

Annual Report 2017-2018



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Opera Holland Park



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Chairman's Introduction

Charles Mackay CBE

Opera Holland Park has had another tremendously successful year, our third as an independent company. The 2018 Season received acclaim from the critics and public alike Both *La traviata* and *Isabeau* sold out and across our four opera productions average occupancy was 98%. We also extended our work with other companies nationally and internationally, co-producing *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Scottish Opera and *Isabeau* with New York City Opera.

We were delighted to receive nominations in two categories of the 2019 International Opera Awards: Festival for our whole 2018 Season and Rediscovered Work for *Isabeau*. Rodula Gaitanou, who directed our hugely successful *La traviata* and will be returning in 2019 to direct *Un ballo in maschera*, has also been nominated in the Director category.

Our Hope for Grenfell Gala was the winner of the Theatrical Event of the Year at the Broadway World Awards and received the Music Magazine Editor's Award. Produced by Director of Opera James Clutton, the Gala was held in memory of the victims of the Grenfell Tower Fire and proceeds went towards supporting the Rugby Portobello Trust's work with the Grenfell Community. Lastly, the Milan International Film Festival gave two awards to our General Director, Michael Volpe's short film, *Hip Hop to Opera*, which followed him taking eight South London teenagers and giving them their first experience of opera.

Inspire, Opera Holland Park's Outreach & Education programme, continued to go from strength to strength with our very first Schools' Matinee of *La traviata* and the extension of our work with refugees. Alongside all of this, we reduced the operating deficit by a further £130,000 bringing it down from £643,000 in the previous year to £513,000.

Whilst we are on track to meet our goal of financial sustainability, the task becomes harder as we get closer to achieving this. We need to continue to grow our fundraising and our ticket and non-ticket income, and I would urge all those reading this to consider ways in which they might increase their support.

In the meantime, a very big thank you to Investec Wealth & Investment, who have just finished their eighth year as title sponsor in which they developed for us The Ensemble, our new bar and lounge for donors at Envoy level and above. And an equally big thank you to our Founders, who invested in the artistic excellence of the company at the very beginning of our independence and whose support has been critical to our success, and to our Benefactors, Ambassadors, Envoys, Members and Friends, many of whom have been key supporters of Opera Holland Park since the very beginning and continue to be so to this day. And very many thanks also to our Volunteers who support us with their valuable time, selling programmes, manning our Stage Door and helping in the office.

I should also like to pay special tribute to our two Directors, Michael Volpe and James Clutton, and our management and staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes. And my warmest thanks go to my fellow Trustees who work closely and effectively with the Directors and Senior Managers to steer the Opera Holland Park ship. They were joined in July by Michael Jary who brings top level experience in strategy consultancy and the charity sector. Our Campaign Board generously give their time to support the Development Team to find and attract new supporters for Opera Holland Park, which is much appreciated.

General Director's Report

Michael Volpe

It seems no time at all since we separated from The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, yet here we are reporting on our third full season – one which consolidates our position as an important part of London's cultural community.

When I drew up the first plans for Opera Holland Park in the summer of 1995, a key part of the design was for the company to form a vital role in providing opportunities for emergent, largely British-based singers. It is hugely satisfying that, all these years later, this is still the core driving principle of the company, as exemplified by the success of several singers through the 2018 Season.

Our repertoire remains adventurous, and 21 years after we first introduced Londoners to rare late period Italian opera, it fills us with joy that Mascagni's *Isabeau* was one of the first in our season to sell out. Our co-production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (our first Strauss opera) with Scottish Opera was a rewarding experience for all concerned and superb summer weather was the icing on the cake for the 2018 Season.

The season was also marked by our continuing involvement with the Grenfell tragedy, but this time with hope and optimism at the heart of our endeavours. The Hope for Grenfell Gala was a moving and intensely challenging event to stage but it raised an enormous amount of money for our friends at Rugby Portobello Trust, who have established a special fund in the name of our friend, Debbie Lamprell.

Times remain challenging for arts companies. OHP is no different in this regard, but it is very pleasing to report that we reached our demanding financial goals for 2017-2018. Our patrons continue to support us with vigour and commitment, and we have introduced new schemes for the 2019 Season to provide even greater reward for their loyalty. In uncertain times, such support is invaluable and we continue to be immensely grateful for it.

