



2017 2018



Arts
Commons

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

This is **YOUR** Arts Commons

Our Vision:

A creative and
compassionate
society, inspired
through the arts.

Our Mission:

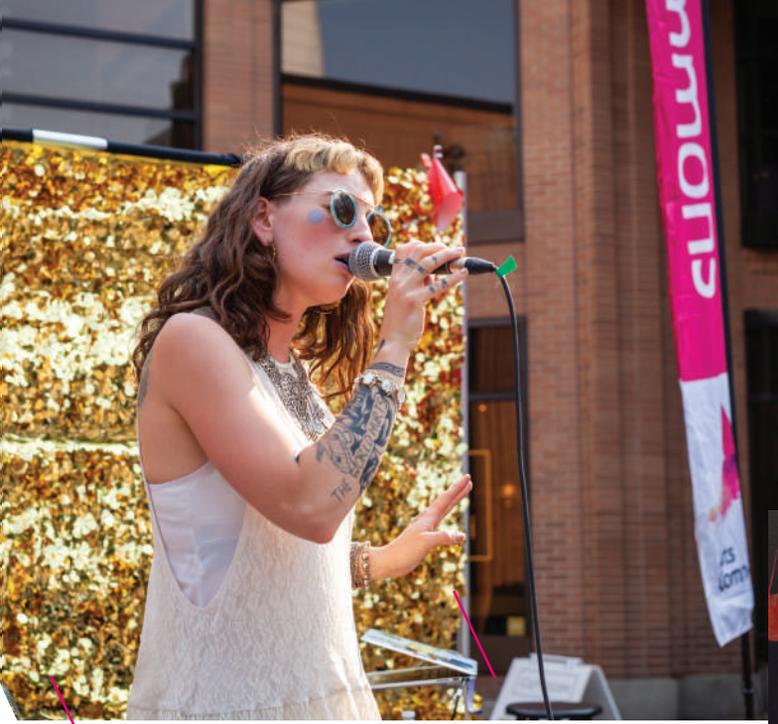
To bring the arts
...to life.



Snotty Nose Rez Kids perform at National Indigenous Peoples Day © Elizabeth Cameron



*Crafting paper puppets at Happenings event
© Will Young*



Selci performs at Happenings 13 © Will Young

Artists from Classic Albums Live speak to members of Founders Circle © Will Young



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What's in a year?

This year has been another interesting one for Calgary. While we are still seeing some lingering effects, the economic downturn seems to have finally turned upwards. In this past year, we have seen a number of new businesses open, and the City has invested more in arts and culture through initiatives like the opening of cSpace King Edward, the Beltline Mural Project, and the invaluable support of ongoing Arts Commons lifecycle projects. There was also a proliferation of new art within Arts Commons' walls. Theatre Calgary partnered with The Old Trout Puppet Workshop in an impressive production of *Twelfth Night*; Alberta Theatre Projects celebrated Canada's first national female hockey league through music and dance, in *Glory*; One Yellow Rabbit had another unforgettable High Performance Rodeo; the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra welcomed the legendary Yo-Yo Ma; and Arts Commons Presents welcomed new donors, embraced long-standing sponsors (such as Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP, ConocoPhillips Canada, and TD Bank), introduced a new series (Classic Albums Live), and put forth several new community initiatives. Sadly, not all organizations were able to survive

these trying times, and the Calgary International Children's Festival made the difficult decision to close its doors after 32 years.

So, what about the last nine years? It was nine years ago that Johann Zietsman joined what was then the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts to become our President and CEO. At the end of this year Johann will be leaving Arts Commons to accept the position of President and CEO of the Adrienne Arsht Center of Miami-Dade County, in Miami, Florida - an extraordinary opportunity for him and his family. We will miss him dearly, but he leaves behind a wonderful legacy and a sound foundation for the ongoing evolution of Arts Commons.

Within months of starting, Johann recognized that we were headed to a projected deficit of over \$900K and led the very difficult task of "righting" the ship before moving the organization forward. We ended the fiscal year with a small consolidated surplus of \$38K. In the eight fiscal years since then (2010 - 2018), we have had surpluses in seven of those years and now have a working capital reserve of over \$1.3M.



The rebranding of the Centre as Arts Commons exemplifies the values and vision that Johann brought to his tenure – “A creative and compassionate society, inspired through the arts”. A place open and welcoming to all - a place of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Under his leadership, we have become a values led organization, focusing on three core values: *Do the Right Thing*, *Be Our Best Always*, and *Be Open: Minds, Hearts, and Arms*.

These values and his personal style have led to: a high functioning, professional, and empowered leadership team and staff at Arts Commons, collaborative relationships with the City of Calgary and our Resident Companies, improved access to the arts by the community through partnerships with organizations like Action Dignity, and imaginative community and education initiatives such as the Hub for Inspired Learning.

Johann brought with him a passion for the arts, but also a passion for open, principled, and creative management. In a difficult economic environment, he leaves Arts Commons on solid financial footing. His initiatives in making full use of the centre’s venues, expanding

Arts Commons Presents programming by adding programs like *National Geographic Live*, and instituting our growing volunteer Concierge program have all contributed to this. In addition, the building’s infrastructure, visible and invisible, has been upgraded and refurbished, ensuring the best experiences for our patrons.

