

# Welcome

Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company. Scottish Opera's mission is to entertain, inspire, surprise, educate, challenge, and delight audiences old and new by delivering high quality, powerful opera throughout Scotland, the rest of the UK, and internationally. The company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson. The inaugural productions of *Madama* Butterfly and Pelléas and Mélisande at the King's Theatre in Glasgow set the artistic tone for the company's future, one that placed repertoire staples next to daring, under-explored works. In 1974, Scottish Opera purchased the Theatre Royal Glasgow from STV, which reopened in 1975 as Scotland's first national opera house. The Orchestra of Scottish Opera was founded in 1980.

The Company gives regular mainstage performances in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Inverness. These productions are fully staged, complete works from the beginning of the operatic canon to world premieres. All of these performances, regardless of language, are supertitled in the theatre, and access and audio-described performances give all audiences a chance to experience opera.

The Company also tours small scale productions to communities across Scotland. In 1971 it became the first

European opera company to establish an Education Department. It now runs an extensive education and outreach programme for people of all ages, social backgrounds, and abilities that contributes to the development of personal creativity, interest in opera, and wellbeing.

Scottish Opera is one of five National Performing Companies funded directly by the Scottish Government. It also attracts significant support from individuals, trusts, and the private sector alongside earned income from ticket sales, production hire, transport, and manufacturing.

Scottish Opera takes its role as a National Performing Company and the only full-time, professional opera company in Scotland very seriously. It is committed to playing a leading role in supporting and developing the creation, performance, and enjoyment of opera across the country; demonstrating Scotland's operatic credentials to the rest of the UK and internationally; and supporting the development of young artists. It contributes significantly to Scotland's cultural ecology, retaining artists, creatives, artisans, and other performance-related professionals in Scotland through employment and training opportunities.

# Chair's Statement

This year has brought challenges for Scottish Opera not seen in my lifetime, with the global pandemic posing significant challenges and threats to our organisation. However, the adventurous spirit, the transformative business changes embracing digital (that had been previously put in place), and the resilience built into the Company have enabled us to navigate the uncertainty brought by the pandemic with flair, pride, and considerable passion.

As a keen supporter of the performing arts, it has been really difficult not having the regular opportunity to be part of live performances. But Scottish Opera provided us with a refreshing taste of that at the time when Scottish Government restrictions were briefly relaxed in late summer 2020, allowing us a 6-performance run of Puccini's La bohème under a canopy in Scottish Opera's Edington Street car park. I congratulate everyone involved – staff, creatives, and audiences – for their willingness, quick thinking, and excellent collaboration to make these performances happen.

Investing in and developing new talent has remained at the heart of Scottish Opera's vision despite the pandemic. The 2020/21 Emerging Artists singers were able to embed themselves within Scottish Opera

with a programme of filmed performances. Their talent was enjoyed by thousands of people in Scotland and beyond in the filmed *Opera Highlights* and films of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*.

We remain grateful to the Scottish
Government for its continued support and
commitment to core funding. In particular,
we are indebted to former Cabinet
Secretary for Culture, Tourism, and External
Affairs Fiona Hyslop for her demonstrable
enthusiasm and dedication to Scottish
Opera throughout her ten years in post.

I cannot thank our supporters enough — audiences, trusts, foundations, businesses, and individual donors — for everything they have done to support Scottish Opera through these hugely challenging times. Your support has been constant and the commitment you make is never taken for granted by staff and Board.

During the year, we were sad to see Anthony Burton retire from the Board but we were delighted to welcome May Ferries as a Director.

We recognise that there are many external influences at play. In particular, we must look at how we may emerge from the

pandemic, especially with on-going issues of worldwide touring and travel regulations. We must look at how we continue to work with co-producers and hire out productions to other opera houses.

