



OREGON ARTSWATCH

# ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



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# Introduction

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As coverage of the fine and performing arts in other media has dropped dramatically, Oregon ArtsWatch fills this critical news gap and has become the region's leading arts and culture journal. Since 2011, we have published independent arts journalism and criticism at [orartswatch.org](http://orartswatch.org), producing a breadth and depth of coverage not found elsewhere.

## OUR MISSION

Oregon ArtsWatch produces arts journalism that is fundamentally useful to the public interest. Our goal is to discover, report on, and evaluate art that we think is most important to the public, and then to encourage discussion by the public of that art and the issues it raises. Our journalism is professional – independent, transparent, fair, accurate, and responsive – and we aspire to be a trusted public source for journalism about the arts.

## OUR IMPACT

Our work supports the entire cultural ecology in the region and ripples out to bolster hundreds of organizations. We provide critical analysis, publicity, visibility, and validation that cultural organizations use to amplify their work, and we create documentation and a lasting impact for temporary works of art. As one of only a handful of organizations in the country that specialize in this kind of work, we provide a valuable contribution to public dialogue about arts and culture.

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*Cover main image: A member of Ritual Azteca Huitzilopochtli performs at Ten Tiny Dances in Beaverton. Photo Joe Cantrell*

*Cover left, top to bottom (photos by Joe Cantrell unless otherwise noted): Young women in ancestral Mongolian clothing; Curtis Salgado; BinKye Bellflower; cuteness takes wing; Maya Kherani sings Handel's "Messiah;" floating dragons at Lan Su Chinese Garden (photo Friderike Heuer).*

*Page 2: Young people enjoy circle dancing to the sounds of Ukrainian music at Beaverton Night Market. Photo Joe Cantrell*

*Page 3 top to bottom: Elijah Pilkington (photo David Bates); Coralee Popp (left) and Jana Charl (photo D. "Bing" Bingham); Donna Mation and Bernard Okuleh Tetta, a.k.a. Face King (photo Joe Cantrell); Adam Leonard (photo Ester Barkai); Poison Waters (photo Joe Cantrell); Joe Powers (photo Joe Cantrell)*

# Notes from the Executive Team

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ArtsWatch has come a long way since its Wild West blogging days of a dozen years ago, when a few writers provided content for free just to keep arts journalism alive. In 2016, after operating for five years, our heroic founder Barry Johnson planned to step away, and ArtsWatch was on the brink of dissolving unless a new rider took the reins.

Quite casually, I said I'd do it. There was no board vote or job search. At the time, the job was a part-time side gig – pay a few folks and write a few grants. My only goals were to keep ArtsWatch running and bring in enough money to pay people. It was important to me to provide compensation in order to professionalize our operations to be sustainable, properly respect the work of contributors, and diversify our content with perspectives from people who perhaps couldn't afford to write for free.

Since then we have grown dramatically, and are now recognized as one of the few organizations in the country that specialize in arts journalism.

To meet our growing needs, last fall we launched a major capacity-building initiative, which was hugely successful, bringing in 64% more revenue than the previous year. As you'll see in this annual report, it's been a year of tremendous growth, and we have more plans in the works so that we can grow even stronger, become an essential resource for all arts organizations in the region, and continue to tell your stories for years to come. When we are stronger, the whole cultural community is stronger.

Yes, we've come a long way from the Wild West blogging days, and it's thanks to the many funders, donors, and contributors listed in this report. We do this work for the community, and we are grateful that you help make it possible.



Laura Grimes  
Executive Director  
laura@orartswatch.org

Trying to capture the shape and flavor of Oregon's culture is an elusive, exciting, and constantly shifting pursuit. It takes a team to gather insights and impressions and patterns as everything transforms. As I look back on what our writers, editors, photographers, and podcasters have accomplished in the past year I'm both grateful and astonished. Together they've created a grand, diverse, and eye-opening collage of the arts and cultural life of this place we call home.

