



FAIRMONT  
Opera House



ANNUAL  
REPORT

July 1st, 2023-  
June 30th, 2024

**Fairmont Opera House, Inc.**  
45 Downtown Plaza  
PO Box 226  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
[www.fairmontoperahouse.org](http://www.fairmontoperahouse.org)

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Table of Contents

1. A message from the Executive Director
2. Capital Campaign
3. Financial Overview
4. Programs and Performances
5. Community and Donor Recognition
6. Looking Ahead: 2024-2025
7. Get Involved
8. A message from the Chair of the Board

# FAIRMONT OPERA HOUSE

## Board of Directors 2024-2025

### Executive Committee

Chair - Robert Luedtke  
Vice-Chair - Samantha Werre  
Treasurer - Jane Reiman  
Secretary - Zachary Petersen

### At-Large Members

Hollee Klesh  
Barbara Duffey  
Jonas Nissen  
Justin Miller

### Ex Officio Board Members

Joann Woodward  
Seth Becker

### Outgoing Board Members - 2024

Chantill Kahler-Royer  
Michael Edman

## Staff

Executive Director - Blake Potthoff  
Marketing/Communications Coordinator - Katelyn Langwith

## OUR MISSION

BY PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT, FAIRMONT OPERA HOUSE INC. STRIVES TO ADVANCE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE HISTORIC FAIRMONT OPERA HOUSE FACILITY AND THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

# From the Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Reflecting on the 2023-2024 fiscal year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable journey we have taken together at the Fairmont Opera House. This past year has been a time of transformation, both in our programming and our ambitious capital campaign, Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future.

Our season kicked off with a beloved production of “The Sound of Music,” a show that not only marked a strong start to the year but also became a symbol of the Opera House's resilience and importance to our community. The energy from our cast and crew and the overwhelming community turnout were truly magical. With nearly 2000 attendees, it was the highest-attended event of the year, showing that the spirit of the arts is alive and thriving in Fairmont. This success is a testament to our community's collective effort and support, making us all proud of what we have achieved together.

Following the success of “The Sound of Music,” we continued our commitment to community engagement with a series of remarkable performances. These included a memorable concert by Deuces Wild, Arts Midwest World Fest performances, Mick Sterling’s “Grand Old Opry Christmas,” and more. Each show entertained and engaged a wide range of community members, from school-aged children attending our workshops to seasoned theatergoers. This diversity in our programming reflects our deep commitment to making the arts accessible to all and ensuring that the Fairmont Opera House remains a cultural hub. Your participation and support are integral to our mission, and we value your role in our community.

While we celebrated our artistic achievements, we also experienced hardship. As you know, we’re at a pivotal moment in our journey. The capital campaign we’ve launched, “Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future,” is not just about keeping the doors open—it’s about preserving a piece of our community’s soul while also creating new opportunities for future generations. We are facing real, immediate challenges. If we don’t raise \$4 million by the end of 2025, we won’t be able to make the critical repairs needed to keep the Fairmont Opera House open. It’s that simple. Without your support, this community could lose a century-old treasure.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to everyone who has contributed—whether through donations, attending events, or volunteering your time. Your support ensures that future generations will continue to experience the wonder and magic of the Fairmont Opera House. As we look ahead to the 2024-2025

season, I am excited and optimistic for what’s to come. Together, we will preserve the legacy and enrich the future of this remarkable space.



With gratitude,

Blake Potthoff, Executive Director  
Fairmont Opera House

# “Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future”

*“We stand at the most pivotal moment in our 125-year history.”*

The Fairmont Opera House isn't merely a venue; it's essential to the lifeblood of our community. It has been a cherished beacon of culture, entertainment, and fellowship in our region for generations. However, the passage of time and wear have left their mark on this historic gem, and **\$4 million** is urgently required for immediate repairs essential to safeguarding a legacy and propelling the future of our community forward.

## **“Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future”**

### **Timeline: Immediate Required to Reopen\***

- Roof Repairs
- Tuckpointing (Ext. Brick Repairs/Replacement)
- Plumbing and Electrical Repairs
- Restroom Repairs
- Basement-Level Repairs
- Balcony Repairs
- Stage Rigging Repairs/Replacement
- Stage Technology Repairs/ Replacement
- Reconstruction Cosmetic Repairs and Replacement
  - Seat Reinstallation
  - Carpet and Flooring
  - Decorative Plaster
  - Time-Period Appropriate Paint and Decor

***\*Repair and rehabilitation initiatives will begin on the receipt of funding.***

We cannot embark on this journey alone. We need your financial support to turn this vision into a reality. Your contribution won't just fund essential repairs; it will breathe new life into The Fairmont Opera House, ensuring it reopens as a place where all are welcome, countless memories are made, and the enduring magic of live performance continues to captivate hearts and minds.

*Will you help Preserve the Legacy of The Fairmont Opera House?*



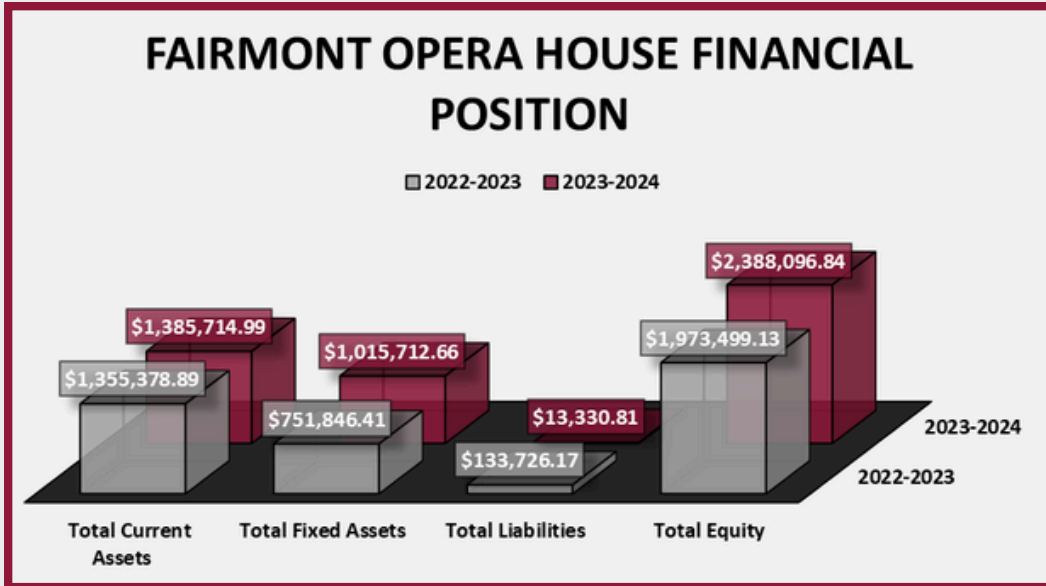
**SCAN HERE**



**TO DONATE!**

# Financial Health of the Organization

The 2023-2024 fiscal year marked significant financial progress for the Fairmont Opera House, reflecting our organization's resilience and our supporters' generosity. We are pleased to report a \$400,000 increase in our financial position compared to the previous fiscal year. This improvement is critical to ensuring the Fairmont Opera House's future and securing the resources needed for the ongoing capital campaign.



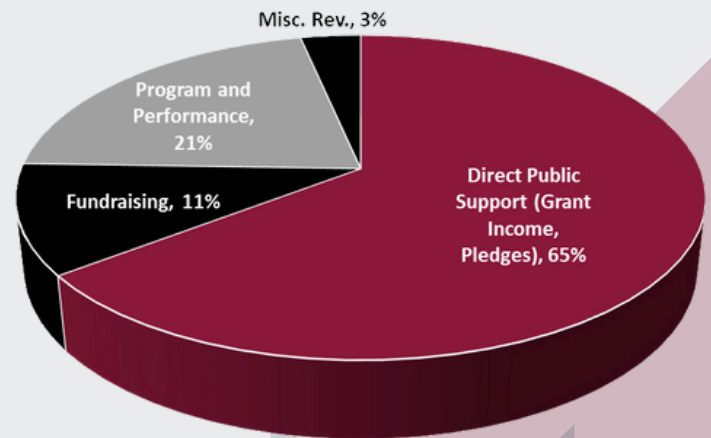
One of the major financial highlights this year was securing \$200,000 in grant revenue. These funds came from a combination of local, state, and private foundation grants, which provided crucial support for both operational costs and our capital campaign efforts. The grant funding was instrumental in planning for the capital campaign, continued programming, and community outreach initiatives.

#### Financial Highlights for Fiscal Year 2024

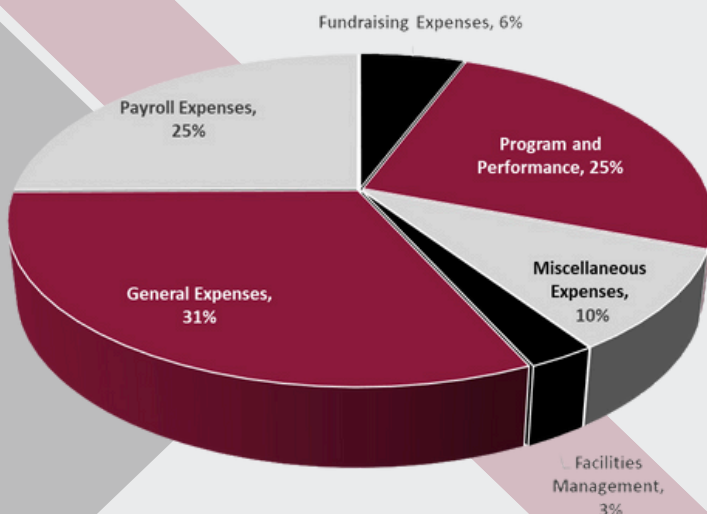
- **Increase in Financial Position:** \$400,000 growth from the prior year
- **Grant Revenue:** \$200,000 secured from various grants, supporting restoration and programming
- **Year-End Profit:** \$137,000 (unreviewed)

Additionally, we closed the fiscal year with an unreviewed profit of \$137,000. This surplus, achieved through grant revenue, successful fundraising events, and increased program participation, helps build a financial cushion to navigate ongoing operational expenses and the unexpected challenges that arise during a major restoration project. The surplus will be directed towards maintaining daily operations while keeping the momentum of the Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future campaign.

#### Sources of Revenue



#### Expenditures



Despite this positive financial performance, the road ahead is still challenging. The Fairmont Opera House faces substantial costs associated with equipment rentals and ongoing repairs, including scaffolding rental fees that continue to accrue. The need to raise \$4 million by the end of 2025 to complete the restoration and reopen our doors remains urgent.

Our progress this year is a testament to the community's commitment to keeping the Fairmont Opera House alive. As we look forward, continued financial support will be vital to meeting our restoration goals and sustaining this treasured institution for future generations. We are moving closer to securing a bright future for the arts in Fairmont.

# A Year of Memorable Events



This year, the Fairmont Opera House was fortunate enough to work with community partners to produce and present entertainment and cultural experiences throughout the community.

**Impacted Adults - 4287**  
**Impacted Youth (under 18) - 2613**



# Celebrating Our Supporters

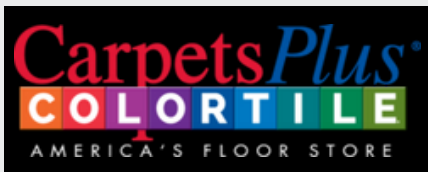
Beth Neist	Darci Bentz	Troy Gies	Lois Kesler
Tyler Benschoter	Val Berhow	JoAnn Gilbaugh	Jerry Kirschner
Jane Reiman	Michele Bisbee	Harlan Gorath	Kayt Klemek
Joy Rachuy	Jaime Bleess	Darcy Graif	Hollee Klesh
Amy Bacon	James Bock	Brian Grantz	Beth Kloeckner
Marilyn Belseth	Bob Bonk	Carol Green	Mike Krumholz
Vernette Buckmeier-Turner	Kaitlin Bormann	Linda Gregor	Evelyn Kue
Carol Cress	Allen Bremer	Marlene Grensteiner	Gayle Larkin
Lorie Cuning	Mary Broviak	Jane Griffiths	Arlynn Leuth
Bruce Ehlert	Lynne Burgraff	Dolores Gronewald	Carole Lohmann
Dwayne Ehlert	Pat Burns	Steve Guetter	Ross and Amy Long
Marilyn Forstrom	Kay Campe	Roslyn Gunderson	Lael Luedtke
Jesse Grantz	Carol Carlson	Elizabeth Gunther	Larry R. Maday
Beverly Haeckel	Cynthia Celander	Mary Ann Hagen	Tom Maday
Eric Johnson	Lori Chirpich	Katie Hanson	Carol Madsen
Chantill Kahler-Royer	John Christ	Elizabeth Hartke	Kathleen Mathiason
Nancy Klemek	Carol Christianson	Teresa Haycraft	Donna Mcmurtry
Laura Koch	Samantha Chukuske	Louise Hendricks	Kim/Tammy Meyers
Sandy Lunn	Judith Clark	Julie Hill Self	Andrea Miller
Alice Maday	Brad Cone	Lorraine Hintze	James Miller
Julaine Markquart	Jim Cone	Katie & Andrew Hoaglund	Sammie Moeller
Dan Moore	Tina Coquyt	Donna Hogenson	Mary Jo Moltzen
Karen Munsch	Michael Core	Melissa Hollom	Chris And Carol Nasby Family Foundation
Ernie Nuss	Rita Craven	Gretchen Hoppe	Jan Marie Nawrocki
Barbara Phelps	Leslie Curry	Evalynne Hoppe	Curtis Nelson
Joy Pollock	Carmen Deling	Matt Hotujec	Russ Nelson
Tari Riley	James Dick	Robert Huemoeller	Jonas Nissen
Cheryl Rippke	Barbara Duffey	Barbara Iverson	Nick Nissen
Jon Rippke	William Eckles	Marcia Jagodzinske	Robert Nolte
Daniel St. John	Michael Edman	Bonnie Johnson	Nancy Nordstrom
Dennis Trushenski	Sara Edmundson	CJ Johnson	Carolyn Oanes
Charmaine Whitman	Dale Engquist	Nancy Johnson	Merlin Oddan
Joann Woodward	Lee Engquist	Joyce Jorgensn	Suzanne Oliver
Blackbaud Giving fund via Avery	Jayson & David	Siri Kabrick	Karla Olson
Weigh-Tronix ITW	Engquist-Winkworth	Char Kahler	Jeff Paris
Ryan Aarhus	Larry Everett	Keith Kearney	Donna Parnell
Susan M. Andersen	Larry Everett	Daniel Kehrberg	Wanda Patsche
Cindy Anderson	Deb Eversman	Nancy Thiesse	Jonathan Pedersen
Jim Anderson	Alan Fisher	Steve Thiesse	Judi Poulson
Mark and Sue Anderson	Shella Franz	Amanda Thompson	Heidi Quist
Devin Zarling	Annette Garlich	Leslie Thompson	Lynn Reeve
Darwin Anthony	Ellen Gemain	Betsy Tino	Jan Rieland
Thomas Arneson	Brian & Deb Roggwo	Trace Tumbleson	Marlys Rodgers
Mark Atkinson	Becky Rogness	Colene Turner	Kathy Smith
Lee Baarts	Rebekah Rogness	Lenny Tvedten	Kevin Spencer
Daryl Bartz	Pat Rowan	Jerrick Urban	Laura Spitzer
Sandy Beckendorf	Arlene Saxton	Annette Valvick	Patricia Steuber
Judy Beckman	Candi and Wes Schafer	Roger and Carol Voss	Jason Stine
Mary Segar	Shaina Scheppmann	Alison Wagner	Stacey Williams
Mary Jane Setterlund	Suzanne Schermerhorn	Lydia Wallert	Lisa Wohlhuter
Laurie Sherman	Sue Ellen Schissel	Margaret Weaver	
Kaarin Slotte	Susan Wittmus	Nora Whiteman	
	Cindy Wohlhuter		

# Funding Partners



“These activities are made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.”

“This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.”



Baarts Trucking

Stine's Duct Cleaning

Hertzke's Construction and Millwork

Becker Financial Group



# The Future of the Fairmont Opera House

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this past year, we also eagerly look forward to what lies ahead for the Fairmont Opera House. Our vision is clear: a repaired, vibrant, and inclusive space where the arts and community unite in new and exciting ways. However, this vision can only become a reality with the continued support of the people who love and cherish this historic venue.

The Fairmont Opera House has stood for over a century as a testament to our shared values of creativity, culture, and community. Generations of families have gathered here to experience the magic of live theater, concerts, and community events. It is a place where memories are made, local talent is showcased, and the arts come alive for young and old alike.

But now, more than ever, the future of this treasured institution is in your hands. As we move forward with our “Preserve the Legacy, Enrich the Future” capital campaign, we are calling on our community to help us reach our goal of \$4 million to restore and reopen the doors of the Fairmont Opera House. This is more than a financial goal—it is a collective effort to preserve a vital part of our cultural heritage.

Why is this important?

Because the Fairmont Opera House is more than just a building—it’s the heart of our community. It’s where local children first experience the thrill of being on stage, neighbors come together to share stories, and the power of live performance unites us all. Without your help, the doors of this cherished venue may remain closed, and an irreplaceable part of our town’s identity could be lost forever.

We are deeply committed to ensuring that this doesn’t happen. We believe in the power of the arts to bring people together, inspire, heal, and transform lives. We believe in the importance of keeping this space alive, not just for ourselves but also for our children and grandchildren. We believe in the future of the Fairmont Opera House, but we can’t do it alone.

How can you help?

You can help by continuing to spread the word, volunteering your time, and donating to the capital campaign. Every contribution, large or small, brings us one step closer to reopening the doors and creating a brighter, more vibrant future for our community.

As we look ahead, we are filled with hope, determination, and gratitude. Together, we can preserve the legacy of the Fairmont Opera House and enrich our town’s cultural life for generations to come. Your support is not just an investment in a building—it’s an investment in our community’s future.



Thank you for standing with us, believing in the power of the arts, and being part of this journey. The future of the Fairmont Opera House depends on all of us.

Let’s make it brighter together.

Samantha Werre, Vice Chair  
Fairmont Opera House Board of Directors

# How You Can Help

***There's no question about it—giving feels good.***

There are many different ways to give when it comes to time, talent, or treasure. Throughout history, philanthropists have changed the course of our communities, our country, and the world.

You might think, “I don’t have much money to give, so how can I make a difference?” The good news is that philanthropy isn’t just about writing a big check - It’s about finding creative ways to support a cause you care about. Regarding the Fairmont Opera House’s Capital Campaign, there are countless ways to contribute that don’t require a large financial donation.

Give Your Time:  
Advocate for  
our Cause



One of the most valuable gifts you can offer is your time, and advocating for us with your time can make a huge impact. Talk about the importance of the Opera House with your neighbors, co-workers, and local businesses. Share why preserving this historic venue matters to you and the community. Use social media to rally others to the cause, share campaign updates, and encourage others to get involved.

For those who are looking to get more involved, we invite you to join our Community Engagement Committee. This group is dedicated to helping create and organize local fundraisers. By joining the committee, you can collaborate with like-minded individuals who share a passion for our Fairmont Opera House. It’s an excellent opportunity to contribute your time and talents in meaningful ways that support our mission. This group meets on the first Wednesday of every month at noon at our offices in the Behind the Scenes building behind the Fairmont Opera House. Send us an email to [info@fairmontoperahouse.org](mailto:info@fairmontoperahouse.org) to join and receive emails about upcoming meetings.

***“What’s meaningful to you? If it’s \$5 or \$5 million—it’s meaningful to us.”***

**- Blake Potthoff, Executive Director of Fairmont Opera House**

Do you have a skill or talent that could help the campaign? Maybe you’re a great writer, artist, vendor, or event planner. Use your talents to write about your experiences at the Fairmont Opera House and why they matter, or organize a class to teach others about one of your favorite art styles. You can also sell your art/cutting boards/lemonade/baked goods and donate a percentage of your profits.



Share Your Talent:  
Organize a Local  
Fundraiser

Host a garage sale, bake sale, or car wash with proceeds going to the campaign. Or, if you’re part of a group or club, consider organizing a benefit event where all funds raised go to the Opera House. Your unique abilities and connections can make a big impact. These grassroots efforts not only raise funds but also engage the community and create a sense of shared purpose. Your efforts might even inspire others to give!



Inspire  
others



Remember, philanthropy is about more than just money. It’s about caring for our community and making a difference in whatever way we can. By getting involved in the Fairmont Opera House’s Capital Campaign, you’re helping to ensure that this historic venue continues to be a place where memories are made for years to come.

Whether you give your time, talent, or voice, your contribution is valuable, and together, we can re-open the doors of our beloved Fairmont Opera House.

# From the Chair of the Board

As I sit down to write this letter, I can't help but think about all the memories we've shared within the walls of the Fairmont Opera House. Whether it's the joy of seeing your favorite play, the magic of your child's first performance, or simply gathering with neighbors for a shared experience, this place holds a special significance for each of us.

But right now, we are facing a tough challenge. As much as we've loved celebrating the arts together, the Fairmont Opera House is in jeopardy. The path ahead requires us to unite, just as we always have, to save this historic space. That's why I'm reaching out to you—I know how much this building represents and means to you, too.

While our commitment to arts, culture, and entertainment is unwavering, our current and most pressing task is to collect the funds necessary to repair, restore, and reopen the Fairmont Opera House. We must raise \$4 million by the end of 2025, or we will be forced to close permanently. Your support is crucial to achieving that.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has supported the Fairmont Opera House throughout the year. Your commitment to our organization shows how much the Fairmont Opera House means to all of us. This building has been a touchstone for the arts in our community for over a century. Now, we face the biggest challenge in its history — and to overcome it, we need your help.

We must recognize the urgent reality: **the Fairmont Opera House is at risk of being lost forever**. Our beloved historic venue desperately needs repair and restoration to reopen. It's not just a building—it's a symbol of our community's heritage and a place where memories have been made for generations.

Every day, our costs keep mounting. We're pouring thousands of dollars each month into equipment rentals, the most glaring of which is the scaffolding to support the roof. These expenses and our regular operating costs make it increasingly challenging to keep this dream alive. With each passing day, the financial burden becomes heavier, and the road to recovery is steeper. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

Can you imagine a Fairmont without the Opera House? I can't.

Imagine no more community gatherings in our historic space. Imagine no home for Fairmont Area Community Theater, the very existence of which is very much in jeopardy without a permanent home. It's a reality we're working hard to prevent. We need each of you—your generosity and your commitment to repair, restore, and reopen the Fairmont Opera House.

Together, we can accomplish our goals.



Regards,

Robert Luedtke, Chair  
Fairmont Opera House Board of Directors



## The Fairmont Opera House

### Box Office and Administration

The Behind the Scenes Building  
112 E. Blue Earth Ave

Theater: 45 Downtown Plaza

Mailing: PO Box 226

Fairmont, MN 56031

Website: [www.fairmontoperahouse.org](http://www.fairmontoperahouse.org)

Box Office Hours:

Tuesday-Friday

9:00 AM - 2:30 PM and 1 Hour Prior to Event

\*Doors Open 1 Hour Before Event, House Opens 30 Minutes Before Event

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