The Board and Senior Management Team in particular have demonstrated expert leadership, determination, resilience, and enthusiasm, and for this I extend my gratitude. The commitment and effort of the entire Scottish Opera team to switch from live work to a digital programme is to be applauded. We are ready to emerge from the pandemic with many more tools in our box, necessary to achieve our global digital ambitions. We are also, most importantly, looking forward to welcoming our audiences back to our theatres and venues!

#### **Peter Lawson**

Chair of Scottish Opera



# 2020/21 Summary

In the 2020/21 financial year, the Covid-19 pandemic gravely impacted all segments of the performing arts and the lives of millions who rely on this industry. Scottish Opera has, however, had a strong year in spite of the challenges presented. Scottish Opera learned digital skills to release a series of films, performed live opera outdoors when restrictions allowed, maintained jobs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), maintained full pay of self-employed artists and contractual staff whose engagements were curtailed, and supported the nation by making scrubs and PPE (personal protective equipment). Scottish Opera supporters remained loyal and audiences appreciated and were inspired by the company's adaptability.

This was Music Director Stuart Stratford's fifth year with Scottish Opera. His knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm continue to play a key part in shaping the Company's artistic success.

Scottish Opera continued to champion imaginative, innovative programming that is accessible for a wide audience. This year, a key pillar of this work was Scottish Opera: On Screen, a series of opera films made throughout lockdown. Scottish Opera was the only Scottish National Performing Company to present live performances during the 2020 pandemic.



820 sets of scrubs made for NHS Scotland

87
films posted on YouTube
with a total of 238,030 views

2,079
people saw Pop-up Opera at 46 performances

665
people at 6 sold-out outdoor
performances of *La bohème* 

27,984
people from 66 different
countries took part in the online
Primary Schools Project Fever!

collaborations with the
Edinburgh International Festival,
Lammermuir Festival, and
Perth Festival

BBC Radio Scotland broadcasts

Classical Music Digital Award 2020 for *The Narcissistic Fish* 

Over 260,000 people, in Scotland and beyond, experienced Scottish Opera in 2020/21

# **Online Performances**

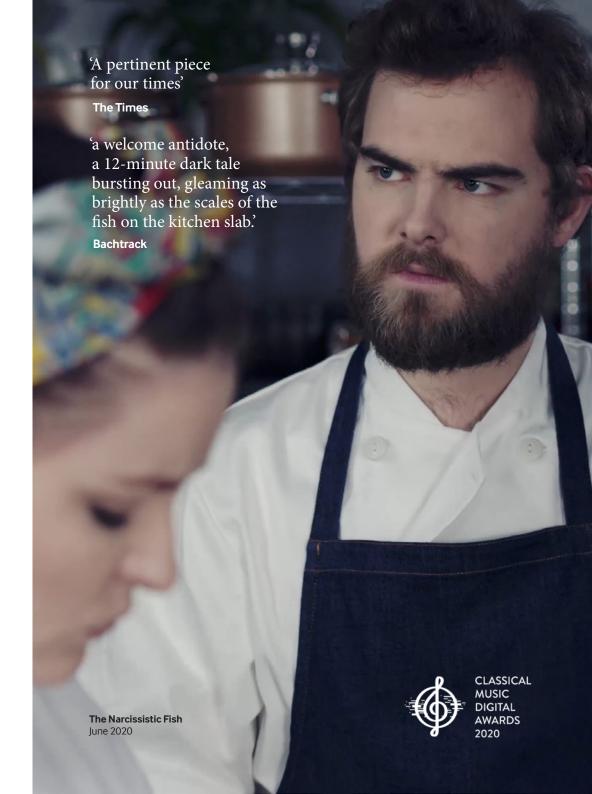
Scottish Opera: On Screen was created in response to the pandemic. Between April 2020 and March 2021, six new films were launched:

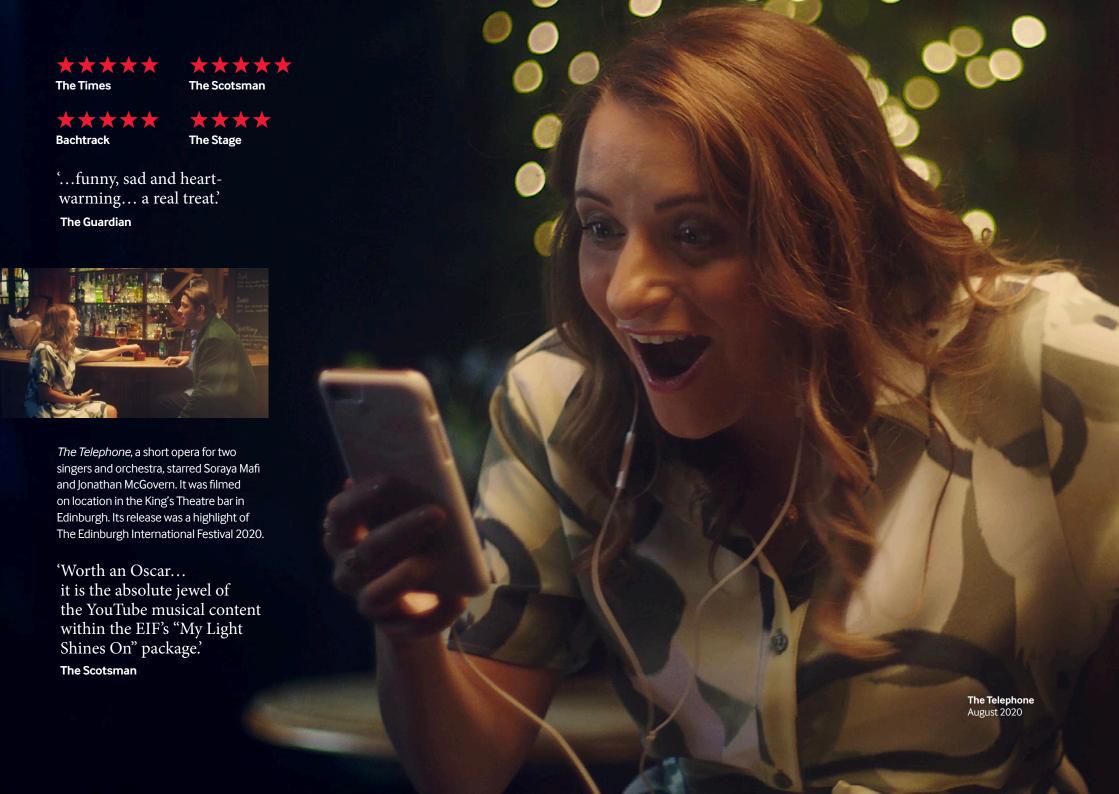
- The Narcissistic Fish by Samuel Bordoli
- The Telephone by Gian Carlo Menotti
- The Diary of One Who Disappeared by Leos Janáček
- Opera Highlights Online
- Così fan tutte by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Hansel and Gretel by Engelbert Humperdinck

These included a world premiere, four new productions of semi-staged operas, and a film for Opera Highlights. A film for South Lanarkshire Council was also made for launch in April 2021.

Planned live performances for the end of the 2019/20 Season and the whole of the 2020/21 Season were postponed. At the start of the pandemic, a tranche of shortform films were made by members of The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, freelance choristers, and Scottish Opera Emerging Artists. A highlight is 'Dance a Cachucha' (*The Gondoliers*) which included all of The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and the chorus of this postponed production.

Scottish Opera's first digital 'Opera Short', *The Narcissistic Fish*, was commissioned in 2018 from former Composer-in-Residence Bordoli with libretto by Jenni Fagan. This film starred 2019/20 Emerging Artists Arthur Bruce, Charlie Drummond, and Mark Nathan. When it was released in June 2020, it captured the imagination of thousands, gaining over 61,000 national and international views on YouTube with many viewers first-timers to opera. It also won a 2020 Classical Music Digital Award and was a special feature at Aberdeen's Sound Festival in January 2021.