It's been a year of emerging from the pandemic and trying to recapture the creativity and joy of what had been. Our writers have been out and about to the concert halls, theaters, studios, galleries, museums, and even to roving attractions such as pianist Hunter Noack's "In a Landscape" outdoor concerts and the new SoundsTruck NW mobile stage, which takes the magic of performance wherever it roams. We've celebrated re-emerging

art and also tracked for our readers what isn't working, including the crisis that the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and other theater, dance, and music companies face as audiences remain reluctant to return.

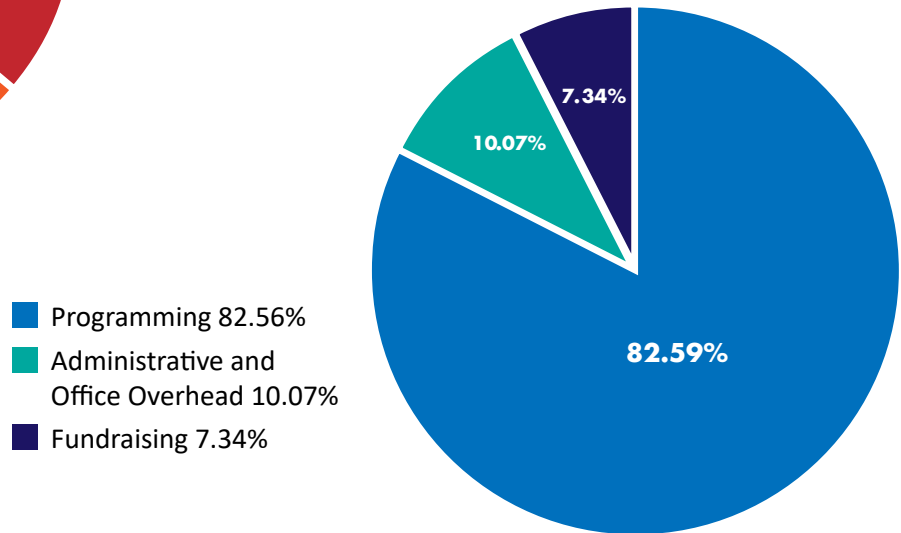
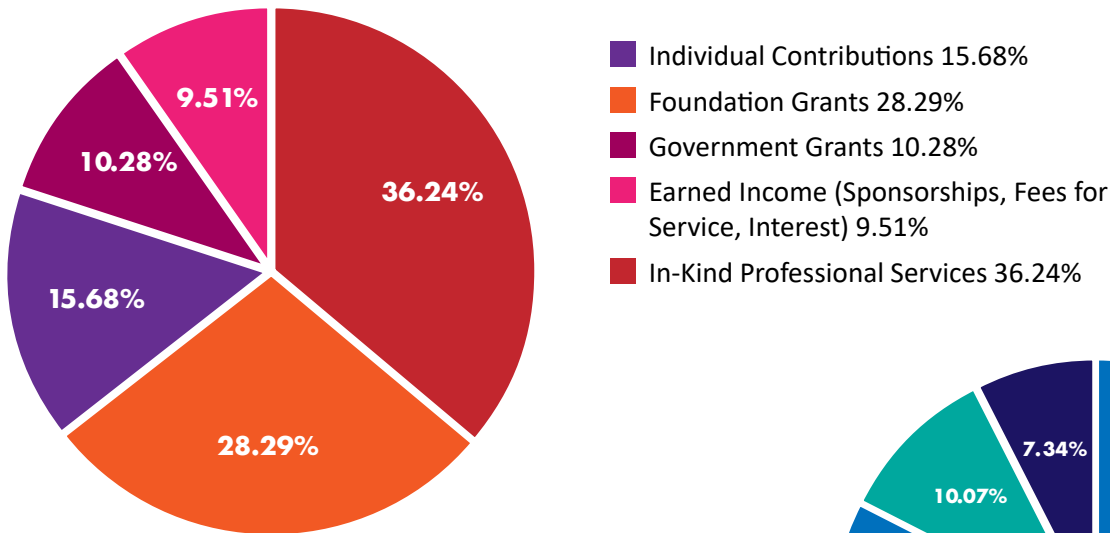
All of what we've accomplished has been made possible by the generous support of foundations, governmental agencies, sponsors, and individual donors, without whose aid we couldn't exist. You are our partners. You help to make it happen. We can't thank you enough.



