



2018 2019

 Arts
Commons

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Performers with Cuba Vibra at the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Aaron Chatha



Happenings performers © Callan Field

Our Vision:

A creative and compassionate society, inspired through the arts.

Our Mission:

To bring the arts ...to life.

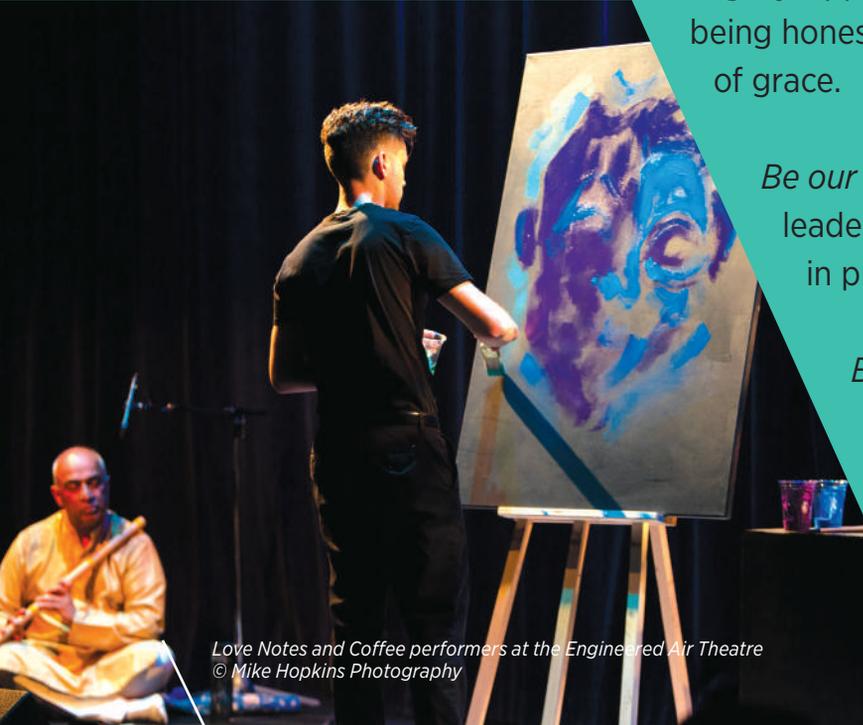
This is **YOUR** Arts Commons

Our Core Values:

Do the right thing - behaving with integrity, applying professionalism, being honest, and erring on the side of grace.

Be our best always - in service, in leadership, in professionalism, and in providing a quality experience.

Be open: minds, hearts, arms - through empathy, openness, trust, and collaboration, seizing opportunities to impact our community in a positive way.



Love Notes and Coffee performers at the Engineered Air Theatre © Mike Hopkins Photography



“Life doesn’t get easier or more forgiving. We get stronger and more resilient.”

Although the Alberta economy continues to rebound, with provincial unemployment rates dropping and a prediction for steady growth in Calgary over the next five years, we know that purse strings remain tight. Our commitment to make the arts accessible to everyone was therefore even more important this season, ensuring that all Calgarians had the opportunity to experience the transformative nature of the arts.

This season, through the TD Arts Access Pass, Arts Commons offered 1,500 tickets for a variety of Arts Commons Presents concerts, to new Canadians and other citizens who may not otherwise have the opportunity to attend. Arts Commons Presents also produced and presented many free, diverse, and inclusive events for our community, including *National Indigenous Peoples Day*, multiple events during Black History Month, and our new Amplify cabarets.

Our public visual arts galleries abounded with local artworks and residencies, celebrating the new RBC Emerging Visual Arts Program, and culminating in the final *Happenings* event which was an adult late-night extravaganza. Our +15 Galleries began a new partnership with Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society that not only showcased artwork by local Indigenous artists, but also inspired the creation of new collaborative works in the Ledge Gallery. We were so proud and grateful to be able to share these experiences

without barrier, making them all free and open to the public.

We see every day how the power of the arts enrich learning and inspire people of all ages to engage with the world around them. This year, through Arts Commons Presents programs such as *National Geographic Live*, the *ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning*, and our One Day Arts School, we supported over 10,000 students, teachers, and education professionals, focused on the growth and development of our young people.

Arts Commons Presents also enjoyed sold out crowds for the incredible performances by the science-meets-art band, OK Go, and Disney legend, Lea Salonga, and also did its first run of theatrical shows in the Martha Cohen Theatre with the hilarious, family-friendly production of *Potted Potter*.

Our family of resident companies and partners also filled houses for their marquee productions and we are proud to be able to work together to provide Calgary with innovative, artistic, fun, and thought-provoking productions and presentations. With a representative from each resident company on our Board

of Directors, we are able to promote creative collaboration within our city, bring the magic and inspiration of the arts to our community, and face our collective struggles – together.

We now look forward to when we can expand our offerings, develop a more sustainable business model for a successful future, and welcome even more people into our spaces, through the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project. We continue to work with all three levels of government to make this important project happen and are grateful to everyone who has shown their support.



Colleen Dickson
Chief Financial Officer
and Interim Co-CEO

Greg Epton
Chief Development Officer
and Interim Co-CEO

Our Mandate is...

to foster, present, and promote the arts

From show stopping dance numbers to heart-wrenching personal drama to a real-life Disney princess, Arts Commons had it all.