Throughout this report you will find information about the activities of the company during the year, our successes and our ambitions. The efforts of all of our staff, their dedication and their skill, make the lives of all of us much easier and my personal thanks are extended to each of them. Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of our patrons and supporters.



Director of Opera's Report

James Clutton

La traviata, Giuseppe Verdi

This was the first time that Opera Holland Park had staged *La traviata* since 2007. Given the pressure that attends the opening show of the season, especially when a work is as well-loved as this one, we needed to be sure that the production would represent the company at its most musically sensitive, most stylish and most dramatically vital.

Director Rodula Gaitanou and designer Cordelia Chisholm first worked together on the 2016 OHP production of *The Queen of Spades*, and went on to great success in their 2016 Wexford Festival production of Samuel Barber's *Vanessa*. Their attention to detail made them an ideal creative fit with Mathew Kofi Waldren, a former OHP Young Artist who has come up through the ranks of the company and is now one of our leading conductors.

The Australian soprano Lauren Fagan made her role debut as Violetta, singing opposite the young Italian tenor Matteo Desole, who made his UK debut as Alfredo, commuting between London and La Scala in Milan during rehearsals. The reviews of *La traviata* were uniformly outstanding.

One of the most pleasing things about the reaction was the critical and public appreciation of the entire cast, including the OHP Chorus and those singers in the smaller roles – an ensemble of long-term members of the OHP cast and former Young Artists. Rodula Gaitanou was subsequently nominated in the Best Director category of the International Opera Awards.

I am pleased to say that we have kept Cordelia's set so that we can revive *La traviata*, and have filmed a performance for our records.



Reviews

'The characters are well defined, the chorus groupings perfectly handled, and every detail of the staging is a delight. It is a long time since any La traviata looked and felt as beguiling as this.'

Richard Fairman, *Financial Times*

'Matthew Kofi Waldren propels the score urgently forward, admirably avoiding sentimentality.'

Tim Ashley, *Guardian*

'Go, if you can get a ticket.'

Hugh Canning, *Sunday Times*

'One of the most moving Traviatas I have seen.'

David Mellor, *Mail on Sunday*

'Director Rodula Gaitanou is sensitive to every nuance of Verdi's tragedy.'

Clare Colvin, *Sunday Express*

'An impeccably cast new production raises the bar.'

Michael Church, *Independent*

'The most distinguished new Traviata to reach London in years.'

Mark Valencia, *WhatsOnStage*



Director of Opera's Report (continued)

Così fan tutte, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

As with *La traviata*, we set out to produce a *Così fan tutte* that was 'classic with a twist'. Following on from their success with *Don Giovanni* in 2017, the former Opera Holland Park Young Artists Dane Lam and Oliver Platt headed the creative team as conductor and director, joined by Alyson Cummins, whose designs brought to life the cosmopolitan street life and fashions of 18th-century Naples.

This was a beautifully balanced 'home' cast that contributed to OHP's nomination in the Best Festival category of the International Opera Awards.

Kitty Whately (Dorabella) and Sarah Tynan (Despina) had both appeared at OHP on many occasions. Nicholas Lester (Guglielmo) started his career in the OHP Chorus in 2007. Nick Pritchard (Ferrando) was an OHP Young Artist in 2014. Peter Coleman-Wright and Eleanor Dennis, familiar to London audiences from their work at ENO and elsewhere, made their OHP debuts.

For the first time, the six principal roles were covered by six singers from the OHP Chorus, who received additional coaching and rehearsal time in the style of the Young Artists Scheme, and gave performances of a reduced version of the opera in hospitals and care homes around the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, as part of our Inspire programme.



Reviews

'It is the triumph of Opera Holland Park's vision and planning that the casting of this ensemble piece is so outstandingly accomplished, much more so than in recent productions at ENO and the Royal Opera. With a mix of singers making their company debuts and established members it proved just how much British-based talent there is, sometimes overlooked by larger and better funded London companies.'