Bob Hicks  
Executive Editor  
bob@orartswatch.org

# Fiscal Health

Last fall we launched a **hugely successful capacity-building initiative**, which is helping us meet our growing needs in serving the community.



<b>64</b>	Percent increase of overall revenue over the previous year
<b>74</b>	Number of sponsors, doubling that revenue from the previous year. We donated \$37,000 and provided \$30,000 in trade to cultural organizations.
<b>63</b>	Number of people we economically supported
<b>96</b>	Percent of our budget that goes to pay people

# Our Capacity-Building Plan

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## GOALS

- Strengthen operational stability
- More effectively support the vital need for arts journalism
- Better serve the region’s arts community
- Compensate equitably
- Improve accessibility
- Grow our audience
- Set the stage for future succession
- Provide sustainability



*Ceramic creation by Kendall Jones.  
Photo David Bates*

## FOUR PILLARS

1. **Increase pay for core staff**, who currently donate most of their professional services (worth \$138,000) in order to strengthen and stabilize operations. This incremental increase meets only a fraction of a full salary. Staff members will continue to donate much of their time with the goal to eventually provide full, equitable salaries for all.
2. **Develop a strategic funding plan** with a financial systems consultant to shape our financial future, and increase revenue in order to sustain the new level of capacity.
3. **Develop targeted promotional materials** for each piece of programming with a marketing consultant in order to increase revenue by reaching new donors, sponsors, and foundations.
4. **Upgrade our digital platform** to improve accessibility, strengthen operations, expand programming, and develop new community resources. Our website is our entire public face, so its health is crucial to our success. With 97% of websites not accessible to people with disabilities, our digital plan includes a full-scale accessibility effort, which we will document and publish, providing recommended tech improvements, guidelines, and best practices, in order to influence change for the entire cultural community.



# Programming

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In addition to covering cultural news, performances, exhibitions, and feature stories on artists and the arts, we have concentrated our coverage in several key subjects that we believe to be important to the health of Oregon’s cultural infrastructure, with specific funding for each.

We’ve also expanded our work with journalism students at Oregon State University, who have produced several good stories for us. We all benefit from fresh perspectives, and they get the opportunity to work with experienced editors, build professional portfolios, and get paid.

<b>744</b>	stories published
<b>270,780</b>	users
<b>473,498</b>	page views
<b>5.1 million</b>	Google impressions

*Top to bottom (photos by Joe Cantrell unless otherwise noted): Fiddler Jourdain Thibodeaux (left) and a bandmate; Lamiae Naki, Seffarine’s lead singer; Jun Kaneko’s sculptures at Portland Japanese Garden (photo Friderike Heuer); classical Indian dancers perform at Ten Tiny Dances; a member of Ritual Azteca Huitzilopochtli; a member of the The Greaseland Allstars performs at the Waterfront Blues Festival.*

# Programming

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## CULTURAL HUBS

Through our Cultural Hubs series, which prioritizes rural and underserved communities, we've kept our eye on places around the state that are attracting and advancing the arts. A sample of 16 stories we published:

- **East Creek Art Camp** in the hills near Willamina and the fascinating craft scene that's coalesced around the anagama kiln
- Artist-run **Art Adventure Gallery** in Madras
- **The Dalles Art Center** that is reinvigorating itself
- **Whiteaker Printmakers** in Eugene
- **Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education** that has expanded, remodeled, and reopened



*A crowd gathers for an event at The Dalles Art Center.  
Photo Laura Grimes*

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## ARTS EDUCATION

In our Art of Learning series we've kept an eye on arts education in the public schools and beyond. A sample of 16 stories we published:

- Jefferson High School's elite dance program
- Sitka Center's melding of arts and science
- Fear No Music's mentoring of young composers
- The effusion of Oregon's youth choirs
- Northwest Children's Theater & School's bold move to the core of downtown Portland's cultural district

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION

- A retweet by director **Guillermo del Toro** of an interview with the makers of *Pinocchio* reached 67,000 people.
- **Curtis Institute of Music** shared our profile of composer Alistair Coleman.
- **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** shared our interview with mezzo-soprano Hannah Penn.