Johann also brought energy and ideas to the broader Calgary scene, becoming a huge supporter of the City and its arts community. This past year Arts Commons was awarded the “Ultimate Host City” designation – a designation awarded by Tourism Calgary to organizations who demonstrate leadership in taking Calgary to the next level. To date, only 13 organizations have been awarded this recognition.

Johann will be greatly missed by his Arts Commons family. We’ll miss the stylish bow ties, the South African idioms, his love of ice cream, and his passion for the arts and for this city.

Please join us in reflecting not only on this past year, but on the past nine, and help us wish both Johann and his wife, Tharrie, the very best on their new adventure!



Scott Hutcheson
Chair, Board of Directors

Henry Sykes, Q.C.
Past Chair, Board of Directors

John McWilliams
Past Chair, Board of Directors

Our Mandate is...

to foster, present, and promote the arts

The past came to life this season at Arts Commons, as we toured through the lives of legendary musicians, father and son relationships, classic rockers, and Shakespeare, and also said a final goodbye to a beloved festival.

Theatre Calgary partnered with The Old Trout Puppet Workshop to take audiences back to the 1600s for a brilliantly inventive take on Shakespeare's classic comedy: *Twelfth Night*. Fast forward a few hundred years to the 1930s with Arts Commons Presents BD&P World Music's presentation of: *PIAF! The Show*. Starring Anne Carrere, the show chronicled the life of the legendary French chanteuse using her own music and never-before-seen images in a theatrical, multimedia event.



Classic Albums Live perform Fleetwood Mac - Rumours © Will Young

Then former CBC broadcaster Tetsuro Shigematsu explored history through the lens of his rocky relationship with his emotionally reserved father in *Empire of the Son*, presented by Alberta Theatre Projects & One Yellow Rabbit. From the ashes of Hiroshima to the swingin' 60s, Shigematsu painted an intimate portrait of love that father and son struggled to express.

Speaking of the 60s – audiences tuned in to hear The Beatles – Abbey Road as performed by Classic Albums Live! A debut for Arts Commons Presents, Classic Albums Live then came back for a second monumental show performing Fleetwood Mac – Rumours. Due to its undeniable popularity, Classic Albums Live has become an official series in the Arts Commons Presents lineup.

At the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma performed an intimate solo recital, continuing a life-long mission to unite humanity through the connective power of music.

Unfortunately, after 32 years, the 2017-18 season was the last for the Calgary International Children's Festival. They leave behind a legacy of love, laughter, and generations of Calgarians who can



Students enjoy *The Path of Dreams* at the Calgary International Children's Festival © RocketHouse

credit the Festival for introducing them to the transformative nature of the performing arts.

Looking to the future was *The Listening Room* by Michaela Jefferey, presented by Azimuth Theatre and Downstage. A chilling vision of the future, the play was also a triumph for the hardworking team of emerging professional artists. Michaela is also an Arts Commons employee, and we shone with pride during this play's debut.

While this is a very brief history of this season, we reflect on a year that was full of enlightening and enriching moments serving to entertain and inspire.



"We loved the way the music transported us to another place and culture"

- Patron from Monsieur Perine



389,363
total attendance
to a ticketed event
at Arts Commons



The Old Trout Puppet Workshop at Theatre Calgary with members of Founders Circle © Will Young



Our Mandate is...

to provide and care for our assets

Arts Commons is proud to be the custodian of Canada's 3rd largest and most comprehensive arts facility. Within the walls of our building are five theatres, a world-renowned concert hall, arts education spaces, costume and set building shops, rehearsal spaces, visual arts galleries, a café, and administrative offices for some of the most groundbreaking and accomplished performing arts companies in Canada. Arts Commons makes it a priority to maintain, as well as enhance our facility to the highest possible standard, from seating and lighting, to backstage rigging and improved patron experiences.

Wes Jenkins, one of the longest serving employees at Arts Commons, officially retired this year, ending a history with the building that started before it even officially opened! Jenkins started his career welding lighting tracks and making costume racks in 1984. He became Director, Facility Operations in 2008, ensuring the upkeep and sustainability of the facility, providing tours to newcomers, and putting his heart and soul into his work.

Meanwhile, facility improvement projects this season made leaps and bounds of progress, thanks to the extraordinary

support we received from the City of Calgary (\$7 million), the Government of Alberta (\$1 million), and the Government of Canada (\$900K). Just because Arts Commons is a historic building, it doesn't mean it has prehistoric standards when it comes to emissions and saving energy. Upgrades included work on the air handlers, replacing the main and secondary electrical switches, and replacing the aging dimmers and stage lighting system in the Max Bell Theatre – crucial work to lowering our carbon footprint.

Finally, our most significant project involved digging up part of 9 Ave SE so we could decommission our aging heating boilers and tie into the thermal heating service provided by ENMAX District Energy. The \$2.88M project was funded by the City of Calgary in partnership with the Government of Alberta that provided a \$1 million grant through Culture and Tourism. The move from our own boilers to the ENMAX District Energy thermal energy solution will improve energy efficiency by 35% and reduce our annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 1,198 metric tonnes. Total GHG reduction over the 25-year life span of the new heating system is estimated at 29,950 metric tonnes – the

equivalent of removing 6,300 cars from Alberta roadways.

