



FOTO Newsletter

For EPO's Friends of the Opera
Prepared by Holly Mesarch

EL PASO OPERA



May 2026



Principle cast of *La Bohème*, Act II



Featured musicians at *Opera Uncorked*

Photos: El Paso Opera/Johnathan Cereceres/Jasper Mesarch

What a Wonderful Winter!

Just as Puccini's *La Bohème* scenes move from Winter to Spring, El Paso has warmed up—and El Paso Opera is just warming up for the year! [Year end donations](#) and [Support the Stars](#) sponsors made sure the New Year started with a bang with five full house performances of *La Bohème*, including **Youth Night at the Opera**, sponsored in part by [J. Kirk & Judy Robison!](#)

The grant from [Texas Women for the Arts](#), made possible the special behind-the-scenes field trip for students titled **Secrets of the Stage**. The secrets to creating a compelling operatic production were revealed to students from as young as 3rd grade thru high school! More on pg. 4.

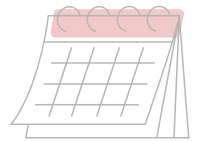
Attendees of **Opera Uncorked** not only received an earful of delicious singing, a mouthful of outstanding tastings of wine & food from local catering company [Desert Bloom](#), but saw beautiful art from our gracious hosts at [El Paso's International Museum of Art](#). Thanks to those partnerships, EPO raised nearly \$5,000!

Chelsea Lamego, advisory Board Member, former Board President, past Executive Director of El Paso Opera, and CEO + Co-Founder of FundMiner, recently wrote regarding non-profits, *"Partnerships allow us to move faster, think bigger, and build solutions... They also remind us that innovation is rarely about one organization, but rather about ecosystems working together."* That's why we are so eagerly looking forward to performing throughout the city for **Bohemios**. Partnering with local sites makes the best use of our existing city infrastructure while offering more accessibility to the arts!

We wish you could all meet the amazing performers, team members, non-profit heroes, and donors—and you can! [Support the Stars](#) donors receive exclusive meet and greet events! Ask our staff how to be a part of the excitement. We look forward to future partnerships with you to fill artistic needs and create fulfilling experiences in our city.

~The EPO Staff

Dates to remember:



Apr-Jun
Education Presentations

May 28-31
Bohemios
28 @ Mexican Consulate
29 @ Carreon Rec Center
30 @ The Beast Rec Center
31 @ Keystone Heritage Park

July
Season 33 Kickoff & Donor Impact Reports

August
Season 33 tickets go on sale!

Sep 11
Encores & Overtures



2025-26 Intern Audrey Najera

Photo: Will Seyffert/El Paso Opera

Meet Opera Intern, Audrey

During the fall, UTEP student Audrey Najera joined the El Paso Opera team as a paid intern. Thanks to the support of The University of Texas at El Paso's Center for Community Engagement's **Community Work-Study Program**, eligible students gain experience in fields related to their majors.

As a Theatre Arts major, working at a professional opera company for seven months allowed Audrey to learn during the production for **La Bohème**, the **Opera Uncorked** event, and leading up to **Bohemios**. We admire Audrey's ability to handle the ups and downs during events, and are thankful we had her on board.



Photo: Holly Mesarch

Volunteer Spotlight

Some volunteers like to stay out of the spotlight, so they take the pictures of everyone else. Busy hospital administrator, anesthesiologist, and father by day, humble behind-the-scenes photography volunteer and overall opera advocate by night. We thank volunteers like Jasper Mesarch for all the unseen work that takes place to make events like *Opera Uncorked* look as fun and memorable as they truly are!

Thank you!



Enjoy Your Donor Perks

Whenever you travel in the U.S. or Canada, take advantage of ticket discounts of at least 10% off at participating opera companies.

Opera Passport allows donors to discover creative productions of new works and inherited repertoire presented in small towns and big cities from coast to coast.

El Paso Opera donors of \$60 annually or more can enjoy benefits. Talk to our staff to get your verification to share with participating opera companies throughout the country today!



Opera Events

- FREE reserved tickets for **Bohemios** (May 28-31) are SOLD OUT! But we have walk-up tickets available each night. Join the wait-list or get in line early to ensure you don't miss a moment!
- Season 33 Tickets go on sale in August!