Alberta Theatre Projects swept up the crowd with the fun, relatable, and inspiring story of a group of unlikely athletes who face off against local prejudice in *The New Canadian Curling Club*. A review in the Calgary Herald described the experience as “so exciting and rewarding to hear so much spontaneous, heartfelt laughter”, and the full house each night proved it to be a fan favourite.

The Arts Commons Presents audience was blown away by both the music and the confetti cannons during OK Go's science experiment meshed with musical innovation gone wild. The quirky and experimental band performed an off-the-wall, multi-media arts and science mash-up to an enthusiastic and sold out crowd.

The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra beautifully collaborated with the likes of Inuit Throat Singer Tanya Tagaq, Canadian singer-songwriter Hawksley Workman, and Celtic-Canadian powerhouse Heather Rankin. Of their entire season, however, *Provocative: Percussion + Tchaikovsky* definitely stood out. The evening, led by Principal Percussionist Josh Jones, featured an incredible 31 percussion instruments on the stage. But the most inspiring aspect of the performance was the fact that Jones had only three months prior undergone surgery for cancer and was returning to give attendees a triumphant concert performance.

Downstage continued to impress and provoke rich discussion with their innovative, heart-warming, and thoughtful productions including the World Premiere presentation of *Smoke* by Alberta playwright Elena Belyea. Tackling the emotional issue of assault within a romantic

relationship, *Smoke* featured the main couple portraying both an opposite-sex and same-sex couple on alternate nights.

One Yellow Rabbit's High Performance Rodeo kept us warm in January, with a line-up of exceptional and thoroughly unexpected works to keep us energized and engaged. Shane Koyczan, who stole hearts at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, and had his poem *To This Day* go viral on YouTube in 2013, filled the Jack Singer Concert Hall as the HPR headliner, and the exceptionally unique COW LOVE by La Société Protectrice de Petites Idées impressed audiences with a performance full of fresh humour and virtuosic style.

Theatre Calgary's production of *Billy Elliot The Musical* was an inspiring and moving tale reminding us to pursue our dreams with pride and determination. Choreographed by former Alberta Ballet principal dancer Yukichi Hattori and directed by Artistic Director, Stafford Arima, this Tony Award-winning musical featured some of the best and brightest of Calgary's dance community.



“You are a ‘First Class’ company to work with and every one of you and your team are outstanding.... this award is just as much yours as it is Theatre Calgary’s!”

~ Letter from Lee Booth, Front of House Manager at Theatre Calgary to Arts Commons, after winning Best Theatre Company award from “Best of Calgary”



High Performance Rodeo headliner
Shane Koyczan ©Kaa-Rel

372,284

total attendance
to a ticketed event
at Arts Commons

**ALBERTA
THEATRE
PROJECTS**



The New Canadian Curling Club. © Benjamin Laird

Arts Commons
Presents



THEATRE THAT CREATES
CONVERSATION



Theatre Calgary's Billy Elliot The Musical © Benjamin Laird

theatre:
CALGARY

Our Mandate is...

to provide and care for our assets

Apart from what you see on stage, the singers, the actors, the sets and costumes, there is so much more that you don't see at Arts Commons. From the air circulation systems that keep the theatres cool or warm, humid or dry, to the flooring under your feet as you walk to your seat, it all has a purpose, and a lifespan.

One of the most significant projects we embarked on in the 2018-19 season was to assess and replace many of the air systems and supporting system hardware in the building including the HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning) system and building automation system. This complex automation system tracks all of the heating, cooling, humidification, and air return systems in the building. Not only has the new system made for huge energy savings, but it also allows us to detect problems in the system before they become major issues.

The HVAC system in Arts Commons is over 30 years old, and tied in with the replacement of the building automation system was the complete replacement of the air distribution systems for the Engineered Air Theatre, Max Bell and Martha Cohen Rehearsal Halls, and the Founders Room (adjacent to the Jack Singer Concert Hall lobby). Hundreds of

feet of ducting had to be torn out and replaced to allow for even distribution of air circulation in these spaces. Now both patrons and artists can breathe easier and be more comfortable.

We also installed a state-of-the-art humidification system – the first of its kind in Western Canada. This adiabatic ultrasonic humidification system uses purified water through a reverse osmosis deionization process, which eliminates the use of chemicals, reducing our environmental footprint and allowing us to simultaneously humidify the building as a whole.

To keep this air moving efficiently through the building, we replaced the eight variable frequency drives, and installed a further 13 drives. The new drives consume 70 per cent less energy by slowly ramping up the fans in the HVAC system, and modulating their speed and performance throughout the day and night.

When it comes to visible changes, the Max Bell and Jack Singer Concert Hall lobbies both received a much needed carpet replacement and the Martha Cohen Theatre received a new wheelchair lift, providing accessibility to all levels of the lobby. The Jack Singer Concert Hall also received new acoustic banners

throughout the hall and backstage area, both improving the sound quality in the hall and the appearance of the previous threadbare banners. The Jack Singer Concert Hall hoists were replaced as well. The four hoists had reached their end of life long ago and two of the hoists had previously been disassembled and used for parts to keep the remaining two hoists operational.