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*“So great that Oregon ArtsWatch reaches out and brings to light for an urban public the gems that exist around the state.”*

*— Reader Comment*



# Programming

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## THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Photographer K.B. Dixon's continuing series The Cultural Landscape has created a fascinating gallery of portraits of many of Oregon's most accomplished arts figures.



*Left to right: Cecily Wong, Josh Hecht, Lulani Arquette. Photos K.B. Dixon*

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## COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

We've continued and expanded our commitment to covering the broad spectrum of culture in Oregon, from Indigenous writing and art to the stories of immigrant artists, Black artists, Asian and Latino art, and gender-diverse artists, including stories on Fuse Theatre Ensemble's plays about the lives of LGBTQ+ people and Hannah Krafcik's Gender Project stories about creative people who are nonbinary and trans.

**Indigenous History & Resilience**, a series by Steph Littlebird, Kalapuya, was selected as the common reading assignment for 700 incoming students at Lewis & Clark College last fall.



*Landscape around Pendleton near Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, which was profiled in the Indigenous History & Resilience series. Photo Joe Cantrell*

# In Memoriam: Important Passages

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Left to right: George Johanson, Katherine Ace, Darcelle, Henk Pander. Photos K.B. Dixon

Some of the many important Oregon cultural figures whose deaths we chronicled include:

- Visual artists **Henk Pander**, **Katherine Ace**, and **George Johanson**
- Musicians **Tomáš Svoboda**, **David Ornette Cherry**, and **Turtle VanDemarr**
- Club owner and world's oldest performing drag queen **Darcelle**
- The film world's **Dennis Nyback**
- Literary dynamo **Julie Mancini**

## TOP STORY

Following the death of Raquel Welch in February, Stephen Rutledge's remembrance of how the actress took Portland by storm in 1972 during the local filming of her roller-derby movie *Kansas City Bomber* was our most widely read story of the year, reaching 12,507 readers.



## MICHAEL GRIGGS

1946-2023

Michael was a director, producer, playwright, actor, administrator, and teacher. He was also an ArtsWatch board member, who contributed greatly to our growth and success.

# Funders, Donors, and Sponsors

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It takes a community. Thank you to all of our funders who help make our work possible.

## Foundations & Government

### \$30,000+

Fields Fund of Oregon Community Foundation

### \$15,000+

Hampton Family Foundation of Oregon Community Foundation

Jackson Foundation

Ronald W. Naito M.D. Foundation

The Roundhouse Foundation

### \$10,000+

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### \$5,000+

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### \$1,000+

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Yamhill County Cultural Coalition



**RONNI LACROUTE**



**BRAEMAR  
CHERITABLE TRUST**



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Culture Council**



*“I remember when Oregon ArtsWatch began and am amazed at how it has become an essential part of the arts infrastructure in our state, becoming an outlet for a wide range of voices commenting on every sort of arts activity in a wide variety of locations. Thank you for all that you are doing for arts and culture in Oregon through high-quality journalism!”*

— Lead donor Ronni Lacroute

# Funders, Donors, and Sponsors

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## Individual Donors

Led by continuing generous support from arts champion Ronni Lacroute, we raised a record amount, 9.56% more than our previous record year.

### \$1,000+

Joseph Anthony and Heidi Yorkshire  
Scott Ray Becker  
Richard L. Brown  
Ronni Lacroute  
Portland Civic Theatre Guild  
Reed College  
Alice Hardesty  
Kathleen Worley

### \$500+

Marvin Dawson and Abby Dawson  
Stephen Rutledge  
Diana Scoggins  
Carol M. Turtle  
Phyllis Yes

### \$250+

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*"I always learn so much from ArtsWatch that is not available anywhere else. I have the greatest respect for your writers and critics."*

— Reader Comment

# Who We Are

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## 2022-23 Editors, Staff, Contributors, and Contractors

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### Be Part of Our Growing Success

We do this work for you. Because if we aren't telling your stories, then who is?

Contributions make our work stronger, and when we're stronger, our entire cultural community is stronger.

#### DONATE TODAY

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or scan the QR code on the right.



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