John Johnston, *Bachtrack*

'Eleanor Dennis's complex Fiordiligi, Kitty Whately's extrovert Dorabella, Nicholas Lester's cocksure Guglielmo and Nick Pritchard's sensitive Ferrando all sing their parts to a degree of excellence rarely encountered.'
George Hall, *The Stage*

'This is a musical jewel box that conductor Dane Lam and the City of London Sinfonia unlock with exuberance and beauty.'
Mark Valencia, *WhatsOnStage*

'As Fiordiligi, Eleanor Dennis has a truly gorgeous soprano – glowing, ample, easeful – and her lovingly intense account of Per pietà was the show's vocal highlight.'
Rupert Christiansen,
Daily Telegraph



Photos from left to right: Sarah Tynan as Despina in *Così fan tutte*, 2018 © Robert Workman;
Nicholas Lester as Guglielmo, Peter Coleman-Wright as Don Alfonso and Nick Pritchard as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, 2018 © Robert Workman

Director of Opera's Report (continued)

Ariadne auf Naxos, Richard Strauss

Developing creative relationships with other opera companies in Britain and abroad has become central to our planning since the 2016 premiere of Oliver Platt's staging of *La Cenerentola*, our first co-production with Danish Opera.

Co-produced with Scottish Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos* was Opera Holland Park's first production of an opera by Richard Strauss and a tremendous success in its London run, conducted by Brad Cohen with the City of London Sinfonia. This was a homecoming for director and designer Antony McDonald's staging, which had used a facsimile of Holland House as a backdrop for the performances in Glasgow and Edinburgh in March.

A superb ensemble cast, including OHP regulars Jennifer France and Julia Sporsén as Zerbinetta and the Composer, and OHP debuting artist Alex Otterburn as Harlequin, were praised in the press for their singing, dancing and circus skills, gaining four- and five-star reviews from *The Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *The Stage* and other publications.



Reviews

'Strauss's score, an enigmatic mix of jaunty detail and voluptuous flow, is perceptively handled by the conductor Brad Cohen.'
George Hall, *Financial Times*

'Jennifer France has been championed by OHP for several years now... this living jewel in opera's crown sings the heck out of her music – helium notes and all.'
Mark Valencia, *WhatsOnStage*

'A stylish and wickedly funny staging that ends fittingly in a fireworks display.'
Clare Colvin, *Sunday Express*



Photos from left to right: Lucy Hall as Echo, Elizabeth Cragg as Naiad and Laura Zigmantaite as Dryad in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2018 © Ali Wright; Elgan Llŷr Thomas as Brighella, Alex Otterburn as Harlequin, Daniel Norman as Scaramuccio and Lancelot Nomura as Truffaldino in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2018 © Robert Workman

Director of Opera's Report (continued)

Isabeau, Pietro Mascagni

Italian rarities have long been one of Opera Holland Park's specialties. In terms of Mascagni's operas, we have produced *Iris*, *L'amico Fritz* and *Zanetto*, in addition to *Cavalleria rusticana*.

The UK premiere staging of *Isabeau*, Mascagni's 1911 mediaeval fantasy, resulted in OHP's nomination in the Rediscovered Works category of the 2019 International Opera Awards. Reviving any long-forgotten work is always a gamble.

Reviews ranged from one- to five-stars (a professional first for me!) but were united in their praise of the OHP Chorus, French soprano Anne Sophie Duprels in the title role and the British tenor David Butt Philip as Folco, who first appeared in the OHP Chorus as a young baritone.

This was the company's first co-production with New York City Opera, and marked the OHP debut of the Italian conductor Francesco Cilluffo. New York City Opera will be reviving Martin Lloyd-Evans's production in their 2019/20 Season.



Reviews

'Francesco Cilluffo conducted on his London debut with terrific conviction, and the City of London Sinfonia responded nobly, especially in the ambitious orchestral intermezzo that accompanies the naked ride that Isabeau is forced to undertake for refusing each of five knightly suitors. The French soprano Anne Sophie Duprels carried the title role with emotional honesty and technical security, as she did here last year in Leoncavallo's Zazá, her tone never wilting under the powerful orchestral writing. In a performance that deserves wide notice, the tenor David Butt Philip has never sounded more exciting as Folco, the lover who fatefully captures Isabeau's heart.'