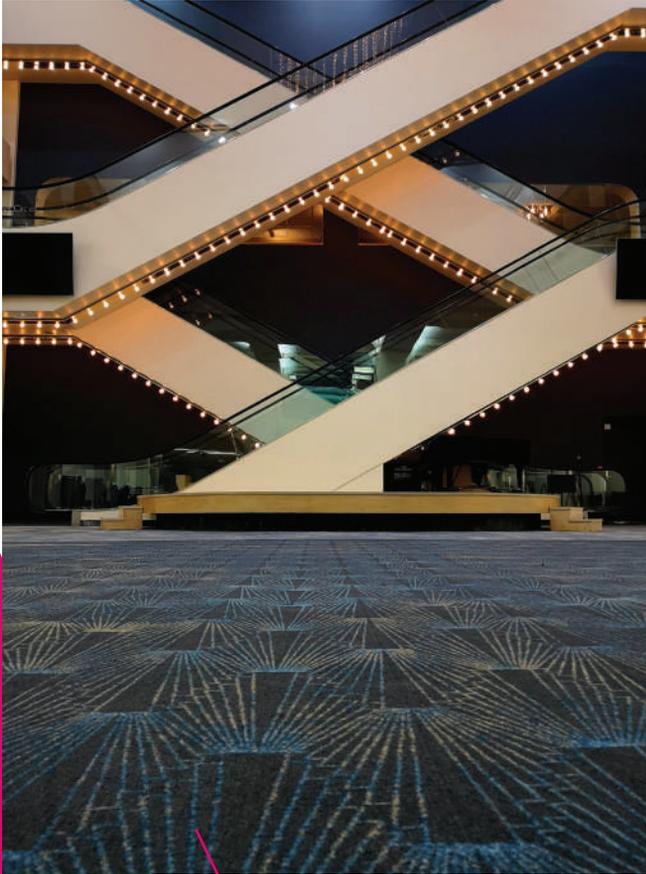
All of these improvements are just a small glimpse into the moving parts of what goes on behind-the-scenes in the hard-working Arts Commons building.



*Crescendo fundraiser in the Jack Singer Concert Hall
© Brian Beaulieu*



New HVAC in the Engineered Air Theatre © Rafal Lichman



Jack Singer Lobby featuring new carpeting © Alex Bonyun

70% less
energy consumed with
new HVAC variable
frequency drives

Our Mandate is...

to ensure optimal access and utilization of our assets

Arts Commons offers beautiful and purposeful venues for every kind of event, from weddings to corporate retreats, and concerts to graduations. This season, our venues were filled by the resident companies and 200 community organizations looking for the perfect space to host their event, in a central location with a variety of amenities and access points nearby.

We are always thrilled to host a diverse array of events in our spaces. This season was no exception, with a wide variety of events, including: 6 Degrees Calgary, which gathered a panel of local changemakers along with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship Co-Chairs to discuss how communities and societies can be more resilient, inclusive, and cohesive; *Crescendo*, a one-of-a-kind musical event that included awesome light projections, amazing performances, and inspiring stories shared in order to raise funds for the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation; the awe-inspiring Chris Hadfield, who celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon-landing; the uproarious and unapologetic Hater's Roast, which featured the best in

drag performers; the hilarious John Cleese, who shared his humorous insights on life; and YouTube sensation, Scott Bradlee's Post Modern Jukebox, who had the audience dancing in the aisles.

Arts Commons continued to support our community through sponsorship of popular events such as the Top 40 Under 40 gala, which honoured: Col Cseke, a former ensemble member of resident company, Downstage, and the current Artistic Director of Inside Out Theatre, for his work in making theatre more accessible for artists and audience members with disabilities; and artist, author, musician, and Assistant Professor, Vivek Shraya, who graced the cover of the last issue of our Arts Commons Magazine and was featured in our +15 Soundscape with her brother, Shamik Bilgi, who is also her artistic partner in the musical group Too Attached.

Arts Commons Presents was one of the primary users of our alternative spaces: hosting the very last *Happenings* event with an adult-only party celebrating the wild and dreamlike Surrealist and Dadaist movements of the early 20th century; providing rotating visual artist residencies and exhibits; and venturing into the Martha Cohen Theatre for the hilarious two-man, gut-busting show, *Potted Potter*.

Sadly, we still had to turn hundreds of events away due to limited space and availability and we look forward to when our Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project becomes a reality, increasing our available space and securing a more sustainable future for Arts Commons and the resident companies.