Building renovations aren't just about going green, however. Arts Commons is an inclusive space that welcomes all Calgarians and visitors alike, with open arms, hearts, and minds. In this spirit, we undertook a \$354K project to upgrade several public washrooms throughout the building to become barrier-free and gender neutral. The change rooms for our Front of House team were also given the same upgrade.

Additionally, Arts Commons gave our 2011 timeline mural, located in the hallway beneath the Martha Cohen Theatre, a much needed facelift. Local illustrators Lyndon Navalta and Jenny Liski expanded the original timeline to include important moments from Indigenous, immigrant, women, queer, environmental, and black history, to illustrate a more inclusive tapestry of Calgary and Alberta.

From the infrastructure that keeps our 560,000 square foot facility operating at high efficiency, to the comfort of our patrons, Arts Commons strives to maintain and constantly improve on the City of Calgary-owned assets in our care.



Members of Founders Circle seeing the new boiler and electrical upgrades © Will Young



“The upgrades to the heating system, in a building this size, will have a significant positive environmental impact.”

- Founders Circle Member



Max Bell Theatre stage lighting dimmer project © Rafal Lichman



Main electrical switch project © Rafal Lichman

6,300

Switching from boilers to the District Energy thermal system in the building has the same effect as removing 6,300 cars off Alberta's roads.

Our Mandate is...

to ensure optimal access and utilization of our assets

Arts Commons has one thing few other arts organizations in the country have to offer: an abundance of quality space. And that's not just our theatres – we use the lobbies, galleries, studios, rehearsal halls, and even the hallways to accommodate as many organizations as possible. The average days of use, per venue, in a North American facility of our size, is 189 days per season. Our venues were filled 229 days by both our resident companies and organizations who selected Arts Commons as their preferred venue for events. While similar sized facilities host about 414 total events through the year, we hosted 866 events in our six major venues. Many more were also held in some of the more unconventional spaces throughout the building.

We're proud of the diverse array of organizations that hosted their events at Arts Commons during the 2017-18 Season, including: Beakerhead's *The Ape In You*, which paired up an expert primatologist with local improv actors; the Attic Players, who presented Genesis: *The Mary Shelley Story*; the Just For Laughs: Comedy Tour; and Live Nation's presentation of the legendary Bruce Cockburn, just to name a few of the 179 organizations that used our spaces.

We also continued to strengthen existing relationships. In the Fall of 2017, Arts Commons sponsored the Calgary International Film Festival, that held their second opening gala in the Jack Singer Concert Hall with the film *Maudie*.

Arts Commons also sponsored Avenue Magazine's *Top 40 Under 40 Gala* in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, which honoured Calgarians like Jennifer MacDonald, Director of Artistic Operations at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, an Arts Commons resident company.

Of course, none of these events would be possible without the 1,681 volunteers who contributed 25,843 hours of service to Arts Commons and its resident companies. In addition, thousands of visitors came through our doors to have lunch, grab a coffee, and enjoy the work presented in the visual arts galleries, adding energy to the daily vibrancy of the building.



Mezzanine at Happenings 12
© Melanie Boisvert

1,510
events booked by
Arts Commons Event
Services in all spaces

1,681
volunteers engaged

25,843
volunteer hours
contributed

1406177 Alberta Ltd
8Rojo
Adult Recreational
Choir Society of
Calgary
Agency EA
Alberta Theatre
Projects
Ambrose University
College
ANCOP Canada
Antonis Remos
Applause Festival
Art of Living
Foundation
Asian Heritage
Foundation
ATB Strategic
Coordination office
Attic Players
Avant-Garde Music
Studio
Ballet Classique
Beakerhead
Behdad Kamvari
Bernice Wong
Beyond Infinity
Productions Corp
Big Time Operator
LLC
Bishop Carroll High
School
Boom Goes the Drum
Bow Valley Chorus
Bow Valley College
Bridges Story Telling
Burnet Duckworth &
Palmer LLP
Calgary Association
for the Development
of Music Education

Calgary Catholic
Immigration Society
Calgary Economic
Development
Calgary International
Children's Festival
Calgary Old Time
Experience
Calgary Opera
Calgary Philharmonic
Orchestra
Calgary Pride Planning
Committee
Calgary Queen's
University Alumni
Association
Calgary Real Estate
Board
Canada Council For
The Arts
Canadian Olympic
Committee
Centre for Newcomers
Chellan Hoffman
Chelsea Michtich &
Cameron Retzlaff
Children's School of
Dance
Choir Alberta
Chris Ma & May Choi
Chris Michell Jazz
Chromatic Theatre
City of Calgary -
Community Standards
City of Calgary - IT
Department
Cloudsway Dance
Theatre
CNL Resources Ltd.
Columbia College
Contemporary Calgary
Curiously Canadian
Improv Guild
Dance on Edge

Dance Spectrum
Devin Haag
Disponsible Theatre
Diversity Dance &
Performing Arts
Diversity Performing
Arts
DIY Theatre- Closer
Downstage
Dr. E.P. Scarlett Music
Parents Association
EJD Production Inc.
En Corps Dance
Collective Guild
Encana Corporation
Ernst & Young, LLP
Ethno-Cultural Council
of Calgary
Experience Church
Fairy Tales
Presentation Society
Festival Chorus
Fire Exit Theatre
Company
FLC Seniors Club
Foothills Academy
Foothills Bluegrass
Music Society
Framework
Foundation
Fusion Spirit
Production
H/W School of Ballet
Hawk Entertainers
Honens
Husky Energy
Illuminating
Engineering Society
Indigenous Resilience
in Music/Drum Beat
Informa
Inside Out Theatre
Institute for Canadian
Citizenship
Investors Group
Financial Services Inc.

