



Rising Waters  
Collective

**IMPACT**

**REPORT**

**2025**

# INTRODUCTION

**Rising Waters Collective launched to create immersive performing arts rooted in the Pacific Northwest, centering regional artists, ethical pay, and work that invites audiences into meaningful dialogue with their communities.**

## **The Problem We're Addressing**

Many performing arts models depend on imported talent, unpaid or underpaid labor, and experiences disconnected from the communities they serve. Rising Waters Collective was founded to do things differently by:

- Hiring only regional artists, including performers, directors, conductors, composers, librettists, and creative collaborators
- Producing immersive, innovative performances designed for connection, not distance
- Paying artists for the work they do, recognizing labor as essential to sustainability
- Using art as a catalyst for conversation around the issues shaping our shared lives

## **Our Inaugural Season: What We Achieved**

In its inaugural season, Rising Waters Collective presented multiple community concerts across Seattle, Vashon Island, Tacoma, and Bellingham, reaching new audiences and building meaningful regional partnerships.

A defining achievement was The Vox Project: six distinct interpretations of a contemporary English adaptation of *La voix humaine*, presented in a single day. The project became both an artistic and community milestone, demonstrating how one work can hold many voices, perspectives, and lived experiences. We also produced our first feature-length film of *Vox: The Hollow Between Them*. This ambitious project employed 14 area creatives and included 5 venue partners.

## **Recognition and What Comes Next**

In December, Rising Waters Collective was awarded the 4Culture Launch Grant, a major endorsement of our vision and leadership. For an inaugural season, these outcomes were extraordinary, and they set a strong foundation for the ambitious work ahead.

In 2026, we continue partnerships with Shunpike and the Conru Foundation's ArtLove Salon. We welcome a co-production of the North American premiere of *disPLACE* with Theatre Off Jackson and we will premiere award-winning composer Sheila Silver's song cycle, *Songs of Resilience*. We will be holding our first Open Call Auditions this January to ensure that we are moving beyond our personal networks and welcoming all interested PNW creatives.

# Our Leadership

Rising Waters Collective is led by four co-directors whose practices intersect across opera, music, theatre, and community-centered performance. Each brings a distinct artistic voice and professional background, shaped by work as performers, directors, producers, educators, and collaborators within both established institutions and independent spaces. Together, they balance creative vision with practical execution, moving fluidly between concept development, artist support, logistics, and audience engagement.

Collective leadership is not a branding choice for us; it is a working method. Decisions are made through dialogue, accountability, and shared responsibility, with each co-director leading from their expertise. This structure resists burnout, flattens hierarchy, and keeps power from pooling in one voice. In the performing arts, where labor is often precarious and leadership narrowly defined, collective leadership creates resilience, transparency, and space for better art to emerge.



**Julia Benzinger**

Co-Director

Seattle Opera

Deutsche Oper  
Berlin

Royal Opera  
House Muscat

Pacific  
MusicWorks

Universitat  
Internacional de  
Catalunya

Royal Northern  
College of Music

Cornish College  
of the Arts



**Holly Boaz**

Co-Director

Seattle Opera

Vancouver Early  
Music Festival

Aldeburgh Festival

Symphony  
Tacoma

Music of  
Remembrance

Aspen Music  
Festival

Music Academy of  
the West

The Hartt School



**Ibidunni Ojikutu**

Co-Director

Portland Opera

Bellingham  
Symphony  
Orchestra

Seattle Opera

First Church  
Seattle

AstroLabs



**Lucy Weber**

Co-Director

Seattle  
Shakespeare  
company

Spectrum Dance  
Company

Seattle Opera

Vashon Opera

Kitsap Opera

Seattle Opera  
Guild

# Our Vision

We envision a community-driven opera company that harnesses the power of storytelling to reflect the evolving world around us. Steeped in the rich cultural and ecological landscape of the Puget Sound region, we strive to create opera that is intimate, relevant, and accessible. By remaining adaptable and responsive, we create art that is deeply felt, socially conscious, and artistically adventurous.



# Our Mission



Rising Waters Collective creates bold, locally rooted chamber opera that amplifies stories of our region, commissions and showcases regional talent, and embraces opera as a living art form, one that resonates with the struggles and hopes of our time while honoring its deep traditions.

# Our Values

## WE ARE

Rising Waters Collective is an ensemble of passionate artists who create and present new works of performing arts and reinterpret historical works to reflect the issues facing our communities today.

We focus on turning the spotlight on historically excluded perspectives and storytellers to shine a light on the many experiences that exist in our region.

## WE BELIEVE

Rising Waters Collective believes we all have a story to tell and that our stories deserve a place in our collective memories.

We create through collaboration and celebrate a collective intelligence in our approach to organizational leadership and operations.

Theatrical and musical storytelling does not exist in theatres alone. Our artists share their stories on stages and in unconventional spaces across the Puget Sound region and through digital channels.

Our audiences are invited to be present and open to experiencing new forms of performance art. Our narratives may challenge or offend and we encourage honest dialogue in our Talkback Sessions.

## RISING WATERS COLLECTIVE LEADS WITH:

courage  
collaboration  
respect  
love  
transparency  
vulnerability  
sustainability



# The VOX Project

August-October



**The Hollow Between Them**  
Lucy Weber & Amy Boers



**The Art of the Inner Monologue**  
Ibidunni Ojikutu & Jay Rozendaal



**Halfway to Herself**  
Heather Dudenbostel & Mark Davies



**The Sacred Between**  
Korland Simmons & Mark Davies



**The Echo in the Crowd**  
Lucy Weber & Jay Rozendaal



**The Name is Missing**  
Adia Bowen Tsi Sʔuyuʔat & Jay Rozendaal

The Vox Project reimagined La voix humaine through six distinct contemporary interpretations, presented in one day, centering regional artists and lived experience while transforming a single work into a shared, multi-voiced community event.