1,609
events booked by
Arts Commons
Event Services
in all spaces

200
organizations made
use of Arts Commons'
facilities

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Action Dignity | Calgary Economic Development | E=MC2 Inc. | Live Nation Canada Inc. | PREPSKILLS INC. | The Living Room Series |
| Actors Workshop Theatre | Calgary Folk Festival | Edgemont School | Love We Share Foundation | Priti Obhrai-Martin | The Orchestra Society of Calgary, performing as The Calgary Civic Symphony |
| Adult Recreational Choir Society of Calgary | Calgary International Film Festival | Enbridge Inc. | Luminous Voices | Productions Juste pour rire II Inc. | The Rest of Us Theatre |
| AEG Presents Canada, Ltd. | Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra | Esther Yu | Lyna Phung | Prospect Human Services | Theatre Calgary |
| Aga Khan Council for Canada | Calgary Pride | Ezra For Israel Festival Chorus | Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society | Queen Elizabeth School | Thumbs Up Good Work Theatre |
| Alberta Childrens Hospital Foundation | Calgary Queer Arts Society | Fire Exit Theatre Company | Maple Ridge School | Red Deer Symphony | Tim Tamashiro |
| Alberta Eco Trust | Canadian Council for Public and Private Partnerships | Foothills Academy | Mawer Investment Management Ltd. | Red River | Tin Foil Cup Creative |
| Alberta Federation of Labour | Canadian Cultural Mosaic Foundation | Geek SOS Productions | Mayor's Environmental Expo | RedPoint Media & Marketing Solutions | Trang Nguyen & Jerry Lam |
| Alberta Theatre Projects | CBC Radio Canada | Gfour Productions | Mayor's Safety Expo | Robertson College | Traugott Building Contractors |
| Alex MacWilliam | Chabad of Alberta | Glamorgan School | McKenzie Towne School | Rozsa Foundation | Troo Knot |
| Allissa and Julian Wedding | Chantal Gagnon | H/W School of Ballet | Millennium Entertainment | Rundle College | Tryzub Ukranian Dance Society |
| Amber Arts Inc. | Children's School of Dance Ltd. | Handsome Alice Theatre | Miranda Krogstad | Sage Theatre | Tundra Swan Dance |
| Anna Vuong | Chinook Park School | Honens | Morin Music Studio | SG3 Business Solutions | Twelve Mile Coulee School |
| ARTICLE 11 | Chloe Huberdeau | Hugh A Bennett School | Moscow Ballet/ Akiva Talmi Presents; QBZ793, Inc. | Shantero Productions | Two Towers |
| Arts Commons | Chromatic Theatre | Ijmal Haider | Mount Royal University | Show Time Dance Promotions | Ultimate Dance Company |
| Ashley Menzies | CIBC Wood Gundy | Immigrant Seniors Project | Mpact Movement | Shy-Ann Dance Productions Ltd | United Way of Calgary |
| Attollo Productions | CineMusic Live | Independent System Operator o/a Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) | MRG Concerts | Silver Springs School | University of Calgary Distinguished Writers Program |
| Babae Council of Filipina Canadians | City of Calgary - Community Standards | Institute for Canadian Citizenship | MS Society of Canada | Skipping Stone Foundation | University of Calgary-Forzani & MacPhail Colon Cancer Screening Centre |
| Bank Charities, operating as BANC | City of Calgary - IT Department | International Festival of Animated Objects | Musical Event Solutions | Soul to Sole Dance Company Ltd | University of Lethbridge |
| Bianca Miranda | Claire Butler | Irene Ly | National Theatre School of Canada | Sparq Productions | Urban Stories Theatre |
| Big Time Operator LLC | CNOOC International | Jeff Parry Promotions | Nature Conservancy of Canada | Spiritus Chamber Choir | Valley View School |
| Binhi ng Lahi | Columbia College | Jenny Wu | New West Symphony & Chorus | Springbank Dance | Viva Musica Studio Ltd. |
| Blackbox Communications Inc. | Community Resource Department, Distress Centre Calgary | Jeunesse Classique Ballet | Nhac Chieu Guitar | St. Catherine School | Vlad Productions |
| Board of Directors of the University of Calgary | Copperfield School | JJ Shiplett | O.S. Geiger School | St. Dominic School | Wayne Jones Comedy |
| Bow Valley College | Dalhousie School | Johanne Deleeuw | One Voice Chorus | St. Philip Fine Arts School | West Island College |
| Briar Hill School | Dance on Edge | Julie Funk | One Yellow Rabbit | Stage Coach Theatre Arts Calgary | Western Canada High School |
| Burnet Duckworth & Palmer LLP. | Dance Spectrum | Kala Bhavan of Calgary | Orff the Wall | Stage Left Productions | Wild Rose Dance Arts Association |
| Calgary 2026 | Dark Matter Productions | Kelly Brothers Productions | Our Lady of Grace School | Staples Canada | Wildwood School |
| Calgary Arts Development | Diamond Integrated Marketing | Keshia Cheesman | Pangburn Philosophy | Sunalta School | Woezo Africa Music & Dance Theatre |
| Calgary Association for the Development of Music Education | Diversity Dance & Performing Arts | La Pointe Dance Studio Ltd. | Phillipine Festival Council of Alberta | Suncor Energy Inc. | WordFest |
| Calgary Chinese Music Development Association | DIY Theatre | Lake Bonavista School | Phillipines Festival Council of Alberta Youth Empowerment Program | Swallow A Bicycle Theatre | World Beauty Fitness & Fashion Inc |
| Calgary Construction Association | Downstage | Langevin School | Phoenix Dance Competition | TEDx YYC | |
| | Dr. E.P. Scarlett Music Parents Association | Laura Castle | | TFD Productions | |
| | Dynamic Risk Assessment Systems, Inc. | Let's Talk Entertainment inc. | | The Alberta Association of Architects | |



*“Very well done
Arts Commons.
You were so
respectful
of the audience.”*

-Patron, Goran Bregović Wedding &
Funeral Band



*An excited fan meeting Lea Salonga
© Will Young*

Cirque Eloize performers © Will Young



Lightbox Studio artist Mike Hooves
© Busola Fapojuwo



Goran Bregović performs at the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Will Young

Arts Commons Presents

“Absolutely outstanding!
Thank you for bringing
artists like this to Calgary.”

