters, thoughtfully stewarding our financial resources, and ensuring effective, renewable leadership from an ensemble of Board, staff, artists and volunteers. In doing so, we will ensure that our company remains dynamic as an institution of lasting importance.

Our Vision

Our overarching 10-year vision is to create **MORE OPERA**, and ensure POV is the most distinctive opera company in Canada, the most irresistible performing arts organization in the region and an invaluable community asset for Victoria. Our vision is to be recognized for our artistic excellence, our community leadership, our financial stewardship, and our inclusive culture.

“Our art is the best of us after all ... It represents the best of humankind. We need as much of that as we can get.”

Timothy Vernon

Looking ahead 10 years, we envision POV as a company that exemplifies artistic excellence and imaginative curatorial practice. We will have expanded our art making with signature opera events, community and youth operas, and a sophisticated practice in national and international collaboration and co-production. We will be the go to company for Canadian and international opera artists.

We will be the boutique company of choice for audiences. Our patrons will be more diverse than ever before; they will respond with enthusiasm and loyalty to our vibrant creativity, our leadership in arts education, and our role as a convener of community.

Our people will flourish as we inspire and cultivate leadership among staff, board, and volunteers and nurture the skills of creative, performing, and production artists. Our facilities and systems will continue to support our success.

We will be financially secure, having achieved growth and sustainability in both earned and contributed revenue. Our still growing family of patrons and philanthropists will make certain that we continue to follow our artistic vision.

Situational Analysis

A combination of innovative artistic practice and business acumen has put POV on the map as an organization that consistently punches above its weight class. At the core of this accomplishment are the contributions of artist, audience, and donors.

1. Capabilities and Culture

POV has nurtured an art and artist driven culture, where a fundamental commitment to artistic excellence and stewardship of artistic values has allowed an imaginative and innovative curatorial practice to flourish. We explore a broad range of repertoire from baroque to contemporary premières, present our unique brand of opera and theatre, and invite audiences to share a journey rooted in artistic courage and adventure. We realize ever-richer artistic experiences, collaborate with celebrated Canadian and international artists from multiple disciplines, and develop collaborations, co-productions, and commissions on local, national, and international stages. Our inclusive culture creates a welcoming experience and solidifies meaningful relationships and trust with audiences. Our community practice and education programs have ensured the art form is widely available to the public, while our collaborative agenda has solidified a national audience for our work.

Supporting this growth is an inspired culture of philanthropy, supportive audiences, public investment, and the growth and diversification of revenue streams. In the period from 2013 to 2016 growth of earned revenues has been led by the development of co-productions. The expansion of community programs and re-pricing of tickets have stewarded increased attendance and attracted growth in private contributions and public funds.

In the same period, POV has increased its investment in artistic production and made significant investment in its resident artistic and administrative resources. Our skilled staff and committed volunteers remain the most critical resource for addressing challenges and achieving our artistic and strategic goals. POV has distinguished itself by a strong history of recruitment and retention and a demonstrated commitment to professional development and supporting the leadership development of its people. The Opera Shop has cultivated artistic innovation and the creation of original, made-in-Victoria productions, thus enabling the growth of co-productions. Our investment in the Baumann Centre has been a catalyst for increased community impact and collaboration with youth and artists.

2. Vulnerabilities and Risks to Manage

While the intimacy of our performances is a critical asset for audiences, the scale of our venues limit the exploration of some repertoire. The number of performances in our season impacts the range of experiences for audiences, and also the volume opportunities for artists. There are far more artists – singers, directors, designers – than opportunities to perform and create, and the resultant financial strain on many individual artists poses a challenge for the sector. Opportunities for composers and conductors in opera are even fewer.

POV also remains vulnerable to demographic changes and to competition from live and online entertainment. While increasing numbers of people are engaging with our operas and programs, they do so less frequently. The decades-long decline of arts and music education in the schools means that arriving generations have had limited exposure to the art form and culturally diverse peoples are not necessarily aligned with a European music tradition. Population growth and affordability oblige many families to migrate to the suburbs, far from the opera house. As opera is consumed online and on film and local music and theatre offerings proliferate, the marketplace is growing increasingly competitive while the impact of traditional marketing and editorial content continues to diminish. Perceptions of opera and declining familiarity with the repertoire are risks to developing future audiences, while brand confusion and perceptions of the social and cultural value of opera weaken the impact of POV's work.

POV's financial health is vulnerable to the realities of undercapitalization, which leaves the company vulnerable to external market forces and the threat of economic volatility. Competition for philanthropic dollars and declining corporate support threatens revenue growth, while public funding sources have not kept pace with rising costs. Expense efficiencies have been maximized and the costs of artistic creation, production, and administration continue to grow. Internally, the capacity of our human resources and the sustainability of our facilities are also vulnerabilities.

3. Opportunities and Aspirations

POV aspires to instil a love of the art form in all who engage with it and to make opera irresistible to the community. Artistic opportunities abound for the company; producing even broader repertoire, commissioning new work, and laying the groundwork for a signature opera event for Victoria remain a priority. We aspire to create more operas with youth artists and for

youth audiences. We wish to attract accomplished Canadian and international artists with creative opportunities. We wish to develop our professional artist training programs for singers, stage directors, and designers, while launching a defining opera conductors program. We recognize the opportunity to expand into international co-production and regional touring, while leveraging technology to disseminate our work online.

We see significant opportunities for audience development – ways to enhance the audience experience, attract a broader demographic, increase accessibility, and expand participation. We aspire to develop operas for families, youth, newcomers, and travellers; to continue with accessible ticket pricing, community programming, and innovative operas to increase participation in the art form and broaden the diversity of our audiences. We recognize the opportunity to develop our civic practice, using opera to build intercultural bridges and develop community engagement. We can grow audiences through community collaboration and enhance our international profile through co-production.

There are favourable conditions for financial success: population growth, economic prosperity, and favourable demographics for opera audiences and increased philanthropy, as well as prospective growth in federal and provincial arts investment. Philanthropic support of our annual campaigns continues to grow, as do major gifts and planned giving. The migration of arts-friendly and philanthropic retirees to Victoria is an opportunity for POV.

We aspire to create more leadership from within through professional development and expanded staff resources; to increase our leadership role with national service organizations; and to leverage our role as leaders in the arts community. Our current facilities serve us well, but it is important to develop strategies to serve long-term priorities.

Strategic Priorities

Through the intentional **evolution** of our company we will create the conditions that allow us to achieve our overarching vision of **more opera**.

Our 2017 to 2020 strategic plan will focus on four key priorities:

1. **Capitalize** our Company
2. **Build** our Internal Capability and Capacity
3. **Grow** the Opera Family
4. **Create** More Opportunities for Artists

Priority 1: Capitalize Our Company

Artistic opportunities and the evolution of POV's business model require up-front investment in projects whose revenues won't be realized until a future year. Despite growth in contributed revenues and the prospect of increased government investment, the organization is woefully undercapitalized, and our financial health vulnerable to external market forces and economic volatility.

Capital is essential to managing risk in these uncertain times and to ensuring a future for opera that is driven by artistic vision rather than situational factors. A diversified and balanced capitalization plan will ensure POV has the artistic venture capital, operating reserves, and working capital to achieve its artistic vision and strategic aspirations.

- Goal 1** – Launch a capitalization strategy to raise artistic venture funds, operating reserves, and working capital.
- Goal 2** - Develop our planned giving program to cultivate multi-year planned gifts to support artistic creation for future years.
- Goal 3** - Maximize annual revenue generation to ensure renewable funds for operations.
- Goal 4** - Create five-year budgets and financial plans that leverage artistic opportunities and are mindful of economic uncertainties.

Strategic Priority 2: Build our Internal Capability and Capacity

Our people are the most critical resource for addressing challenges and achieving organizational goals. After ten years of high performance growth, however, POV has reached the capacity of its internal human resources. Professional development, recruitment, retention, and succession planning will be critical factors in achieving our vision.

Securing and developing our artistic, production, and administrative facilities will also be important for our sustainability. The Baumann Centre has become a catalyst for regional arts collaboration, music creation, and performances, while the Opera Shop is central to our artistic vibrancy and to our co-production strategy. The Royal Theatre is known for its intimate and acoustic qualities, and also for its insufficient stage, orchestra and audience amenities. A long-term strategy for our people, our facilities, equipment, and systems will be critical for a sustained and healthy future.

- Goal 1** – Retain, attract and cultivate the talents we need to execute our strategic priorities and achieve our vision.
- Goal 2** - Ensure that a robust succession plan is in place for staff and board and that the organization is prepared for the predictable and the unexpected.
- Goal 3** - Ensure we have the facilities, systems and operational assets to support our long-term success.

Priority 3: Grow the Opera Family

In line with global trends, more people are attending opera less frequently, and audiences are engaging with the art form in new and multifaceted ways. The decline of traditional marketing channels, the rise of digital media and the proliferation of broadcast and online entertainments have made it more challenging for arts organizations to capture public attention in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Changing demographics and emerging consumer trends demand that we refine our marketing efforts, contextualize our communications, and expand our opera and community engagement programming for an increasingly diverse audience.

Concentrated audience development strategies are essential to ensure that POV becomes even more inclusive and that opera is made irresistible to the largest possible public. Marketing, communications, and brand development will maximize awareness of our offerings. Developing our education programming, community engagement, and civic practice will intensify civic pride in the organization.

Goal 1 - Refine our marketing and communications strategies to build audiences and express the vitality of the organization.

Goal 2 - Invite an increasingly diverse audience to participate in our programs and performances.

Goal 3 - Intensify the brand and leverage our reputation to build awareness and develop civic pride.

Goal 4 - Create a concentration of education and community engagement programming to strengthen the impact of opera.

Priority 4: Create More Opportunities for Artists

POV challenges artists to be their best, to take risks in a supportive environment, debut in new roles, and explore distinctive and rarely performed repertoire. Our creators conceive of original productions rather than adapt to existing ones. Our continued commitment to Canadian artists has stewarded countless national and international careers while the introduction of international artists in strategic roles has broadened the experience for our audiences.

Our investment in orchestra services and our focus on chorus development have greatly enhanced our productions. We encourage opera stage directors and designers through our residency program and wish to create opportunities for emerging conductors. We aspire to revive our professional training program for early career singers. Attracting a range of artists to our stages while supporting the development of young artists and nurturing mature opera careers will be critical for our continued evolution.

Goal 1 - Attract a broad range of Canadian and International artists to create with us.

Goal 2 - Build and develop our local artists, ensembles and craftspeople.

Goal 3 - Create unique and defining professional artist training and residency opportunities.

Conclusion

As Pacific Opera Victoria approaches its 40th anniversary in 2020, we see clearly how a potent combination of deep community roots and profound commitment to the art form has led the company's growth over the decades.

Grounded in a 10-year vision to create more opera, we will create the conditions for continued excellence in our artistry and ensure POV is the most distinctive opera company in Canada, the most irresistible performing arts organization in the region, and an invaluable community asset for Victoria.