



As we cautiously emerged from the pandemic (maybe? hopefully?), we made the transition from virtual work back to the fully-staged, live productions that are our lifeblood.

We were thrilled to gather to perform (and even just rehearse!) in person, live, for the first time in what felt like forever, and we're particularly grateful that we didn't have to cancel a single performance all season! Thank you for riding this rollercoaster with us.

This season, we produced, or co-produced *Home Cooked Heroes*, *The Aria Project*, *Preludes*, and *L'Orfeo*.

Plus, we hosted 12 virtual and 2 live Voice Labs, issued 2 new commissions, and supported our Script & Score education initiative at Parkside School for the Arts.

THE NUMBERS

With a healthy box office and generous support from grants and individual donors, we were able to end our season in the black, as we have done each year since we were founded.

We reached an audience of over
4,044
people
(and counting!)

We produced, or co-produced
41
performances

Of the
\$64,979

we spent on those performances,

\$50,356

was paid directly to artists in fees, stipends, and commissions.

93%

was spent on local talent, supporting our bedrock belief that investing in area talent creates a thriving community.

SEASON REVIEW

In **October 2021**, we reunited with our collaborative partners at the Decameron Opera Coalition to contribute one segment to an operatic anthology film on the subject of inconvenient heroes. Our segment, a spoken word opera on film called *Home Cooked Heroes*, featured a libretto by local poet Brit Nicole, music by composer Ms. Lotus Fankh, and videography by Samer Ghani, and focused on Milwaukee's Northside pay-what-you-can Tricklebee Café and its place in the community. We followed that up with a free concert at Tricklebee on October 17, 2021, featuring performances by *Home Cooked Heroes* cast members and a screening of the film we made together.

From **October 2021 to May 2022**, we released *The Aria Project*, a monthly virtual series in which we challenged eight local artists to choose a classic aria and record it in a way that reflected their personal pandemic experiences. Director Catie O'Donnell and local singers Adam Qutaishat, Allison Hull, Nicole McCarty, Alexandra Kassouf, Cecilia Davis, Austin Bare, and Colleen Brooks accepted the challenge, and all eight installments are available now to watch for free at our website and on our YouTube channel!

In **April 2022**, we joyously returned to live performance with our long-awaited production of Dave Malloy's *Preludes*. We were so stoked to (finally!) present this deep dive into the hypnotized mind of Sergei Rachmaninoff at the Woman's Club of Wisconsin after having to cancel in March 2020. *Preludes* featured some of Milwaukee's favorite music theatre performers, including Joe Picchetti, Jenny Wanasek, Natalie Ford, Gage Patterson, and Joel Kopischke, with the transcendent Ruben Piirainen music directing and playing some of Rachmaninoff's most virtuosic piano music.



"Some of the most imaginative musical theater in town during this century has been staged by Milwaukee Opera Theatre"

— David Luhrssen, *Shepherd Express (Preludes)*

And in **June 2022**, we closed our season with a fully-staged, live production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* in a newly-commissioned English translation. We were beyond jazzed to reunite with our previous collaborative partners at early music vocal ensemble Aperi Animam to present this once-in-a-lifetime project at Calvary Presbyterian Church in downtown Milwaukee. Featuring a cast of sixteen dedicated singers and an orchestral ensemble of six musicians playing period instruments, *L'Orfeo* just might be the most ambitious project we've ever undertaken!

THESE ARE SOME OF THE ARTISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS WE WORKED WITH IN 2021-2022:

Kellen "Klassik" Abston, Sarah Acker, **Aperi Animam**, Chris Armijo, Austin Bare, Heidi Barker, Elizabeth Blood, Dave Bonofiglio, Colleen Brooks, Danny Brylow, Marty Butorac, **Calvary Presbyterian Church**, Doug Clemons, Xylia-Sophia Conn, Cecilia Davis, Debonne, the **Decameron Opera Coalition**, Adam Dillon, Ms. Lotus Fankh, Natalie Ford, Colin Gawronski, Danielle Gedemer, Samer Ghani, Demian Glas, David Guzmán, Deme Hellwig, Kaisa Herrmann, Dr. William Hudson, Allison Hull, Jennifer Jakubowski, Amy Kaczmarowski, Alexandra Kassouf, Andrea Klohn, Joel Kopischke, Andrew Kosmalski, Joseph Krohlow, Danur Kvilhaug, Nicole McCarty, Christie Melby-Gibbons, David Melby-Gibbons, Brit Nicole, Julio Nieves, Fumi Nishikiori-Nakayama, Catie O'Donnell, Luke Pacholski, Jim Padovano, Gage Patterson, Joe Picchetti, Ruben Piirainen, Jill Anna Ponasik, Maria Pretzl, Lisa Quinn, Adam Qutaishat, Charlie Rasmussen, Jack Rutter, Katelynn Rutter, Nate Schardin, Amelia Spierer, Lee Stovall, Brett Sweeney, **Traveling Lemur Productions**, **Tricklebee Café**, Sentaces Townsend, Mike Van Dreser, Uyen Vo, Coltyn VonDeylen, Christal Wagner, Jenny Wanasek, Nathan Wesselowski, Jackie Willis, and the **Woman's Club of Wisconsin**