-Patron, OK Go



The Brian Quaye Trio performs on the Jack Singer Concert Hall Duet Stage © Mike Hopkins Photography



Arts Commons Presents...

creates connections

Arts Commons is a shared space for all members of our community to come together to share different viewpoints, experience a variety of art forms, and have impactful experiences. Whatever the occasion, we create connections that help strengthen our community.

This season, Arts Commons Presents committed to and invested in a new stream of community and artist development, dedicated to traditionally underserved communities. The Amplify Cabaret series, including: *We Gon Be Alright* during Black History Month, *Love Notes & Coffee*, and the *Sissy Fit Queer Cabaret*, are events curated by diverse artists at the edge of their practice. Bringing new perspectives, connections, and collaborations, these cabaret-style performances were received with phenomenal enthusiasm by audience members who described them as 'spectacular' and 'incredible'. Up to 25% of attendees reported that this was their first time attending a performance at Arts Commons.

Continuing our partnership with Action Dignity and the Philippine Festival Council of Alberta (PFCA), Arts Commons Presents hosted the monthly, multi-day Youth Empowerment

Program workshops, which provides Filipino-Canadian youth an opportunity to develop their personal, social, and professional skills. These workshops are ongoing and inspire and empower youth to be more active, lead, and contribute positively to the community.

Written and produced by Arts Commons Presents, *Itty Bitty Arts Day* was piloted this season, as a sensory-friendly performance, to a sold-out crowd of families with babies, toddlers, and young children. Bianca Miranda, a teddy bear performer for *Itty Bitty Arts Day* said, "I am so honoured and grateful to have had the opportunity to create, perform, and be a part of what may have been one of the first few art experiences in a child's life. I truly believe that this is a significant gap in our community that Arts Commons is slowly but surely trying to fill." Everyone involved was thrilled when it completely sold out, creating the opportunity for us to expand the program in upcoming seasons to a multi-day event.

A very different set of connections was made during *National Indigenous Peoples Day*. In the spirit of participation and understanding, Arts Commons Presents invited dancers from throughout

Treaty 7 territory to come and perform. Completely led by Indigenous Peoples, the event also featured Cree, Ojibway, and Metis artist Chantal Chagnon, who hosted a three-day drum workshop. Said Chagnon, "You learn so much not only about the culture, not only about the history, but also about yourself." Other artists included Anders Hunter, lead singer for Eya-Hey Nakoda; Richard Sparvier, programmer and emcee for the Pow Wow; and Shirly Hill, Indigenous Dance and Workshop lead.

In fact, this season Arts Commons Presents partnered with several Indigenous communities, engaging a total of 29 Indigenous artists and investing over \$45K in Indigenous arts, through education, visual arts, and community engagement programs.

815

artists hired for
Arts Commons Presents
programming

Dancers perform during National Indigenous Peoples Day © Aaron Chatha



“The art performances were incredible, I was very moved, literally to tears.”

- Patron, Amplify Cabaret series



Mel Vee performs at We Gon Be Alright © Mike Hopkins Photography

13,353

people attended a free event put on by Arts Commons Presents

\$45,399

invested in Indigenous Arts

Performers for the Itty Bitty Arts Day © Lucia Juliao



Arts Commons Presents...

inspires learning

Arts Commons staff has the pleasure of working with amazing students and teachers each year through our numerous education programs including: the *ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning*, *National Geographic Live* student shows, One Day Arts School, Artist-in-Residence programs, and Teacher Professional Development. Through these programs we saw over 10,000 students and teachers come through our doors, to learn, experience, and be inspired by the arts.

Campus Calgary - Open Minds is a program through the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School board that encourages and promotes inquiry, problem solving and critical thinking for students, teachers, and parents. In March 2018, ConocoPhillips Canada became the naming sponsor, allowing us to provide even more opportunities for our young people to learn through the arts. The *ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning* invited students to make Arts Commons their classroom, and learn from our instructors about visual arts, dance and choreography, acting and stage craft, music and song, and so much more. Students from St. Philip

School learned about self-expression by creating mini dramas and becoming new characters as they put on masks that were sad, shy, sassy, or silly. Students from Twelve Mile Coulee created visual arts pieces that ended up in their very own gallery showing.

With all of the fantastically talented musicians who come through our doors, we sometimes have the opportunity to connect these musicians with students for unique learning and mentorship interactions. When the legendary Bobby McFerrin came to perform as part of our TD Jazz series, one such an opportunity came up. We partnered with CADME (Calgary Association for the Development of Music Education) for a special, sold out engagement of “circle-singing” with McFerrin, featuring young singers from our local high schools and universities. These young artists were beaming throughout and after the performance and many claimed the experience to be “life changing”.

Another program that has evolved to incorporate a stronger mentorship and learning element is Visual and Media Arts. The RBC Emerging Visual Artists

Program at Arts Commons provides an exceptional opportunity for emerging visual artists to develop their artistic practice, to showcase their work to the public through exhibitions, open studio and speaking engagements, and hone their professional skills in order to build a solid foundation for a successful career. With the advent of this program, Arts Commons now provides a safe space to take risks, and benefit from one-on-one mentorship opportunities, professional development sessions, networking social events, and exhibition opportunities. Becoming a successful artist is about more than innate ability; it is a purposeful combination of support, opportunity, meaningful hard work, and mentorship.