Jasmin Remoquillo
Jeff Parry Promotions
Jenilly Joseph
Jeunesse Classique
Ballet
Jiajia Li
Kapoor Film
Kathleen Engel &
Daniel Muir
Kathryn Murray
KBC Indian Folk Dance
Kevin Jung & Kimberly
Chung
Kris Demeanour
La Pointe Dance
Studio Ltd.
Legacy Kitchens
Live Nation Canada
Inc.
Maura Shaftoe
Mawer Investment
Management Ltd.
Mayor's
Environmental Expo
Mayor's Safety Expo
Mira Black
Morin Music Studio
Mount Royal
University
MOX42, Inc
MS Society of Canada
National Theatre
School
New West Symphony
& Chorus
Nexen Energy ULC
Next Level
Entertainment Service
Inc.
O2 Dance Company
Oliver Miguel
One Yellow Rabbit
Opportunity
International Canada
Orff the Wall
Palo Alto Networks

Philippine Cultural
Center Foundation
Phillipine Festival
Council of Alberta
Phillipines Festival
Council of Alberta
Youth Empowerment
Program
PREPSKILLS INC.
Productions Juste
pour rire II Inc.
Prospect Human
Services
PwC Management
Services LP
Queer Arts Society
Rachel Soong &
Brendan Barber
Read Jones
Christoffersen Ltd.
Red Deer Symphony
RedPoint Media &
Marketing Solutions
Rogers
Communications
Rosebud Centre of
the Arts
Rozsa Foundation
SAI Productions
Sankofa Music and
Arts
Schizophrenia Society
of Alberta
Search Tower
Productions - Reasons
For Being Pretty
Shantero Productions
Show Time Dance
Skipping Stone
Foundation
Sled Island Festival
Soul to Sole Dance
Company Ltd.
Spiritus Chamber
Choir
Springbank Dancers
Springboard
Performance
Stage Coach Theatre
Arts Calgary

Staples Canada
Story Book Theatre
Sun Ergos A Company
of Theatre and Dance
Swallow-a-Bicycle
Theatre
TEDx YYC
The Orchestra Society
of Calgary, performing
as The Calgary Civic
Symphony
The Wiggles
Theatre Alberta
Emerge 2018
Theatre Arts
Collective for Consent
and Respect
Theatre Calgary
Theatre Outre -
Montparnasse
Tracy Johnston
Tundra Swan Dance
Two Towers
Ultimate Dance
Company
University of Calgary
University of
Lethbridge
Urban Stories
Verb Theatre
Vertigo Theatre
Viva Musica Studio
Ltd.
Wedding Wire Canada
West Island College
Western Canada High
School
Westwinds Music
Society
Wild Rose Dance Arts
Association
Woezo Africa Music
and Dance
WordFest
World Beauty Fitness
& Fashion Inc
Zaina Peermohamed
Zdob si Zdob
Zurich Canada

179

organizations made
use of Arts Commons'
facilities



Anne Carrere performs in PIAF! The Show © Will Young



“Absolutely amazing, engaging, energetic and just beautiful and fun. Loved it. Beyond my expectations. Couldn’t have been more enjoyable”

- Patron, from PIAF! The Show



“There are no words in English or any other language to describe how outstanding this show was. Utterly amazing and mesmerizing performance!!! On a scale of 0 to 10, 10 being best, I give it 20!!”

- Patron from Che Malambo



National Geographic Live Explorer and Photographer Cristina Mittermeier with Explorers Circle members © J.Ashley Nixon



Carolina Slim performs on the Duet Stage ahead of Lila Downs © Melanie Boisvert



Performers for Truck Stop by Machine de Cirque on Olympic Plaza © Will Young



Lightbox Studio artist Jake Walker © Ariane Carlos

Arts Commons Presents

Founders Circle members meet with Mr. Sipp at the Engineered Air Theatre © Will Young



Arts Commons Presents...

creates connections

Arts Commons is a community space that's constantly evolving and Arts Commons Presents ensures that evolution by reaching out to our community. This year we put a renewed focus on our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives to better support marginalized voices, facilitate more connections, and reach beyond our traditional network to connect new communities, artists, and audiences.

In November, Arts Commons Presents partnered with Casa Mexico to host a special celebration of Dia de Muertos, or Day of the Dead. Yes, there was face painting and live performances, but it wasn't just about getting into costumes. Attendees learned the history of La Catrina and the traditional costumes that mark this occasion, and walked away with a deeper understanding of Mexican culture – along with beaming smiles underneath their calavera painted faces.

We celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day with a bright and energetic Pow-Wow in Olympic Plaza, which not only gathered a crowd but had Calgarians joining in, having fun, and learning about the oldest culture in Canada's mosaic. Supported by Arts Commons Presents, the event was

organized by Indigenous Resilience in Music, Sled Island, and Drum Beat. After the Pow-Wow, there was a free, all-ages event focused on Indigenous identity and resurgence in electronic music, featuring a discussion panel, rotating workshops, and the positive bass-face vibes of DJ Kookum. It was a fun way to engage those within and outside the Indigenous community – most stayed until the sun began to fall, watching films presented by ImagineNATIVE and enjoying performances by hip-hop artists Mob Bounce and the Snotty Nose Rez Kids.

For one week, artist Iman Bukhari demonstrated the potency of the Preamp Short Term Residency pilot program. Armed with a camera, creative lighting, and the capacity to empathise and listen, Bukhari welcomed nine women from diverse backgrounds to the Arts Learning Centre, which became her studio for the week. Building on her passion for social justice, she guided audiences through her subjects' complicated relationships with feminine beauty, identity, and race. Subjects included a queer woman, a transgender woman, one who had never cut her hair because of her religious beliefs, and one who shaved it all off. The result was a thought-provoking

video project called *Women of Colour: A Sisterhood*, presented at an informal open house at the end of her residency.

Other programs included the Youth Empowerment Program initiative to bring Filipino and non-Filipino youth closer to Philippines heritage and celebrate multiculturalism; and *Love Notes and Coffee*, a free spoken word event featuring some of Calgary's most compelling local artists, hosted by poet, author, and social media influencer, Harpreet M. Dayal.

Arts Commons Presents also continued its commitment to help promote and employ rising local musicians by offering them performance opportunities on our duet stage, located in the Jack Singer Concert Hall lobby, or as openers before Arts Commons Presents headlining artists, right on the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage. Calgary jazz musician Ellen Doty took to the Jack Singer stage, opening for Ms. Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton, one of our TD Jazz headlining artists, just weeks after her album *Come Fall* charted number one on the iTunes jazz charts.

Celebrating National Indigenous People Day in Olympic Plaza © Diane + Mike Photography



Face Painting for Dia de Muertos © Ariane Carlos

18,951

people attended a free event put on by Arts Commons Presents

720

artists hired for Arts Commons Presents programming



Local artist Harpreet M. Dayal and performers at Love Notes & Coffee © Jennifer Friesen

Arts Commons Presents...

inspires learning

The heart of Arts Commons Presents beats in our passion to educate and inspire children. It is our strong belief that kids with creative opportunities lead to well-rounded citizens, and education within the arts grows common understanding, empathy, and tolerance. Through programs like the Hub for Inspired Learning (a Campus Calgary Open Minds initiative) and *National Geographic Live*, we engaged more than 10,665 teachers and students this season!

Thanks to help from *National Geographic Live* Series Presenting Sponsor, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), as well as Student Engagement Sponsors and EXPLORE National Geographic sponsors, students were welcomed to engage with National Geographic Explorers like marine biologist, photographer, and Sea Legacy co-founder Cristina Mittermeier; astronaut and former International Space Station Commander Terry Virts; and wildlife photographer Bertie Gregory – who elicited giggles and awe among the kids when he revealed his favourite animal was the penguin. A total of five student engagement events brought relevance and context to curriculum teachings on: biodiversity, global citizenship, space exploration, environmental sustainability, and more, to over 8,500 teachers and students.

In our Hub for Inspired Learning program, 18 different classes from Grades 1 – 6 each spent a week of on-site learning with arts professionals in a variety of behind-the-scenes spaces throughout Arts Commons. The Arts Commons Presents Education team worked with teachers to explore their curriculum using arts-based learning. Grade 1 students from Griffith Woods School dove into the science curriculum by learning how animals prepare for winter – then they produced a play about it, creating puppets of bunnies, bears, and other woodland creatures to act as their cast.

Meanwhile the students from Twelve Mile Coulee school created a viral hit in October by contributing to the Pina Bausch Nelken Line project. People all over the world have contributed to this project, each group creating a single file Nelken dance performance, taking part in a global community event which includes dancers from France and Ireland to Spain and Germany. The students learned the choreography and filmed their dance in the halls of Arts Commons – and even taught others the dance when they returned to their school.

Near the end of the season, we were thrilled that ConocoPhillips Canada Resources Corp. announced their decision

to grow their support and assume the title sponsorship of the ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning as of the 2018-19 Season – a partnership both the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District have said they're excited about.

The Artist in Residence program broke boundaries this season – City of Calgary boundaries to be precise. The program reached two new communities – beginning with Oyen, Alberta, which had no official music program. Arts Commons Presents customized a project and connected the school with Juno-nominated musician Scott Henderson. The program also found its way to Grande Prairie, where Arts Commons Presents organized a puppet residency, teaching kids how to create and control puppets as a way to express themselves.

