

vancouver opera 2010 - 2011 annual report

VO completed its milestone Golden Anniversary celebrations with a successful world-premiere production of its commissioned opera *Lillian Alling*. The entire 2010–2011 season was marked by artistic excitement, forward-thinking creative choices, critical acclaim, and expanded influence locally, nationally and internationally.

VO continues to make a major contribution to the artistic vitality of the communities it serves by adding to the operatic canon with new commissions and rarely-performed pieces, by bringing together creators and performers (both local and international) in fruitful collaboration, and by welcoming new opera goers who will sustain the company in the future. The securing of a new administrative and production facility at the end of the 2010–2011 season achieved the long-term goal of consolidating all non-performance activities of the company under one roof. Our new home, The Michael and Inna O'Brian Centre for Vancouver Opera, will allow for increased community engagement in the vibrant, diverse Grandview-Woodland area and beyond.

artistic vitality



Above Left: *La Traviata*
Above Right: Kiritika Szabó and Wendy Nielsen in *La Clemenza di Tito*
Photos by Tim Matheson

Lillian Alling was a monumental accomplishment for VO: this brand-new opera, created by Canada's foremost opera-creation team of composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell, brought high praise from critics, audiences, and the arts community. Eglise Gutiérrez's return to VO in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* reinforced VO's reputation for engaging singers of a high international level while continually striving to raise its already high musical standards. *La Clemenza di Tito* was an artistic risk that paid off with great critical acclaim, and the VO debut of Sir Jonathan Miller's beautiful *La Traviata* ended the season with VO's capacity for artistic achievement fresh in the minds of critics and patrons.

At the close of the 2010–2011 season, the family of Moh and Yulanda Faris made a \$1-million gift to the Vancouver Opera Foundation to support the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program. This new program, which will operate out of The O'Brian Centre, will expose the country's most promising young professional singers to rigorous training and performance opportunities with a respected professional company and will help prepare them for successful careers.

forward-thinking achievements

VO

building future audiences

Now entering its 40th year, VO's education program continues to be the most extensive and ambitious of any opera company in Canada.

The Vancouver Opera in Schools touring production of *Cinderella* enthralled more than 33,000 children during its province-wide run.

Music! Words! Opera!, now in its 11th year, continued to focus on the creation of original opera in elementary schools through the integration of curricula. In secondary schools, Opera Experience, Work Experience, and the Jean M. Southam Dress Rehearsals gave secondary school students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of opera.

VO continues to offer these highly successful programs as a much-needed enhancement of arts education in schools around the province.



opening our doors

The Michael and Inna O'Brian Centre for Vancouver Opera will include facilities available for use by other arts groups. Relationships have already been forged with sister organizations, community leaders and nearby Grandview / ɔ̄uuqinak'uuh Elementary School. After a settling-in period the surrounding community will be invited to make use of the new space through outreach programs and special events.

engaging the community

VO continued its commitment to community engagement in 2010–2011 with a host of events leading up to the world premiere of *Lillian Alling*. Special events included tours of historic Vancouver, film screenings, open chorus rehearsals and special off-site performances, panel discussions with the creative team and a public forum that explored the immigrant experience, a theme that is prominent in the opera. During the season, VO engaged the community in discussions of madness (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and leadership (*La Clemenza di Tito*), and introduced the community to the prodigious mind of stage director Sir Jonathan Miller.

The 2010–2011 season saw increased leadership and innovation in VO's social media channels. Visits to the VO Blog have continued to increase, and both VO's Facebook page and its Twitter feed engage online communities in increasing numbers.



Cover: Frédérique Weiss and Anne St. Clair Nicholson in *L'Inferno* | Back Cover: Gregory Doh, Burak Bilgili, and Michael Fabiano in *Lucia di Lammermoor*
Photos by Tim Matheson



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Despite artistic success and positive critical response throughout the season, the lingering effects of the global recession exacerbated audience uncertainty over both unfamiliar and standard repertoire. Disappointing returns in earned and contributed income resulted in a significant operating loss for the year. After offsetting the loss with a working capital reserve that had been built up over more than a decade of strong performance, the company holds an accumulated deficit of \$831,000 on a budget of \$9.7-million.

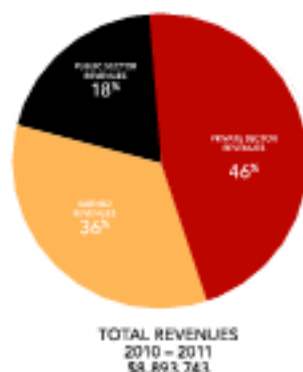
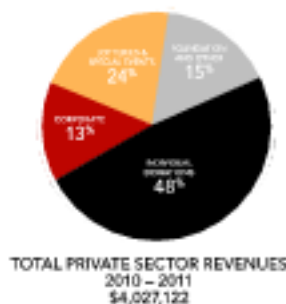
In mid-season, in anticipation of this loss, management took steps to reduce ongoing administrative and operating costs by approximately \$500,000 per year. Significant among these measures was the signing of a favourable long-term lease for the company's consolidated facilities at the O'Brian Centre. In addition, the 2011-2012 season was adjusted in order to maximize subscription revenues, increase subscriber retention rates, and attract new audiences. The mainstage programming has already garnered extremely high enthusiasm, with a subscriber retention rate that is likely to match or exceed the highest on record. Programming and fiscal decisions in the coming years will be made with a view to steady elimination of the accumulated deficit.

strategic planning

Since 2000, Vancouver Opera's board and management have developed meaningful strategic plans that have both stretched the organization and clearly laid out a cautiously ambitious future. By and large, the goals of these previous plans have been met in both financial and artistic areas.

The strategic plan has identified six key areas: Programming; Financial Management and Income; Governance; Operations and Facilities Leadership; and 2010 and Beyond. VO is engaging in a new strategic planning process and is already developing productions for 2012-2014, with continued emphasis on 20th century work and co-productions with other North American opera companies.

financial stability



The Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code (Ethical Code) lays out a set of standards for charitable organizations to manage and report their financial affairs responsibly. By adhering to these standards, charities are complying with generally accepted practices for soliciting and managing donor dollars.