“This experience was a wonderful way for students to garner insight about themselves, their peers and their community.”

~ Teacher, Copperfield School

Circle singing with Bobby McFerrin and CADME singers © Will Young



10,229
students and
teachers engaged



“One student that has always struggled with regular school attendance due to high anxiety was engaged and cheerful each day with no physical pain. He actively participated throughout the entire week.

Thank you for this.”

- Educator, St. Philip Fine Arts School



Learning about Indigenous culture during Teacher Professional Development Day © Busola Fapojuwo



Students discovering self-expression with masks © Busola Fapojuwo



Conversations with Lea Salonga at the Engineered Air Theatre © Will Young

Habib Koité, Bassekou Kouyate & Ladysmith Black Mambazo perform at the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Mike Hopkins Photography



“As a POC [Person of Color] I’m pleased that Arts Commons is recognizing that there are marginalized voices in the city that haven’t had a platform to speak. This performance was spectacular in presenting a diverse ensemble of powerful ladies speaking their truths.”

– Patron, Amplify Cabaret series



We Gon Be Alright performer in the Engineered Air Theatre © Mike Hopkins

Arts Commons Presents...

uplifts and energizes

The 2018-19 season was full of artistic expression, undeniably outstanding music, and events that inspired and uplifted. Though the entire music line-up had its amazing moments, nothing had the audience up and dancing as much as the Goran Bregović Wedding and Funeral Band in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Performing a mix of high-energy Balkan music, Goran Bregović's signature Gypsy brass band style had the audience moving as one, dancing in the aisles, and cheering for more.

This season also saw the launch of our Amplify Cabarets, a series of cabaret style performances featuring artists that highlight inclusivity and diversity through artistic expression, comedy, and commentary. During our Black History Month cabaret entitled *We Gon Be Alright*, the curator - Mel Vee, brought together black women and queer black folks to give another perspective on Black History Month, from the viewpoint

of people in our community whose voices are not heard often enough. A smash-hit with both audiences and performers, a special thank you goes out to TD Bank and the Rosza Foundation for their support.

Another cabaret that made waves with audiences was *Sissy Fit*, held on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. Featuring a number of drag performers, the show was a mash-up of burlesque, comedy, and music celebrating the power and resilience of the queer community.

And then there was Disney Legend, Lea Salonga. Known best for her powerful voice and perfect pitch, Salonga is infamous for her Tony Award-winning role in *Miss Saigon*, and for voicing the words and song of several Disney princesses, including Princess Jasmine from Disney's *Aladdin*. Salonga spent two nights with Arts Commons. The first night was an intimate conversation with our

Producing and Engagement Associate, Joshua Dalledone, on the Engineered Air Theatre stage - a highlight of our Founders Circle season. The second night, Salonga graced the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage and sung her heart out for adoring fans. Although she was still suffering from a broken leg, Salonga's elegance shone through and she even came out in her wheelchair after the performance to meet fans and sign autographs. The house was abuzz with excitement and every patron went home with a lasting and cherished memory from the night.



Dancing in the aisles while Goran Bregović Wedding and Funeral Band perform in the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Will Young

50,609

total attendance to ticketed
Arts Commons Presents
performances

Arts Commons Presents... **is for you**

The 2018-19 season of Arts Commons Presents saw one of the most diverse years of programming that we have ever presented.

The BD&P World Music series had Balkan brass, Celtic storytelling and song, African a capella, Cuban dance, and Indian traditional music. We took our Founders Circle members behind-the-scenes to learn the cha-cha, mambo, conga, and bolero, with the dancers from Cuba Vibra! and Broadway superstar Lea Salonga charmed fans with an intimate interview in the Engineered Air Theatre, the night prior to her main stage performance.

As there is nothing quite like joining others in song to your favourite anthems from your youth, Classic Albums Live saw a surge in subscriptions. Nostalgia hit all-time high levels with the performances of Led Zeppelin IV, AC/DC Back in Black, and Supertramp Crime of the Century.

Our TD Jazz series celebrated Bill Withers through the young and energetic talent of José James, and enjoyed an evening of joyful circle-singing with ten-time GRAMMY-winner Bobby McFerrin while, not to be outdone, the PCL Blues series brought some of the hottest voices in blues to the Engineered Air Theatre stage.

And who could forget *National Geographic Live*? Wildlife photographer Ronan Donovan taught us about social mammals, such as chimpanzees, wolves, and gorillas, and how similar they are to ourselves; Astrobiologist Kevin Hand took us on a journey in search for life on distant planets; photographer and marine biologist Thomas Peschak brought us face-to-face with hammerhead sharks and bottlenose dolphins as we explored the globe's wild seas and secret shores; and photographer Tim Laman and anthropologist Cheryl Knott had us swinging from the trees with intelligent and playful orangutans.

The family-friendly and funny production, *Potted Potter*, enchanted and delighted patrons with laughter and nostalgia. This was the first foray into theatrical presenting for Arts Commons Presents in the Martha Cohen Theatre, and we were thrilled to invite our patrons into a different venue for a unique experience.

In our public spaces, we embarked on a partnership with Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society - *Mokin'stis and Gathering Spaces Today*, to support two Indigenous artists in residency. They exhibited their thought-provoking works in the +15 galleries, while facilitating the creation

of new works with artist consultation of Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. The result – powerful art and insight into how to address our role in truth and reconciliation, using this contemporary gathering space in a way that respects the original caretakers of this land.

And in a unique first, we collaborated with Youth PLACE Performance, to give space and resources to a group of racialized youth to create and perform a show in the Engineered Air Theatre at Arts Commons, based on their life experiences. The show was such a success that there are future plans to remount it in the Martha Cohen Theatre to a larger audience.

This is just a small sampling of events that took place throughout the season, welcoming thousands of people through our doors to experience the transformative power of the arts.

Performance by Ladysmith Black Mambazo
© Mike Hopkins Photography



“Arts Commons does an amazing job of creating an experience... with them, you don’t just attend a show, you go out for an evening”

- Arts Commons Presents patron

Founders Circle Members learning some dance moves from members of Cuba Vibra © Mike Hopkins Photography



Patrons meeting National Geographic Explorers anthropologist Cheryl Knott (left) and photographer Tim Laman (centre).



“You had the hard of hearing devices at coat check for my grandma and they actually worked! We were so thrilled because my grandma could enjoy the play and she usually can’t do this type of thing with us anymore. Thank you.”

- Patron at Potted Potter

1,500

people were introduced to Arts Commons Presents performances at no cost, through the TD Arts Access Pass Program



Patrons in the lobby before Classic Albums Live show © Lucia Juliao



Demonstrates sustainability

Sustainability in challenging economic times

While we are very pleased with our results from our 2018-19 fiscal year, several years into the new economic reality in Calgary we continue to see a mix of good news and challenges. This fiscal year, increased sponsor and donor revenues have offset cuts to base operating grants. Increased ticket sales and fees have offset reduced third party rental spends. And holding the line on expense increases by reducing labour costs through attrition has been effective in the short term, but will impact our capacity to sustain operations in the long term.

Fiscal Year 2018-19 Results

Our 2018-19 year was on track to achieve our budgeted surplus of \$61K. Unfortunately a retroactive cut to our base operating grant resulted in a deficit of just over \$13K. While we have been able to absorb the cut into this fiscal year, the primary concern is the cumulative effect of the cuts in future years.

Year over year comparisons

Earned revenues were up \$620K (8 per cent) overall but with considerable variances in our different revenue streams.

In 2018-19, our programming arm, Arts Commons Presents, had a banner year with significantly increased ticket sales due to the "Potted Potter" effect – a multi-run show held in February which generated almost \$600K in ticket sales and fees and added almost \$45K to our bottom line. Looking at the consolidated results, overall dollars generated from ticket sales, sponsorships, donations, and ancillary revenues totalled just over \$3.2M with associated programming, marketing, and sponsorship expenses at \$2.6M for a net surplus of \$672K. This success allowed us to spend \$295K to support the new RBC Emerging Visual Artists program, as well as our public programming which offers accessible and unique programs to families, Indigenous, LGBTQ2+, and other underserved communities.

In venue utilization, bookings remained relatively flat, down only \$31K year over year, but client spend on those bookings dropped \$165K for an overall revenue drop of \$196K. Occupancy fees from resident companies also dropped \$20K year over year, while food, beverage, front and back of house labour revenues were flat.

Contributed revenues were down \$84K (2 per cent) overall due to a one time grant received in 2017-18. Contributed revenues from other sources all increased year over year with philanthropic giving up 8 per cent, corporate sponsorship up 9 per cent, and goods and services in kind up 61 per cent.

Expenses were up overall by \$613K (5 per cent) when compared to the prior fiscal year – the majority of which was due to the increase in programming activities. We managed to hold the line on facility expenses with only a 1 per cent increase year over year while venue utilization expenses were down 7 per cent, and administration expenses were down 9 per cent.

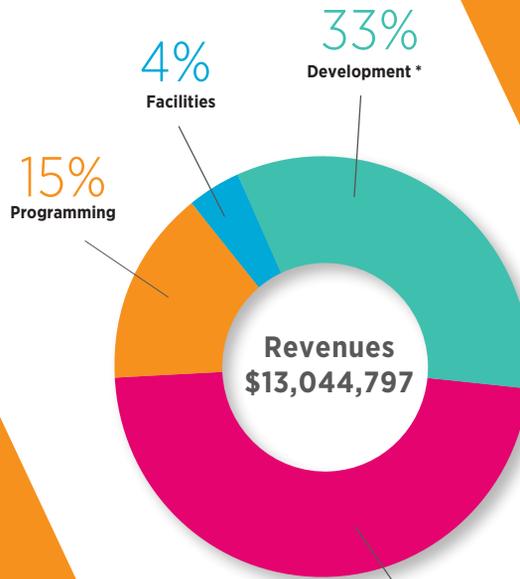
2%
decrease in
contributed
revenues (YOY)

8%
increase
in earned
revenues (YOY)

Looking forward

While we managed to come close to a balanced budget in 2018-19, we will face significant revenue challenges in 2019-20. Required capital work to replace the dimmers, stage lighting, and audio, all of which are far past end of life, will require us to close down the Jack Singer Concert Hall for the summer of 2020. This will result in \$220K in lost revenues which combined with the ongoing impact and potential of additional cuts to base operating grants will lead to a projected deficit budget of over \$200K for the upcoming year. We continue to work on increasing earned and contributed revenues to offset these realities.

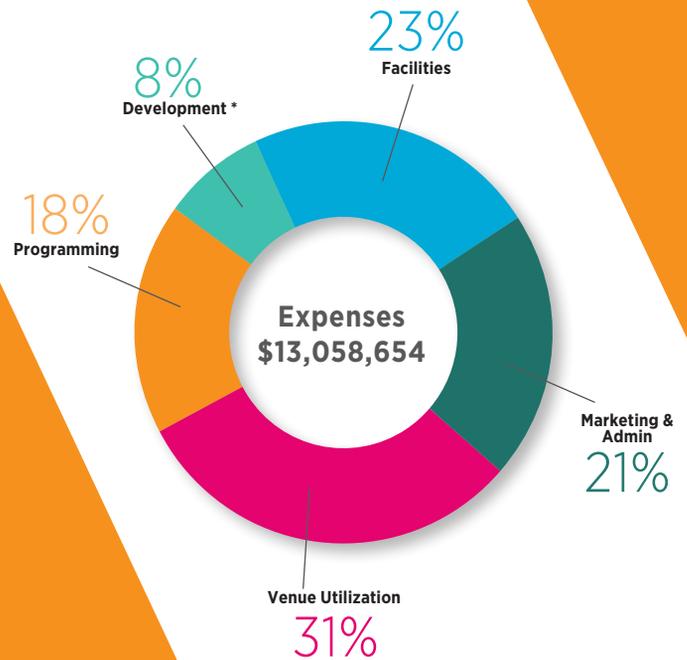
\$1,556,250
was raised in addition to our
operating revenue, in support of
Arts Commons life-cycle projects



5%
increase in
expenses (YOY)

55
Arts Commons
full time staff

Venue Utilization
47%



*Includes \$320,470 of goods and services in kind

#ACT
NOW

Bettering Our Community

For 34 years, Arts Commons has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians and visitors. The existing facility has been enormously successful, but after 34 years, all major infrastructure is at the end (and beyond) of its life.

In partnership with the resident companies, Arts Commons has been in discussions with all three levels of government about the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project for almost 12 years. ACT will both expand capacity in an adjoining new building and renew the existing facility, not only bringing it up to today's standards, but developing a business model that positions us for future sustainability.

This year, we hit some major milestones.

In December, 2018, the provincial government announced that they would extend the Rivers District Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) for 20 years in order to fund major municipal (Calgary) infrastructure projects, including the BMO Expansion and ACT.

In March 2019, City Council approved the creation of the Arts Commons Advisory Committee (ACAC) and related working groups tasked with advancing ACT.

In July 2019, working group member Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) completed their review of the ACT Functional Program and validated the original findings, confirming the order of magnitude project cost for ACT.

In August 2019, at an event held at Arts Commons' Jack Singer Concert Hall, the Honourable Kent Hehr announced the Government of Canada's support of ACT by providing conditional approval of \$80M in funding for the project, from the Community, Culture and Recreation component of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) program. (Subsequently, in Q1 of 2019-20, the



ACT building rendering
© Bing Thom Architects

City of Calgary confirmed their commitment of \$25M for ACT from the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI), releasing \$10M, allowing us to proceed with detailed design work scheduled to be completed in early 2020.)

With these successes, our commitment to ACT is stronger than ever and we look forward to continuing our discussions with all three levels of government to move ACT forward.



ACT Funding announcement with Kent Hehr, David Leinster (CEO, Contemporary Calgary), Colleen Dickson, and Greg Epton (Interim Co-CEOs, Arts Commons) © Will Young

Thank you benefactors

We are extremely grateful to those that believe in the vital role Arts Commons plays in helping make our community a better place to live and to make a life. By investing in our programming priorities, we collectively ensure that Calgarians and visitors alike experience the transformative nature of the arts by having access to Arts Commons, Calgary's preeminent gathering space, and the variety of programs and performances that are offered.

Through the generosity of the corporations, foundations, and governments, as well as the individuals who choose to donate or join our Explorers Circle or Founders Circle membership programs, Arts Commons is able to continue to be a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and wellbeing of our citizens and visitors.



Founders Circle members enjoying a rehearsal and Q&A with OK Go © Will Young



"I really enjoy the benefits I receive which are close to priceless, but more than that, I know that I am helping to create and maintain a stronger arts community in Calgary."

- Brian Mills, Founder - Silver Tier



"[We] look forward to continuing our sponsorship of the National Geographic Live program from the perspectives of the quality, and especially the extraordinarily successful effort that Arts Commons continues to make with its student outreach program."

- Doug Flaig & Helen Timmons,
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Private and Public Sector Support

Arts Commons wishes to express our sincere appreciation to the following corporations, foundations, governments, and passionate community leaders who gave generously to support Arts Commons as we played a key role in the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians and visitors throughout the 2018-19 Season.

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Arts Commons
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CIRCLE**

Members of Founders Circle support Arts Commons education programs, which make the arts more accessible to young minds through a variety of impactful initiatives, such as The Conoco Phillips Hub for Inspired Learning. They also help us bring renowned artists to perform in the BD&P World Music and TD Jazz, to name only two of the music series programmed through Arts Commons Presents.



Founders Circle members at Cuba Vibra Event © Will Young



Founders Circle members at Lea Salonga event © Will Young

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Colleen Dickson with Founders Circle members © Will Young

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Founders Circle members at an event © Will Young



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