Martin Kettle, The Guardian

'A touching, impassioned, vocally fearless Isabeau, and an ardent, heroic Folco, are worth the price of the ticket alone.'
Hugh Canning, Sunday Times

'A faultless production of a minor work.'
Mark Ronan, Daily Telegraph



Director of Opera's Report (continued)

2018 Young Artists

Another group of exciting emerging professionals, including the young singers Alison Langer and Alys Roberts, director Cecilia Stinton and conductor Harry Sever, were mentored and coached through the rehearsal process of *La traviata*, culminating in two highly successful main-stage performances: the Young Artists Performance on 11 June, and the Schools' Matinee on 13 June. In addition to these performances, the Young Artists also worked with us on a variety of *Inspire* outreach projects as part of their training. Once again we were able to improve the format and increase the impact of this training scheme, which we are now confident is the best of its kind in the UK.

Following Lauren Fagan's performance as Violetta was always going to be a challenge but Alison made the title role her own, gaining a wonderful review in the industry bible, *Opera* magazine. I am very happy that she will be returning to Holland Park this summer to perform the role of Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*.

The inaugural OHP Schools' Matinee, held on the same day as the award-winning Hope for Grenfell Gala, was one of the greatest successes. 1,000 children watched a performance of *La traviata* with total attention, giving our Young Artists a curtain call that sounded like a rock concert.

'The Young Artist scheme truly is a rare and invaluable experience that I don't think a young singer can get anywhere else in the UK.'
Alison Langer, singing Violetta



Reviews

'Langer presented a heroine who was all of a piece, naturally sympathetic and retaining a certain reserve rather than pleading for our sympathy. Likewise, her vocal interpretation, anchored in the caressing warmth of her middle register, was admirably integrated.'
Martin Kettle, *The Guardian*

'Alys Roberts, a compact spitfire projecting her sweet, vibrant soprano with arresting clarity.'
Yehuda Shapiro, *Opera*



Photos from top to bottom: Alison Langer as Violetta and Stephen Aviss as Alfredo at the Young Artists Performance of *La traviata*, 2018 © Robert Workman;
Felix Kemp as Marchese d'Obigny with the Opera Holland Park Chorus at the Young Artists Performance of *La traviata*, 2018 © Robert Workman

Director of Opera's Report (continued)

The Hope for Grenfell Gala

In 2017, in the wake of the Grenfell disaster, Opera Holland Park performed Verdi's Requiem in tribute to those who had died and to raise funds for those who were left behind. On the evening of 13 June 2018, on the first anniversary of the fire, we produced the Hope for Grenfell Gala, which involved 200 local children and amateur choirs that included survivors of the disaster. They were joined by the OHP Chorus, the City of London Sinfonia, and principal singers and conductors from some of our finest productions.

Speeches and poems were written and performed by children and young people from the area, introduced by Sir Trevor McDonald and the actors Dame Penelope Wilton, Celia Imrie, Imelda Staunton CBE and Jim Carter OBE. The evening included music by Beethoven, Puccini, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Noël Coward and Mozart, as well as fully-staged excerpts from our five-star production of *La traviata*.



The gala also featured the world premiere of 'Help Me Believe', a new piece created by Will Todd and Gareth Malone with members of the community, and the premiere of Will Todd's orchestrated arrangement of 'Amazing Grace'. The arrangement of 'Amazing Grace' was dedicated to our colleague Debbie Lamprell, who lost her life in the disaster, and the score was presented to Debbie's mother.

This was an emotional and inspiring night. We were thrilled that the performance raised in excess of £125,000 for the Rugby Portobello Trust's work with young people in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and very pleased to have won Theatrical Event of the Year at the Broadway World UK Awards and the 2019 Music Teacher Magazine Editor's Award.



Inspire Report

The premiere of *Refuge in Harmony* at the 2018 Opera Holland Park Open Day was one of the most rewarding events of our award-winning outreach and education programme, *Inspire*. 100 newly arrived unaccompanied minors were welcomed by OHP and the British Red Cross in 11 workshops across London, telling their stories and creating their own performance piece with five professional singers from OHP, a director, a composer, a conductor, a pianist and a string quartet.

All of the young people involved in *Refuge in Harmony* learned new skills, built friendships and increased in confidence through the creative process, which extended to designing a set built around the word 'welcome', written in the 12 languages spoken by the participants.

The drama they created together was witty, surreal and touching, and was warmly received in the theatre by an audience of over 400 people. As ever with OHP *Inspire* projects, the work was as inspiring for us as for them, and it was incredible to witness that energy both on and off the stage.