Finally, SummerACT celebrated the pop-infused 80s, with participants creating their own musical, while learning about the arts. The kids, aged 7 to 13, wrote the plot and chose the songs, performing their show for a real audience in the Engineered Air Theatre. Our Arts Commons Presents Education team beams when they share how formerly shy kids came out of their shell, gaining confidence and friendship along the way.



“Before I came here I thought there was no point of this field trip – but this week was so much fun! Our teachers were so nice!”

-Twelve Mile Coulee Student

Students participating in a Drumming Circle
© Ariane Carlos



Students listening to National Geographic Live Explorer and NASA Astronaut Terry Virts © Alex Bonyun



Students learn some Ukrainian dance moves with Campus Calgary Education
© Ariane Carlos

10,665
students and
teachers engaged

Lila Downs performs at the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Melanie Boisvert



Dawn Tyler Watson performs at the Engineered Air Theatre © Tasha Komery



Hudson performs at the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Will Young



“This was my first visit to the Engineered Air Theatre. I loved the warm cosy atmosphere. You feel more connected to the artists in these smaller concert events. Especially so, when the performer chats with the audience between songs.”

-Patron from Dawn Tyler Watson

38,717
total attendance to ticketed
Arts Commons Presents
performances

Arts Commons Presents...

uplifts and energizes

Our visual and media arts galleries continued to program impactful and innovative content, free and accessible to all. Visual artists Khrysta Lloren and Nine Kennedy started the season strong in The Ledge Galley with *Invasion of Body Dysmorphia* – a multimedia project which looked at the potential of gender subversion and queer theory to manipulate interactions in public and personal spaces.

In the Lightbox Studio, Tamara Lee-Anne Cardinal created an evocative multimedia research exhibit around the fate of our nations within nations, including the First Nations, LGBTQ2+, and immigrant communities. Topics included diversity, equality, and allyship, which informed her later exhibit at the Glenbow Museum.

Arts Commons still hosts one of the only permanent soundscape exhibitions in Canada in our +15 walkway, this year featuring creations by Shawn Pinchbeck, Tona Ohama, and synthesizer duo SH-2000.

The Broadcast Lab also hosted an exciting new partnership with the Treaty 7 Film Collective to wrap up the 2017-18 visual and media arts season. Artists from the collective tackled: substance abuse, digital living, and the history of women, through their unique lens.

In addition to partnering with Casa Mexico on the Dia de Muertos celebration, Arts Commons Presents also worked with them to highlight one of our most important artists of the season: Lila Downs, presented as part of our BD&P World Music series. Dubbed “peligrosa,” or “dangerous woman,” Lila Downs is lauded in Mexico and the Spanish-speaking world for her Grammy-award winning music, and boundary-pushing, feminist lyrics. We were thrilled to share this experience with Calgary’s passionate Spanish-speaking community and other Calgarians who didn’t stay seated for long, enjoying a night of dancing and singing.

With Lila Downs in town and the Glenbow Museum just a +15 walk away, a natural partnership was formed to host a special event with Downs in their exhibit of another feminist and prominent defender of human rights – Frida Kahlo. Attendees learned about Frida’s art and activism of the mid-1900s, and Lila Down’s work of the present.

Our TD Jazz series also had its highlights, including Grammy Award-winning American jazz composer and pianist, Ramsey Lewis, and Hudson, an all-star band named after the Hudson River Valley, led by one of the most influential jazz drummers of the 20th century, Jack DeJohnette.

In our PCL Blues series, Toronzo Cannon took the stage for a special presentation in the Martha Cohen Theatre, filling the house with stories, song, and many smiles, over this 2-night engagement.

Finally, in our ongoing efforts to create inclusive spaces, we welcomed American Sign Language interpreters to the stage for *National Geographic Live’s* presentation of Cristina Mittermeier’s, *Standing at the Water’s Edge*, allowing our deaf and hard of hearing patrons to fully experience the show.



Lightbox Studio Multimedia exhibit by artist Tamara Lee-Anne Cardinal © Ariane Carlos

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

Arts Commons Presents celebrated its third year of *Happenings*, a free quarterly event that offers hands-on, immersive, and fun activities while celebrating the local artists exhibiting in the building. Being a free centre-wide event, our featured artists were able to provide a new perspective on our spaces to many who had never stepped foot in our building before. The *Happenings* events, open to all ages, are aimed at connecting Calgary's diverse communities, like at *Happenings 12* when kids and adults learned about gender identity while reading with royalty – specifically their majesties, drag king and queen, Slamda BD and the Marvelous Mo B Dick.

The *Happenings* events also transformed areas of the building, turning the +15 into an arts-centric mini golf course, creating an intricately woven cardboard tunnel in The Hub, setting up miniature puppet shows with elaborate dioramas in the landing adjacent to the Martha Cohen Theatre, and even bringing the circus to Olympic Plaza.

Happenings 13 capped off the season with more than 1,000 attendees and 28 local artists. Inspired by the free presentation of Machine de Cirque's *Truckstop*, in partnership with the Calgary Downtown Association, *Happenings 13*

was our own take on the big top, with roving performers, a dance-worthy DJ, and several craft stations where everyone was welcome to participate. The free circus performance spilled out onto Olympic Plaza from a single trailer, revealing high-flying acrobats, music, and a healthy dose of hilarity.