The Diary of One Who Disappeared was the first of several films made at the Theatre Royal Glasgow, ensuring work for choristers and backstage theatre staff who would otherwise not have any income. This film involved musicians from The Orchestra of Scottish Opera as well as renowned tenor Ed Lyons. They were joined by Lucy Schaufer, Sioned Gwen Davies, Scottish Opera Associate Artist Heather Ireson, and Scottish Opera Emerging Artist Catriona Hewitson.

Opera Highlights normally tours to around 35 locations each year across the length and breadth of Scotland. As a response to the pandemic, Scottish Opera created Opera Highlights Online, a film with the four 2020/21 Emerging Artists: Catriona Hewitson, Margo Arsane, Shengzhi Ren and Arthur Bruce. Scottish Opera is grateful to the Friends of Scottish Opera for supporting this film.

The same four Emerging Artists were also the stars in Così fan tutte, directed by Scottish Opera Staff Director Roxana Haines. They were joined by Charlie Drummond and lette Parker Young Artist Michael Mofidian, Music Director Stuart Stratford conducted The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and chorus. This film had a special preview cinema screening in Inverness when restrictions allowed.

'Scottish Opera's filmed staging of Mozart's Così fan tutte – cleverly played as a gameshow without flogging the idea – gives a platform to SO's emerging artists, each singer bursting with promise and a recent graduate of the scheme, Charlie Drummond as Fiordiligi, proving the company's ability to spot star quality.'

#### The Observer

'Stylish stuff...Stuart Stratford conducts a pacy, energised account of the score, and with the orchestra at the back of the stage rather than in the pit, we don't miss any details.'

The I





The full breakdown of viewer numbers, including those from two archive opera films released (*Anthropocene* 2019 and *Candide* 1988), can be seen below. Views from YouTube are reported by the site's internal algorithms based on viewers spending longer than 30 seconds on the video. Videos were also hosted on Facebook, but Facebook does not present statistics in a form suitable for reporting.

## Number of YouTube viewings

Narcissistic Fish	61,826
Emerging Artists Recital	1,134
The Telephone	15,805
Diary of One Who Disappeared	3,109
Opera Highlights	3,340
Così fan tutte	9,121
Hansel and Gretel	8,769
Anthropocene	3,504
Candide	1,200
Home films – 80 made in total	130,222
Total (not including home films)	107,808

In addition, over 44 million people viewed social media 'impressions' (previews, partial views, and social media advertisements) of Scottish Opera: On Screen.



# Live Performances

Restrictions in Scotland eased in late Summer 2020, long enough for a 6-performance run of Puccini's *La bohème* under a canopy in Scottish Opera's Edington Street car park. Each show was sold to capacity, with audience members sitting 2 metres away from each other in household bubbles of 2-3 seats. In total, 665 people attended *La bohème*.

Scottish Opera was the only Scottish National Performing Company to perform live during the financial year. The care and effort Scottish Opera demonstrated in producing a safe, crowd-pleasing opera earned positive reviews from the press and attendees.

'I have seen La bohème at the Met. The full dog and pony show, this was different but in no way inferior...I felt that the scale and tone was just right ...and the conditions suited a more 'fun' and slimmed down interpretation for myself too. Even the set was a little playful and silly which worked very well with the tone you were going for. All in all, I think they did an excellent job.'