Our Open Day featured a wider variety of activities than ever before, ranging from singing in a Scratch Chorus, exploring set designs and costumes, conducting the City of London Sinfonia, an *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* tea party, a Q&A session with a panel composed of artists, creatives and members of the production team and musical performances both in and outside the auditorium. We welcomed 1,352 people to the theatre free of charge in a casual and engaging way.

1,000 students were introduced to and immersed in opera through the inaugural full-scale Schools' Matinee performance of *La traviata*, which saw a three-minute standing ovation from a packed house. This was a great opportunity to introduce children to the art form and welcome a new demographic to the theatre.

For those attending the Schools' Matinee performance, *Inspire* produced two supporting packages of pre-performance workshops and resource packs in advance of the performance. For 79% of the audience, *La traviata* was their first experience of watching an opera. For some, it was their first experience of entering a theatre. 91% of them enjoyed the experience, and several young audience members expressed interest in learning to play an instrument and pursuing a career in music.





'We're counting down the days until next year!'
Shivam, young participant



Clockwise: The Young Artists Cast and the Opera Holland Park Chorus at the curtain call of the Schools' Matinee of *La traviata*, 2018 © Helen Cooper; Alison Langer with school children from the audience after the Schools' Matinee performance of *La traviata*, 2018 © Helen Cooper; Refuge in Harmony participants on stage at Opera Holland Park © Helen Cooper

Inspire Report

During the season we provided a safe and relaxed environment at the theatre for families with young children to explore music together in seven OperaUNITY workshops that were tailored to different age-groups and needs. We will be continuing this project in the 2019 Season, using our partnership with Tri-Borough Music to extend our reach to more families.

Across the year, OHP's Out of the Park Opera engaged audiences with performances in the Chelsea and Westminster and Royal Brompton Hospitals, sheltered housing, care homes, hospices, community centres and centres for the homeless and for people with mental illnesses. Like *Refuge in Harmony*, this was a learning experience for our artists, too.

Working within an intimate setting and performing without set, costume and make up enabled them to connect better with their audiences and hone their art. In 2018 we reintroduced *Playlist for Life*, a simple but extremely effective initiative to bring memories to life and reconnect individuals who are living with dementia with their friends, families and carers. Nearly forty singers, instrumentalists and volunteers supported our team of playlisters in locations including Royal Hospital Chelsea, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Inkerman House, Princess Louise of Kensington Nursing Home and Garside Nursing Home. Through a mixture of one-on-one playlist sessions and six *Playlist Live* concerts, we established a connection through which to ease the symptoms of dementia.

'We've been to lots of family workshops, but this was by far the best.'
Father attending OperaUNITY with family



10,946

People engaged

0–18

Age range of children involved

55–98

Age range of elderly involved

27

Schools engaged



140

No. Inspire sessions



20

No. individual *Inspire* projects



2,960

No. of people who benefitted from free or subsidised tickets



16

Partners

*'Thank you so much for giving my mother her voice.
She has so enjoyed these weekly meetings.'*
Daughter of Inkerman House participant

*'I live for these, you cannot know how
much these mean to me.'*
Regular attendee of AgeUK concert
at St Cuthbert's Church



Access and Ticket Schemes

Implementing bespoke training, consultation and partner services, Opera Holland Park emerged this year as the first dementia-friendly opera company and the only London-based opera company to provide live audio-description services.

We also continue to be at the forefront of change in working practices in the opera industry. In 2018, we became the first opera company in the UK to implement childcare and parent-friendly rehearsal and performance scheduling, and hosted the inaugural SWAP'ra Gala, supporting women and parents in opera.

Alongside new access schemes, *Inspire* also offers almost 3,000 tickets (or 12% of the total tickets sold across the season) for free or for a reduced price for audiences in need of financial support and accessible services.

We were pleased to continue to offer free tickets for over 65s across all opera performances. The scheme was again oversubscribed, and we received an overwhelming number of applications. 100% of attendees gave the performance the highest rating of 'very enjoyable', with 70% of recipients being 70-80 years old. Free tickets for under 18s was again a great success with *La traviata* being the most popular production.

'This is a wonderful scheme. I brought a friend who would not have been able to afford a ticket, who greatly enjoyed the opera.'

Older audiences participant



Commitment to accessibility and diversity

Diversity and accessibility are central to Opera Holland Park's work on and off the stage, in creative collaborations with the community and with local charities. Our auditorium and facilities are wheelchair-accessible. Within the parameters of a Grade 1 listed site, we have maximised accessibility to our picnic and entertainment areas. Our theatre is dementia-friendly. We welcome guide dogs and provide surtitles for all of our productions.

We offer audio-described performances every season and have offered relaxed performances of our family and children's operas. Opera Holland Park is also committed to developing artistic, technical and administrative talent from a population that reflects the diversity of London. Opera Holland Park is currently in the process of creating a new and updated audience Diversity Strategy.



2018 in Figures



45,307

Number of people who saw an event in our theatre in 2018



32,278

Number of people who saw on OHP production



10,946

Number of people engaged by our *Inspire* work



2,960

Number of people who attended on our Free or Subsidised tickets.



Facebook

1,468,414

total impressions



Twitter

11.3 million

impressions over the 2018 season



Instagram

@operahollandpark



4345

followers



7,729

followers



1,362

followers



76,114

total video views



6,100

likes over the 2018 season



6,998

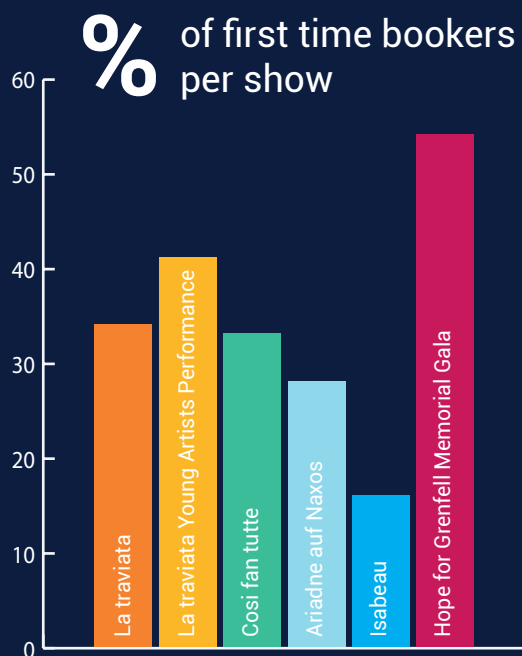
likes over the 2018 season



39%
of bookers to OHP
productions were first
time visitors



94%
of bookers say they
would
attend again



OPERA	Capacity	No. of occupied seats	% occupied
La traviata	11011	10780	98%
La traviata YA	1001	993	99%
Cosi fan tutte	9009	8642	96%
Ariadne auf Naxos	5005	4919	98%
Isabeau	5005	4981	99%
Royal Ballet School	4004	3626	91%
Hope for Grenfell Gala	1001	993	99%
	36,036	34,934	97%