Arts Commons Presents also launched a new series that will become a staple of the ACP lineup: Classic Albums Live. *Note for note, cut for cut™*, Classic Albums Live recreated two very famous albums this season: Fleetwood Mac – Rumours, and The Beatles – Abbey Road, both of which packed the house with music fans young and experienced. Long-standing series' such as BD&P World Music, TD Jazz, PCL Blues, and *National Geographic Live* also had our audiences grinning from ear to ear, and the performers just as happy to perform on our stages.

We love to reflect on how intimate some of our presentations can feel. Audiences certainly couldn't get much closer to Roy Book Binder, who mingled with fans in the lobby during intermission and after his PCL Blues presentation. Terry Virts, like many of our National Geographic Explorers, stayed to sign books, take photos, and chat with a winding lineup of fans. Lila Downs spread an aura of

warmth from the stage, welcoming the community to join her in song. One couple strode out of the event lost in each others' eyes, stopping to tell Arts Commons staff how they originally met a decade ago at a Lila Downs concert in South America – and celebrated their anniversary with her performance at Arts Commons.

Arts Commons Presents provides opportunities for all walks of life to attend, with the ongoing support of TD Bank. Through the TD Arts Access pass, we partner with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (through the Cultural Access Pass) and the Calgary Public Library to provide more than 1,500 tickets to students, new Canadian citizens, and families challenged by a variety of circumstances, to attend Arts Commons Presents concerts and special events at no cost to them. This allows more Calgarians to experience and be impacted by the arts, and allows Arts Commons to reach more members of our community. As an example, 40% of Cultural Access Pass patrons attending the TD Jazz: Ramsey Lewis performance had never heard of Arts Commons before they got an invitation to the show. After the performance, 73% said they would attend another performance at Arts Commons – even without the free admission.

Bubble making at Happenings 13 in Olympic Plaza © Will Young



551

volunteers engaged with Arts Commons

1,884

volunteer hours contributed to Arts Commons



+15 Windows Gallery featuring artist Madeleine Mayo © Melanie Boisvert

Happenings 12 performer Slamda BD © Melanie Boisvert



1,734

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



Demonstrates sustainability

Journey to Sustainability

In our 2009-10 year we were facing a looming \$900K deficit and had to make difficult decisions to cut expenses significantly in order to survive. At the end of the year we were left with a small reserve and the realization that continuing to cut our activities, programming, staff, and maintenance costs was not the answer. We embarked on a journey to develop strategies for long term sustainability not through cost controls and cutting, but through growth and diversification.

As we look back over the last nine years under the leadership of our President & CEO Johann Zietsman, the following are just some of the quantitative results of our work to create a compassionate society through the arts.



National Geographic Live Explorer and Photographer Bertie Gregory © Lucia Juliaio

Overall

Our consolidated working capital reserves at the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year were a mere \$38K. At fiscal year end 2017-18 our reserves were sitting at \$1.3M – a solid foundation for the future.

Revenue Growth

Earned revenues nine years ago were hovering around \$4.7M dropping to \$4.4M in 2011. It was clear that we had to diversify and increase earned revenues in order to keep the doors open. By maximizing venue utilization, adding revenue streams such as ticketing and shared services, and increasing programming we have been able to bring revenues to the \$7.5M level.

Similarly, our focus on deepening relationships with our partners has resulted in philanthropic giving increasing from \$132K in 2009-10 to \$208K in 2017-18 and corporate sponsorship more than doubling in the same time period to \$839K.

Programming

One of our best tools in engaging patrons, donors, and sponsors is the richness of our programming. In 2009-10 our programming resulted in a loss of over \$400K. In seven of the eight years since, we have posted surpluses, increased our programming activity (and resulting ticket sales) from \$400K to \$1.2M in 2017-18. This has not only resulted in many happy patrons but has also allowed us to spend over \$960K to expand our visual arts programs, support hundreds of local artists, provide community groups with access to our venues, and introduce a significant number of free public programming initiatives.

Capital spend

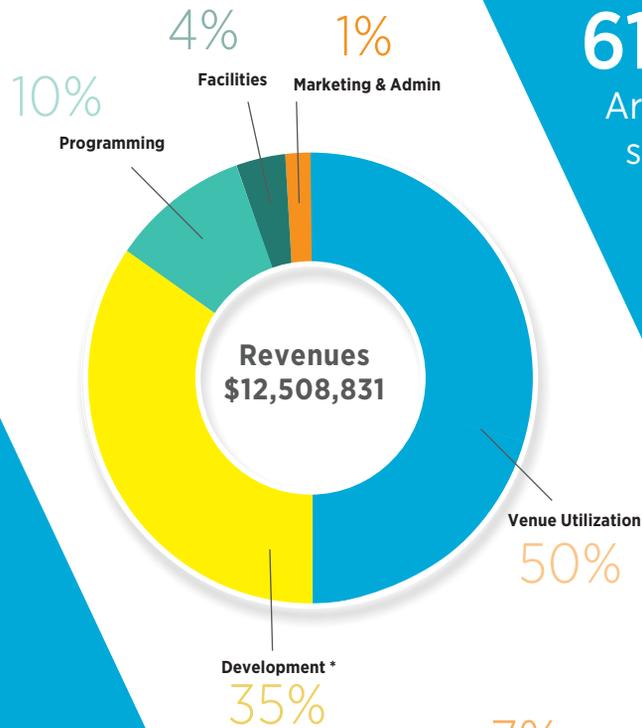
None of this is meaningful without a safe, efficient, and well maintained building. Over the past nine years we have been successful in attaining over \$17.5M in grants from all three levels of government to help fund over \$21.9M in capital improvement and life cycle projects.