DONOR SPOTLIGHTS

Photos: El Paso Inc.



JAN: Dr. David Pritchard

In-Kind donations like the loaning of a vehicle helps El Paso Opera save thousands of dollars each year! Between lending visiting artists a safe car, and consistently donating to Community Engagement through Support the Stars, Anesthesiologist Dr. Pritchard offers EPO all the support he can offer!



MAR: GECU Foundation

Greater El Paso Credit Union believes in building a strong community and believes making the arts available to all is an important part of that. That's why they support our community engagement efforts, including #CurbsideOpera! Our heartfelt thanks go to GECU and businesses like them that support access to the arts in El Paso!



FEB: Janet & Dan Wechter

Passionate about education for young El Pasoans, and honoring the memory of the late Sylvia Wechter, Janet and Dan, chose to support our Educational Programming through their Donor Advised Fund (DAF) with Paso del Norte Community Foundation. Learn more about how to start a DAF today!



APR: Chelsea Lamego, FundMiner

Accountability to donors is paramount to a healthy mission driven organization, and that's why co-Founder of FundMiner, Chelsea Lamego, has not only volunteered her time to create this year's Impact Report, but her company donated in-kind the programming to make our reporting and impact clear and beautiful!

WWWD: What Would Wilma Do?

For over 30 years, Wilma Salzman continues to be one of our biggest cheerleaders.

We welcome conversation about ways we can improve, but also want to make sure we keep doing the things you love! Drop us a line to let us know what you want us to keep doing.

SCAN HERE



To learn more about Donor Advised Funds with Paso del Norte Community Foundation

How To
Make a Difference
Today!

Send a note of encouragement to our staff, artists or team members as you see something you like!

Automate your donations: make your life easier and our community *better!*





Photos: El Paso Opera

Opera Secrets Revealed: *Secrets of the Stage*

With the vibrant stage lights already aglow on the opera artists of **La Bohème**, the house lights came up on the students clapping and cheering for the music they just heard.

But how did we get to this magical moment? It started with curiosity: how do we get young people excited about the art form of opera? When we started offering *backstage tours* to our silent auction ticket winners, and a young high school student was one of the attendees, we wanted to bottle up the enthusiasm of this young person and share it with as many other students as possible. Arianne Marcee and Cherry Duke had an idea!

Thanks to a transportation grant from **Texas Women for the Arts (TWA)** and our grant sponsor *Sarah Laucirica*, we were able to give 280 students and their lucky chaperones a sneak peek into what it takes to ensure an opera is a success-**Secrets of the Stage** was born!

All students had an introduction to the history of opera and to Puccini’s beloved story, complete with *La Bohème bingo cards* to keep them engaged, by Holly Mesarch. They were then let in on the secrets of creating visual effects by our *Production Manager* and *Stage Manager*, *Adrian Salas* and *Itzel Martinez*. We also ensured that students knew of the importance of administrative aspects like funding and planning for an opera with *Executive Director*, *Arianne Marcee*. Where would we be without all these vital roles?

Dazzling *Artistic Director Cherry Duke* wowed the crowd with some of the fabulous handsewn costumes created by costume designer Alan Smith. One teacher wrote, “the most memorable part was the stop with Ms. Duke where she talked about the costumes and why they are so important in an opera.”

The crowd favorite was the short performances by the opera singers themselves! The following Q&A with the stars provided students with great stories of unique performing experiences, and great career insights for interested students. Burgess High School choir teacher, Ms. Araujo shared, “Students were highly engaged during the Q&A and found it especially intriguing to hear directly from professional performers about their experiences.”

As one of our dedicated teachers put it, “Thank you for the thoughtful planning and dedication to student outreach. Experiences like this make a meaningful impact on students and are greatly appreciated.” To all our donors, thank you for stimulating young minds and making this one-of-a-kind experience possible!

Arianne Marcee, *Executive Director*
 Cherry Duke, *Artistic Director*
 Holly Mesarch, *Director of Impact & Engagement*
 Sydney Monroe Gaglio, *Office Assistant*
 Audrey Najera, *UTEP Intern*

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