(top left) *L'Orfeo*, Pictured: Elizabeth Blood (La Musica), Photo Credit: Mark Frohna; (middle) *Preludes*, Pictured: Jenny Wanasek (Dahl), Gage Patterson (Chaliapin), Ruben Piirainen (Rachmaninoff), Joe Picchetti (Rach), Natalie Ford (Natalya), and Joel Kopischke (Tsar Nicholas II), Photo Credit: Mark Frohna

“ FROM THE CRITICS

HOME COOKED HEROES

“A celebration of the idealism of a restaurant that uses fresh, healthy, locally-grown ingredients to bring meals and people together.” — *Russ Bickerstaff, The Small Stage*

PRELUDES

“How I’ve missed this small company’s mighty spirit, their dedication to the unexpected and unusual, and their gift for giving audiences such singular experiences.”
— *Kelsey Lawler, BroadwayWorld*

L’ORFEO

“An original and conceptually daring work; a pure aesthetic experience unsullied by the demands of commercial entertainment.” — *Jeff Grygny, PlayOnMke.com*

“Orpheus’ love perishes as the summer light drains from the sky outside the church...The journey into the afterlife follows the departure of the sun in a clever synthesis between nature and art.” — *Russ Bickerstaff, The Small Stage*

“Per MOT’s methodology, this production was an interesting synthesis of performance styles and storytelling, making a centuries-old opera immediately intriguing to a modern audience.” — *Gwendolyn Rice, GwendolynRice.com*



Preludes, Pictured: Natalie Ford (Natalya) and Joe Picchetti (Rach)
Photo Credit: Mark Frohna

“ FROM OUR ARTISTS

HOME COOKED HEROES

“This whole project was pure magic. You all are delights.”
— *Christie Melby-Gibbons, Tricklebee Café Co-owner and Home Cooked Heroes Cast Member*

PRELUDES

“Thank you for inviting me to be part of such a delightfully grand adventure! It was so thrilling to play in the sandbox with you all.” — *Joel Kopischke, “Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, Tolstoy, Glazunov, Tsar Nicholas II, and The Master”*

L’ORFEO

“Thank you for believing in me...over and over!”
— *Jackie Willis, “Orfeo” and L’Orfeo Music Director*

VOICE LAB

“It really warms my heart to be able to hear such expressive and accomplished performers, as well as learn from them. You create a very safe place for us to be and it’s been such a treat, more like a life raft, especially during these last months.”
— *Sahar Hassan*

“It was so wonderful to meet new singers and chat about performing and technique.” — *Amanda Lauricella*



Home Cooked Heroes, Pictured: Sentaces Townsend, Brit Nicole, Debonne, Ms. Lotus Fankh, Jill Anna, Ponasik, Christie Melby-Gibbons, Danny Brylow
Photo Credit: Samer Ghani

“ FROM OUR AUDIENCES

HOME COOKED HEROES

“You have said yes to using your platform to make a change in the paradigm...Thank you for giving me a little bit of hope for the future of art in this world.”

THE ARIA PROJECT

“I LOVED *The Aria Project*! They’re pint-sized performances that were readily accessible to those who aren’t classical aficionados!”

PRELUDES

“Really glorious as our first return to live theater.”

L’ORFEO

“Thanks so much to you and your amazing company for continuing to create and perform such magical theatre works. *L’Orfeo* was mesmerizing, transformational, awesome!!”



L’Orfeo, Pictured: Jackie Willis (Orfeo), Photo Credit: Mark Frohna