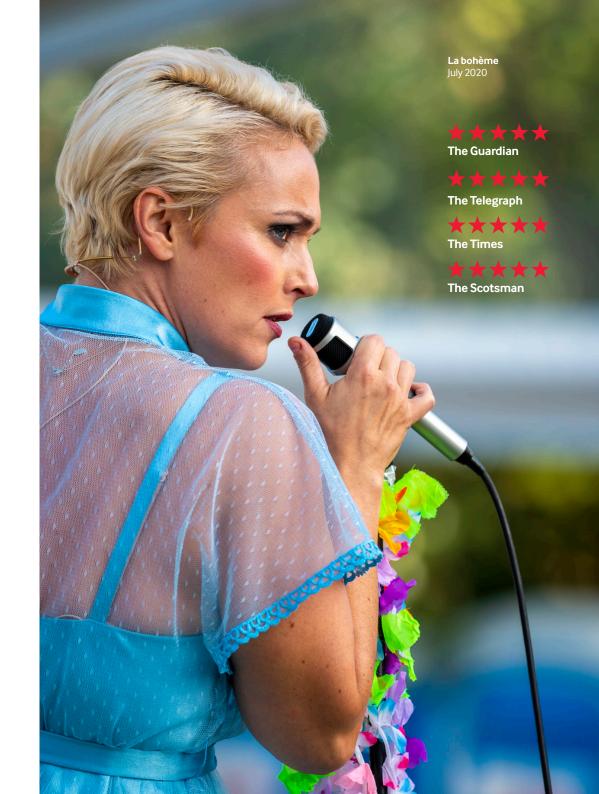
### **Audience member**

'Well done Scottish Opera for bringing opera so powerfully back to life.'

#### The Scotsman

'A true triumph of artistic endeavour over adversity and a great morale boost in difficult times.'

The Guardian







For the rest of the country, Scottish Opera reconfigured the annual Pop-up Opera tour to allow five performers to be socially-distanced on a 'stage' — a trailer with the curtain-sides open. On offer were three shows: two cleverly re-written 25-minute versions of full operas — A Little Bit of Don Giovanni and A Little Bit of The Gondoliers— and an entirely new work created for families — The Song of The Clyde. All tickets were free, with enthusiastic, weather-proof audiences socially distanced outside.

The tour included locations such as The Beacon Arts Centre in Greenock, Platform Theatre in Easterhouse, The Riverside Museum in Glasgow, Eden Court in Inverness, Heart of Hawick in the Borders, Slessor Gardens in Dundee, Edinburgh Zoo, and the Museum of Flight in East Lothian.

In total, there were 46 performances playing to 2079 audience members.

- 98% of audience members rated Pop-up Opera 'a positive experience overall'
- 89% of attendees would come again for autumn or winter shows despite the Scottish weather!

A selection of audience reactions from around the country show the joy and fun Pop-up performances brought:

'Great staff making sure we all felt safe and welcome. And the performers were fab!'

'I was so happy to hear live music again I cried.'

'Please do it again. A bright hour to cheer us up in this difficult time. I have enjoyed Scottish Opera for many years and I look forward to their productions in the theatres again.'

'The whole experience was uplifting and hugely enjoyable.'

'The front of house staff were really welcoming and, despite the small audience, the performers had great energy.'

'Wonderful to see live music of such a high standard. Would like more!'









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## Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the Company's award-winning education and outreach programme. It could no longer provide for large sections of the communities it serves in the same way, particularly older adults and young children.

When the Primary Schools Tour of Warriors! The Emperor's Incredible Armywas brought to an abrupt halt in March 2020, the team changed tactics to create a pack of digital materials for Fever!, an online opera for children about the race to cure a mystery illness. Designed for 8-12 year olds with key learning outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence in mind, Fever! was initially distributed to Scottish schools who shared the links with pupils through their online learning portals. It attracted views and downloads from all over the UK, Chicago, Dubai, Copenhagen, Paris, Los Angeles, Beijing, and Brisbane. The final presentation was a live version of the show, with over 200 families taking part. They participated in the songs and dances, interacted with the cast through request shout-outs and mentions, and communicated with each other through the live chat.

A lot of positive feedback was received:

'Thank you so much for Fever! Honestly, it was the best learning thing we did together over lockdown... It's been the only thing suggested by the school that hasn't provoked groans. Your commitment to quality education for primary aged children is just brilliant and makes me feel very proud.'

## Parent participant

Having completed the classroom work of *Tiny Chef* (a series of creative workshops that explored Chinese and Scottish cuisine, the associated vocabulary, literacy, and numeracy in both Mandarin and English in line with A Curriculum for Excellence) prior to lockdown, Scottish Opera created a digital book featuring some of the pupils' work. In December 2020 it was distributed to all 157 Confucius Classroom Schools in Scotland and is now being enjoyed by their pupils.

A new project called *Meet the Brassketeers* was developed by three brass players from The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, but it was not possible to get into primary schools to continue the project in person. Therefore, Scottish Opera and film animator Jamie Macdonald adapted the project for online, supported by curriculum-based tools designed to enhance music and numeracy skills of Primary 1-3 pupils. The materials launched in time for the 50th anniversary of the Scottish Opera Education Programme in April 2021.

Both the Young Company and the Young Company Gateway have been lifelines for exceptional young Scottish talent.

Their production of Stephen Sondheim's *The Frogs*, due to be performed in April 2020, was sadly cancelled due to lockdown, but the Young Company maintained regular sessions on Zoom working towards a new performance in Summer 2021. The Community Choir met weekly online during lockdown, with an average attendance of 35. This has proved to be a crucial piece of contact for all of the members.







Animation stills from Meet the Brassketeers

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# The Orchestra of Scottish Opera

Music Director Stuart Stratford continued to conduct The Orchestra of Scottish Opera in many of the online films and at the outdoor production of *La bohème*, where the socially distanced orchestra set up in the building's paint shop with their sound amplified to the outdoor stage. With far fewer performance dates, orchestral musicians were able to make use of flexible furlough. The orchestra's quick adaptation to working under pandemic conditions, as well as their dedication to at-home videos, were a key feature in the success of outdoor and online performances.

Following successful performances at the Lammermuir Festival in 2018 and 2019, the 2020 Festival was online and featured Scottish Opera in the semi-staged film of Janáček's *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*. The Perth Festival also went online in 2020 and featured Scottish Opera's at-home content.

BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune' series played excerpts from Scottish Opera's film of *Così fan tutte* in December 2020. BBC Radio Scotland's 'Classics Unwrapped' broadcast audio from the film of *Hansel and Gretel*, with commentary and narration, in February 2021.

'The experience of creating a video as part of The Orchestra of Scottish Opera at the start of the pandemic gave me a purpose and feeling of community, when it was very easy to feel isolated and lost. I hoped that seeing members of the orchestra recording their individual parts alone but, through technology, being part of something larger would speak to those feeling isolated by the pandemic and allow them to experience that sense of community.

Lauren Reeve-Rawlings, Horn Player for The Orchestra of Scottish Opera



# Our Supporters and Donors

Income generated through fundraising for the year 2020/21 totalled £796,027. We at Scottish Opera are grateful to all donors, who helped us to continue reaching audiences from babies to adults, in a huge range of styles and formats including new online work. Special thanks are due to Dunard Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation (Cultural Recovery Fund), the members of Scottish Opera's Syndicate, and the Binks Trust, who all provided significant support during a very challenging time.

Special mention must be made of those who supported our talented props and wardrobe staff with gifts to help them as they designed and made PPE for NHS and care settings around Glasgow.

Scottish Opera is very fortunate to have loyal and committed annual supporters giving through our Alexander Gibson Circle, Emerging Artists programme, Education Angels scheme, Music Director's Circle, and New Commissions Circle. Scottish Opera is also grateful to our Friends of Scottish Opera.

The grants Scottish Opera received from 29 charitable trusts and foundations were important in helping us realise our artistic ambitions, creating new work and reaching audiences by new means. Scottish Opera

is especially grateful to those supporters who agreed to pause their grants as many of our outreach programmes had to be suspended, with a view to resuming giving when Scottish Opera is able to re-start these projects.

Scottish Opera also wishes to thank the corporate sponsors including Baillie Gifford, NVT, and Capital Document Solutions, that support our work with gifts in cash and in-kind.