# Community Concerts

In 2025, Rising Waters Collective brought music and theatre directly into homes and community spaces across the region, dissolving the distance between performers and audiences. These intimate concerts introduced rare and new works to seasoned opera-goers while

welcoming neighbors experiencing the unamplified human voice live for the first time. By meeting people where they are, the concerts fostered connection, curiosity, and a shared sense of discovery - proof that powerful art doesn't require a traditional stage to resonate.



2025

# YEAR IN NUMBERS

1000

Programs Attendees

4

Projects



11

Venues

1

Feature  
Film

20

Artists Engaged

500

Online views of the Vox Project

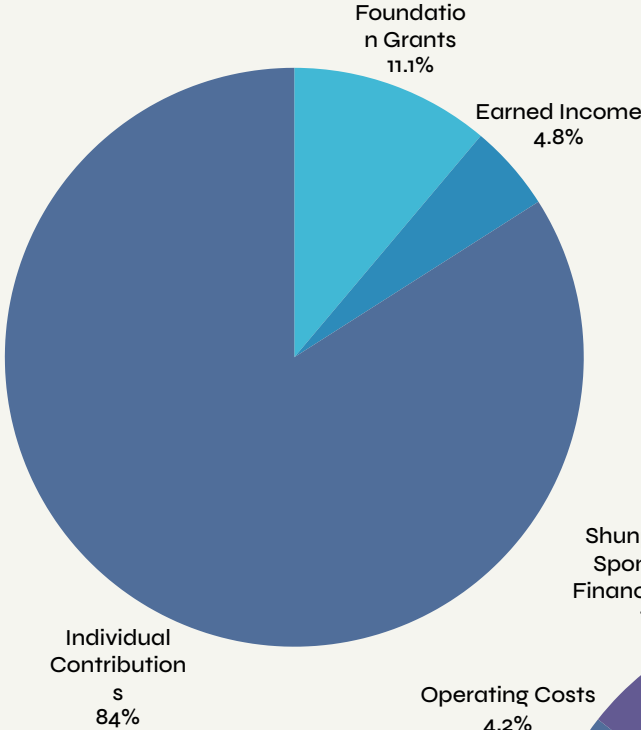
150

Individual Donors Supporting Our Mission

9

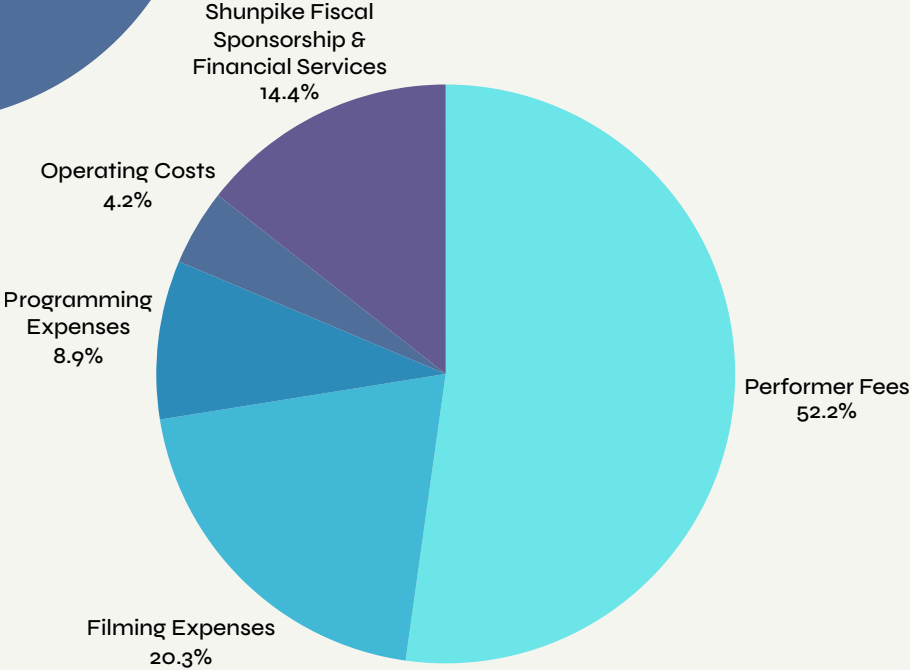
Community  
Partners

# WHAT IT TOOK



**REVENUE:**  
**\$31,420.68**

**EXPENSES:**  
**\$22,557.77**



Our inaugural season was made possible by an extraordinary circle of friends, family, and neighbors who showed up early and generously to help launch Rising Waters Collective. Individual giving formed the backbone of our support, affirming a shared belief in new work and local artists. From the beginning, we committed to paying artists for their labor, time, and expertise and more than half of our expenses went directly to artist fees, with additional investment in documentation and production support. We closed our first season with a modest surplus, allowing us to build momentum responsibly while honoring the people who make the work possible.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work we do is only made possible by the support of our community and the fearless creativity of the artists who join us.

Special thanks to **Jay Rozendaal, Amy Boers, Dawn Sonntag, Sheila Silver, Pollard Vineyard,** and all those who supported us before we had even produced our first show.

Thank you to our fiscal sponsor **Shunpike.**

The venue partners who gave a shot to an outside the box production: **Lairmont Manor, HQ3, First Church Seattle, Rabbit Box Theatre, and ArtLove Salon.**

The **Individuals** and **4Culture** for supporting us with the funds that allow us to pay our artists and create exciting theatre.

**Rising Waters Collective**  
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# WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION