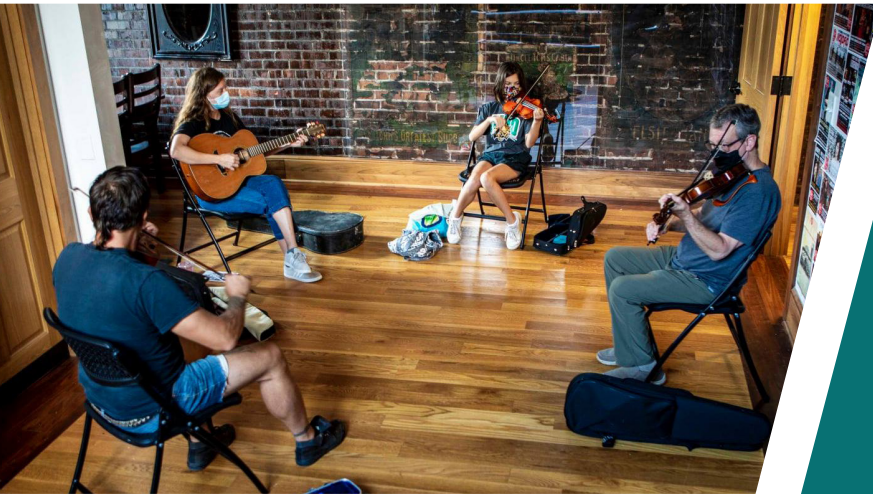


# STUART'S OPERA HOUSE

2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



## OUR MISSION

Stuart's Opera House is the cornerstone of the historic Public Square in Nelsonville. It is dedicated to its role as a regional leader in the arts community, a center for public expression, and an economic development partner for Southeastern Ohio.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I near the 2nd anniversary as Executive Director at Stuart's Opera House, I'm marveling at all we have been through together, both generally as a world moving through a global pandemic, and in particular, the arts, live music, and theater sectors. This report tells the story of all that Stuart's Opera House was able to accomplish in 2021, in spite of the fits and starts the pandemic surges continued to throw at us.

The first half of 2021 looked a lot like most of 2020 as we continued to be restricted on attendees at live performances. We received a grant from the Foundation for Appalachia Ohio to install air purifiers to our HVAC system and began to slowly bring shows and attendees into the theater. Many early events, including the Athens Chamber of Commerce Women's Summit, took advantage of the live streaming technology that we invested in and improved upon.

By the fall of 2021, it began to look and feel a little bit more like pre-pandemic with high caliber artists like Taj Mahal, Shovels and Rope, and the Columbus Symphony Orchestra wowing audiences in our historic theater. Arts Education resurged with Summer Performing Camp, Old Time Music Week, and the return of in-person Afterschool Music Program and private lessons. Spoken and Heard, curated and led by Ohio Poet Laureate Kari Gunter-Seymour, continued to feature nationally acclaimed poets and musicians and to have wide-reaching virtual audiences.

We progressed in our journey to promote Anti-racism and the Arts with a live virtual event featuring local Black artists and activists and arts organizations engaging around what an anti-racist arts community might look like. Arts Midwest invited us to share our experience and process in their regional Gather Round series, "Anti-racism in a Rural Setting".

The past couple of years have been difficult in so many ways; as well as a profound reminder that in times of trouble and strife, people turn to the arts. As poet Maya Angelou wrote, "Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness."

With 2021 in the rearview mirror, I'm left with amazement and gratitude at all that we were able to do because of YOU: our community and friends, our members and supporters, our staff and board, our artists and musicians, our students and instructors. And I'm beyond excited and inspired by what we will accomplish together in 2022!

Gratefully,

Melissa Wales  
Executive Director



*The Columbus Symphony Orchestra brings holiday cheer to the Stuart's stage by Scotty Hall*

# STUART'S OPERA HOUSE IN 2021

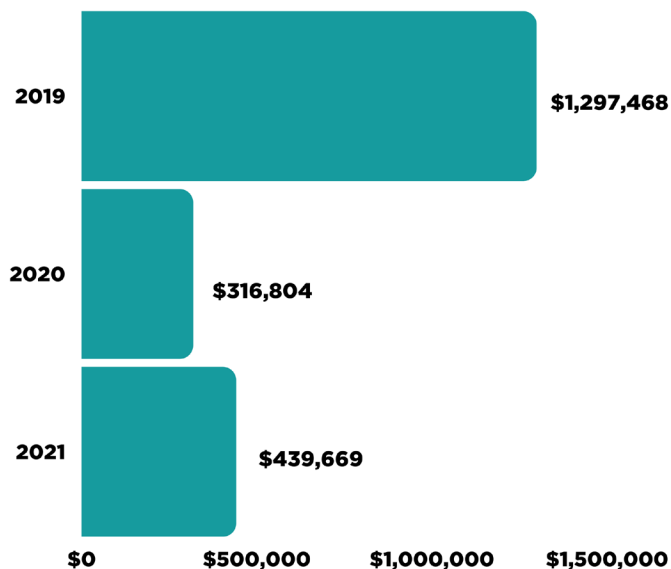
## STUART'S OPERA HOUSE BY THE NUMBERS

Throughout 2021 we continued to pursue grants and relief money, including the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, which came through in a very significant way to keep us moving through a continued and potentially catastrophic loss of earned income.

The support of individuals, companies, foundations, and government grants allowed us to overcome our loss of revenue from ticket, alcohol, and merchandise sales along with event rental fees. We are incredibly thankful for the generosity of our donors that supported us through a very scary time.

While the impact of the pandemic dramatically reduced our ability to earn income from our traditional sources for part of the year, in the latter part of 2021 we began to bring back in-person concerts, events, and educational programs. The return of audiences to Stuart's serves not only our bottom line, but our hearts and souls.

## STUART'S OPERA HOUSE EARNED INCOME



**70%** of Stuart's total income in 2021 came from fundraising.

## Digital Audience

**58K** **33K**

Website Visitors  
Annually

Facebook  
Followers

**13K** **4.5K**

Instagram  
Followers

Twitter  
Followers



After a year of shuttered doors, audiences began returning to our historic theatre in Spring 2021. Photo by Joel Prince



# EXTRAORDINARY IN-PERSON ART EXPERIENCES RETURN



After pivoting to virtual experiences through 2020 and the beginning of 2021, audiences began to fill Stuart's seats in early spring.

In total, Stuart's hosted **43** live streamed, hybrid, and in-person events including musical performances, theatrical productions, film screenings, and book readings.

Photos by Scotty Hall from left to right: Angela Perley performing at our Free Summer Music Series in August 2021; Legendary Blues musician Taj Mahall performing at Stuarts in September 2021.

## HOCKING HILLS MUSIC FESTIVAL

As the world transitioned back to in-person gatherings, we partnered with our friends and fellow Southeastern Ohio festival organizers at Duck Creek Log Jam to produce the first Hocking Hills Music Festival in Rockbridge, Ohio. Collaborating with community partners to produce the two-day October festival provided an opportunity to return to live outdoor performances while sharing the vision and work, along with the risks and the rewards, of producing a large-scale event during challenging and changing times.



# 21

ARTISTS ACROSS 2 DAYS

# 1,500

ATTENDEES



"Exactly what my soul needed! Hats off to the entire crew of organizers for a beautifully run festival in an incredibly difficult time!"

-Hocking Hills Music Festival attendee



Top row photos (left to right): Bluegrass legend Del McCoury wows audiences from his Friday night headlining set by Scotty Hall; Lukas Nelson and The Promise of The Real rocks the festival from his headlining set Saturday night by Brian Bruemmer. Bottom row photos by Scotty Hall (left to right): All ages enjoy Brothers Comatose; Cedric Burnside mesmerizes Saturday afternoon.



# ARTS EDUCATION

The goal of our Arts Education department is to offer affordable, accessible broad-based programming focusing on visual and performing arts to people of all ages in our community and beyond.



September Spoken & Heard livestream

## SPOKEN AND HEARD

2021 kicked off in with the first Spoken & Heard virtual literary event. The seasonal series hosted by Kari Gunter-Seymour, Poet Laureate of Ohio, features award-winning authors, poets and singer-songwriters, along with an ASL interpreter to increase accessibility. In total, Stuart's presented **8** Spoken & Heard livestreams which garnered hundreds of views from audience members

## OLD TIME MUSIC WEEK

The return of Old Time Music Week came in a hybrid format during August 2021. The annual event reflects the rich traditions of music and storytelling of our Appalachian Foothills. Through classes, workshops, and concerts student gained a deeper understanding of the music and culture of our region's past and present.



Old Time jam session in the historic green room by Scotty Hall

Paint & Pour participants show off their creations



## PAINT AND POUR

In October, new Education Director Devin Sudman started an ongoing monthly Paint and Pour series aimed at bringing new audiences into Stuart's Opera House. Lead by Athens-based artist, Luke Boyd, the sold-out classes encourage adult participants to express their creativity in an atmosphere that fosters connection.

## NELSONVILLE-YORK DRAMA CLUB

In December the Stuart's-sponsored Nelsonville-York Drama Club put on their first pre-pandemic production as a radio play of Charles Dickens the Christmas Carol. The performance was broadcast on WOUB throughout Athens County on Christmas Day.

Photo: A Christmas Carol radioplay recording session by Devin Sudman



# THANK YOU

Thank you, one and all, for helping Stuart's Opera House navigate the pandemic.

Through donations, sustaining memberships, small business support, corporate partnerships, and foundation grants, Stuart's remains a vital cultural resource to present and future generations in Athens County.

To the over 600 that supported us, both loyal supporters and new donors alike, know that every gift is important and helps us to deliver our promise to bring impactful arts programming to Southeast Ohio.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO:



Baird Brothers Foundation, Charles G. O'Brien Foundation, F. Robert Jackson, Terry and Susan Conner, Creston Stewart and Sarah Helfrich, Ed and Darlene Stube, Sara Gilfert, Roger Shaw, David Descutner and DeLysa Burnier

## JOIN US

By becoming an annual donor and sustaining member of Stuart's Opera House you are helping support the care and stewardship of our historic theater, along with the vivid live performances and educational programming that fill it. Membership starts at \$100 per year and entitles you to exclusive benefits, including early access to tickets for shows and festivals.

## 2022 Board of Directors

### President

Faith Knutsen

### Vice President

Kelly Hatas

### Secretary

Mary K. Walsh

### Treasurer

Dan Stroh

Sharell Arocho-Wise

Kristi Brooks

Rick Camino

Tyrone Carr

Kathryn Cooper

Susan Harmony

Valerie Kinnard

Diane McVey

Sierra Meek

Karl Runser

## 2022 STAFF

### Executive Director

Melissa Wales

### Artistic Director

Tim Peacock

### Chief Development Officer

Angela Anderson

### Education Director

Devin Sudman

### Marketing Director

Dylan Telerski

### Events Manager

A.J. Castro

### Box Office Manager/ Administrative Assistant

Allie Austin

### Development Associate

Stephen Dierna

### AmeriCorps Member

Duncan Hadley

### Technical Director

Terry 'T-Bone' McCauley