3%
increase in
contributed
revenues (YOY)

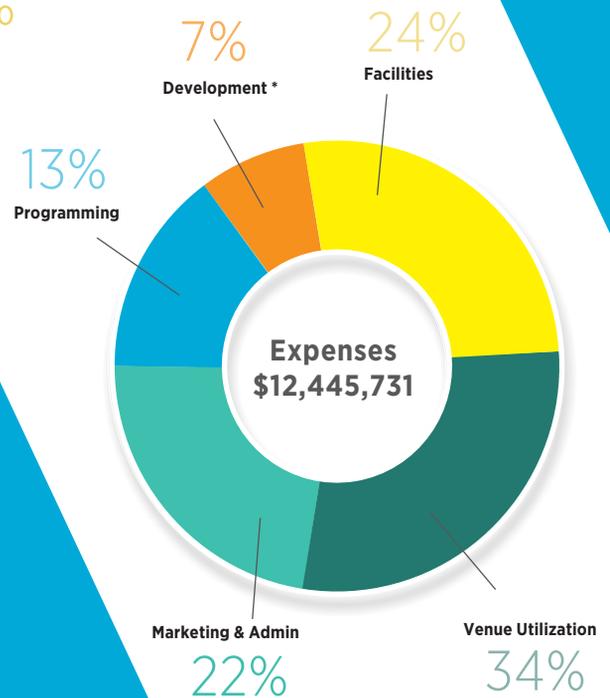
2%
increase
in earned
revenues (YOY)

2%
increase in
expenses (YOY)

\$8.9M
was raised in addition to our
operating revenue, in support
of Arts Commons' life-cycle
projects



61
Arts Commons
salaried staff



*Includes \$198,975 of goods and services in kind

Thank You

Through the ongoing support and generosity of corporations, foundations, governments, and individuals, Calgarians – as well as visitors to our wonderful city – have access to Arts Commons, Calgary’s preeminent gathering space. Arts Commons is where creativity comes to life, remarkable experiences are shared, and meaningful memories are made to last a lifetime.

We are extremely grateful to those that believe in the vital role Arts Commons plays in helping to make our community

a better place to live by continuing to invest in our programming priorities.

It’s only because of the ongoing generosity of our citizens, Calgary’s corporate community, local foundations, all three levels of government, and our Explorers Circle and Founders Circle members that Arts Commons is able to continue to be a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians and visitors.



Bob Benzen, Explorers Circle and Founders Circle member with National Geographic Live Explorer and NASA Astronaut, Terry Virts © Will Young



“A great community is built on its citizens’ contributions to it. Arts Commons provides Calgary with a needed, vibrant cultural connection. Why would you not give back if you are able to? It is our responsibility to add on to what we already have, and make the city better going forward.”

- Bob Benzen, MP - Calgary Heritage, and Sue Benzen, Explorers Circle, Engagement Sponsors, and Founders Circle, Platinum Tier Members



“The arts play a pivotal role in building vibrant communities and strengthening economies, and Arts Commons is a terrific partner that provides artists, from every genre, opportunities to bring their talent and vision to life.”

- Jeff Boyd, Regional President, Alberta & The Territories, Royal Bank of Canada

Private and Public Sector Support

Arts Commons wishes to express our sincere appreciation to the following corporations, foundations, governments, and passionate community leaders that gave generously to support Arts Commons throughout the 2017-18 Season.

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Government of Canada through
the Departments of Canadian Heritage
and Infrastructure Canada

Government of Alberta through the
Department of Culture and Tourism

The City of Calgary through the
Department of Community Services

Arts Commons FOUNDERS CIRCLE

We wish to express our gratitude to the following who give generously through their membership in Founders Circle that supports Arts Commons in our efforts to present remarkable artists through Arts Commons Presents and to foster impactful arts education initiatives in our community.



Founders Circle members interacting with Classic Albums Live artists © Will Young



Explorer Circle members © Will Young

HONOURARY MEMBERS

Dr. Martha Cohen, CM, LLD (*in memoriam*)
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Arts Commons EXPLORERS CIRCLE

We wish to express our gratitude to the following who give generously through their membership in Explorers Circle that supports Arts Commons in our effort to present *National Geographic Live*, which is an unparalleled source of inspiration for adult and student audiences; and, National Geographic in their effort to inspire people to care about the planet.

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Standing at the Water's Edge by marine biologist and photographer Cristina Mittermeier
Ken Havard, *View From Above* by NASA astronaut Terry Virts

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Cover: BD&P World Music, Lila Downs performing on the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage © Melanie Boisvert
Back cover: TD Jazz, Lisa Fisher performing on the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage © Will Young