The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust, funded through gifts in the wills of supporters over many years, continues to play a key role in supporting our work. It remains our intention that legacy gifts to the Company will be transferred to the Trust for investment, where careful stewardship means the gifts will continue to help Scottish Opera for generations to come. Scottish Opera is so grateful to our supporters who have helped us by leaving a gift, as well as those who have pledged to do so in the future through the Dame lanet Baker Circle.

#### **Kirsten Howie**

Director of Fundraising at Scottish Opera



# Our People

Scottish Opera made a commitment to support staff throughout lockdown via the CJRS and was also able to retain on the payroll those whose fixed term contracts ended during the pandemic. Because of this, Scottish Opera spent £1.8m on additional staff costs including salary, pension and national insurance costs, a portion of which was claimed back through the furlough scheme.

Scottish Opera also supported 262 selfemployed people – creatives, musicians, actors, choristers, technical staff and chaperones – all of whom were paid for performances that were cancelled or postponed.

182 people benefited from the Furlough Scheme in the 2020/21 financial year. The Company retained 196 employees on the payroll.

Scottish Opera is committed to the principles of equal opportunities and equal treatment of all employees and artists.

The Company is developing a strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion, in all areas including backstage, creative teams and casting.

Scottish Opera voluntarily carried out the Gender Pay Reporting in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 to cover the 2020/21 financial year. The full findings and data requirements can be found on the Scottish Opera website.

At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, Scottish Opera became one of over 170 cultural organisations to have signed up to The Green Arts Initiative. This forms part of the company's long term commitment to reducing its environmental impact, which is an ongoing effort.

The Green Arts Initiative is a proactive network which aims to build and maintain a Scottish green arts community. Run by Creative Carbon Scotland, with oversight and support from a members' steering group, it enhances the sustainability competencies of arts organisations across the country and supports the sharing of relevant knowledge, ideas, and experiences.

# Financials and Fundraising

Due to the unusual and challenging circumstances of the pandemic, income from trading activities (including mainstage ticket sales) and charitable activities (including education) is lower than previous years. Expenditure for these areas has seen a corresponding drop, though additional money was spent covering costs incurred by Covid-19 measures. Please note that the 2020/21 Fundraising income is included under Donations and Charitable activities.

Scottish Opera is immensely grateful to the Scottish Government for their continued funding as well as for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

This financial support allowed Scottish Opera to maintain staff and functions in a year when generating income through traditional productions and events was often impossible.

## Fundraising Income (in £)

Total	796,027
Legacy	28,977
Corporate (incl in kind)	55,500
Trust & Foundations	119,323
Major Gifts	97,500
Individuals	494,727

#### Income (in £)

Total income	12,790,687
Theatre Tax Credit	87,366
CJRS	2,496,247
nvestments	730
Other trading activities	278,655
Charitable activities	264,683
Donations	9,663,006

### Expenditure (in £)

Total	10,349,775
Governance	21,083
Small scale touring	104,271
Fundraising	321,179
Education	565,097
Support costs	793,418
Cost of Virus	3,312,596
Main Scale Productions	5,232,131

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# Thank you

I close Scottish Opera's 2020/21 Annual Report by expressing my immense gratitude for the patience, dedication and energy that the many skilled and creative people who choose to work with and for Scottish Opera have shown throughout this difficult time. We have had to make difficult decisions and create work differently, knowing our plans would likely change given the uncertainty of legislation and public health. I couldn't be more grateful to the resilience, flexibility, kindness, and determination shown by everyone who has been part of the Scottish Opera 'family' in the past year, particularly my senior team colleagues.

A huge thank you to all those who have engaged in our digital activity, and those who were able to see us perform at *La bohème* and Pop-up Opera. Thank you especially for the many messages of support and all of the donations — regular ones as well as one-offs.

I look forward very much to being able to welcome each and every one of you back to our places of work and venues when it is safe to resume in a post-pandemic society.

### **Alex Reedijk**

General Director of Scottish Opera

Photography: Beth Chalmers, James Glossop, Colin Hattersley, Julie Howden and David Sneddon.