25%
of our UK bookers
live within
1.5 miles
of our theatre

50%
of our UK bookers
live within
4 miles
of our theatre

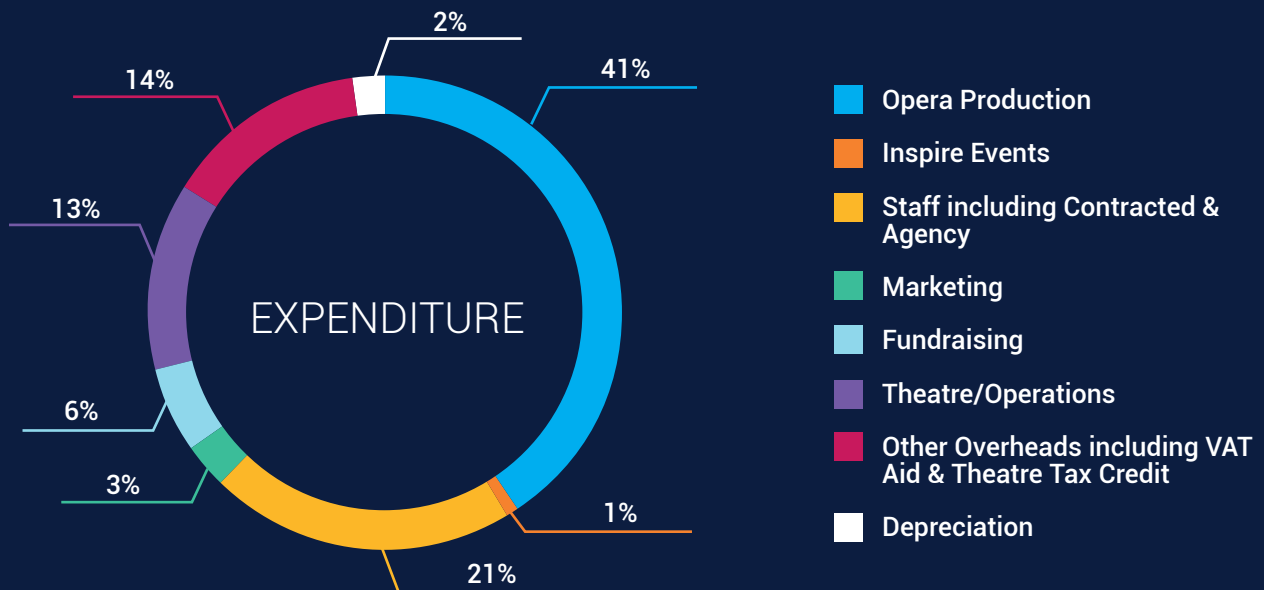
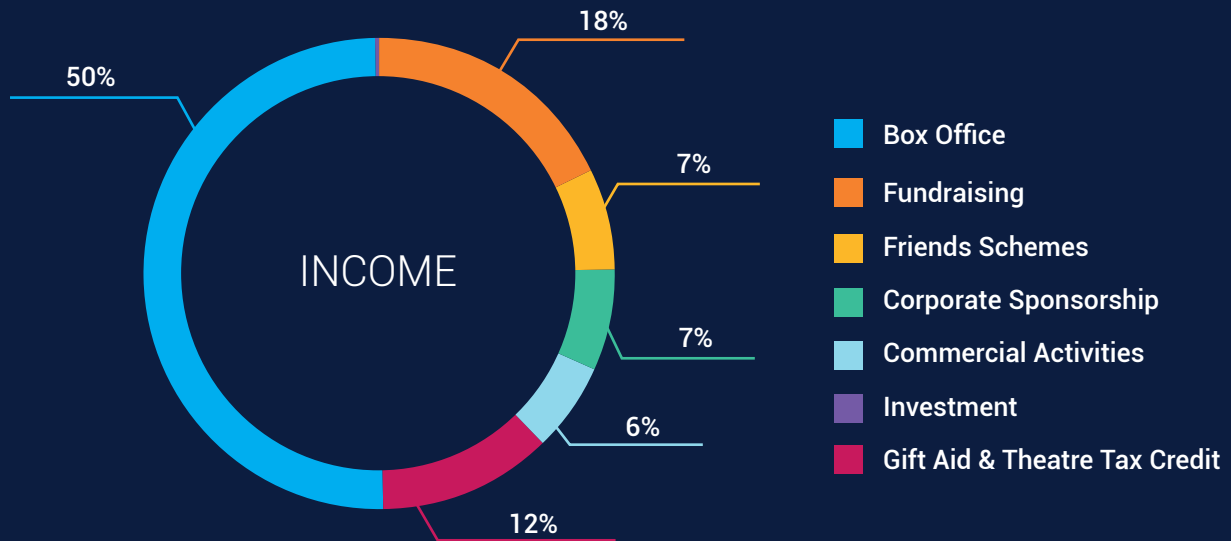
75%
of our UK bookers
live within
10.5 miles
of our theatre

90%
of our UK bookers
live within
46.5 miles
of our theatre

Financial Performance

	2018	2017
Box Office	1,836,375	1,627,035
Fundraising and Corporate Sponsorship	939,480	633,618
Friends Schemes	263,030	250,281
Commercial Activities	213,478	190,363
Investment	9,013	11,069
Gift Aid & Theatre Tax Credit	423,968	554,958
TOTAL INCOME	3,685,344	3,267,324

	2018	2017
Opera Production	1,768,829	1,724,776
Inspire Events	46,717	32,560
Staff inc. Contracted & Agency	884,246	823,044
Marketing & Fundraising	354,737	316,418
Theatre / Operations	560,434	513,690
Other Overheads inc. VAT	584,071	500,141
Depreciation	88,456	68,047
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,287,489	3,978,676
OPERATING DEFICIT	-602,144	-711,352
Release from one off RBKC grant	602,144	711,352
NET OPERATING DEFICIT	0	0



Donor List

Title Sponsor

Investec Wealth and Investment

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