

# Annual Report

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# 2025

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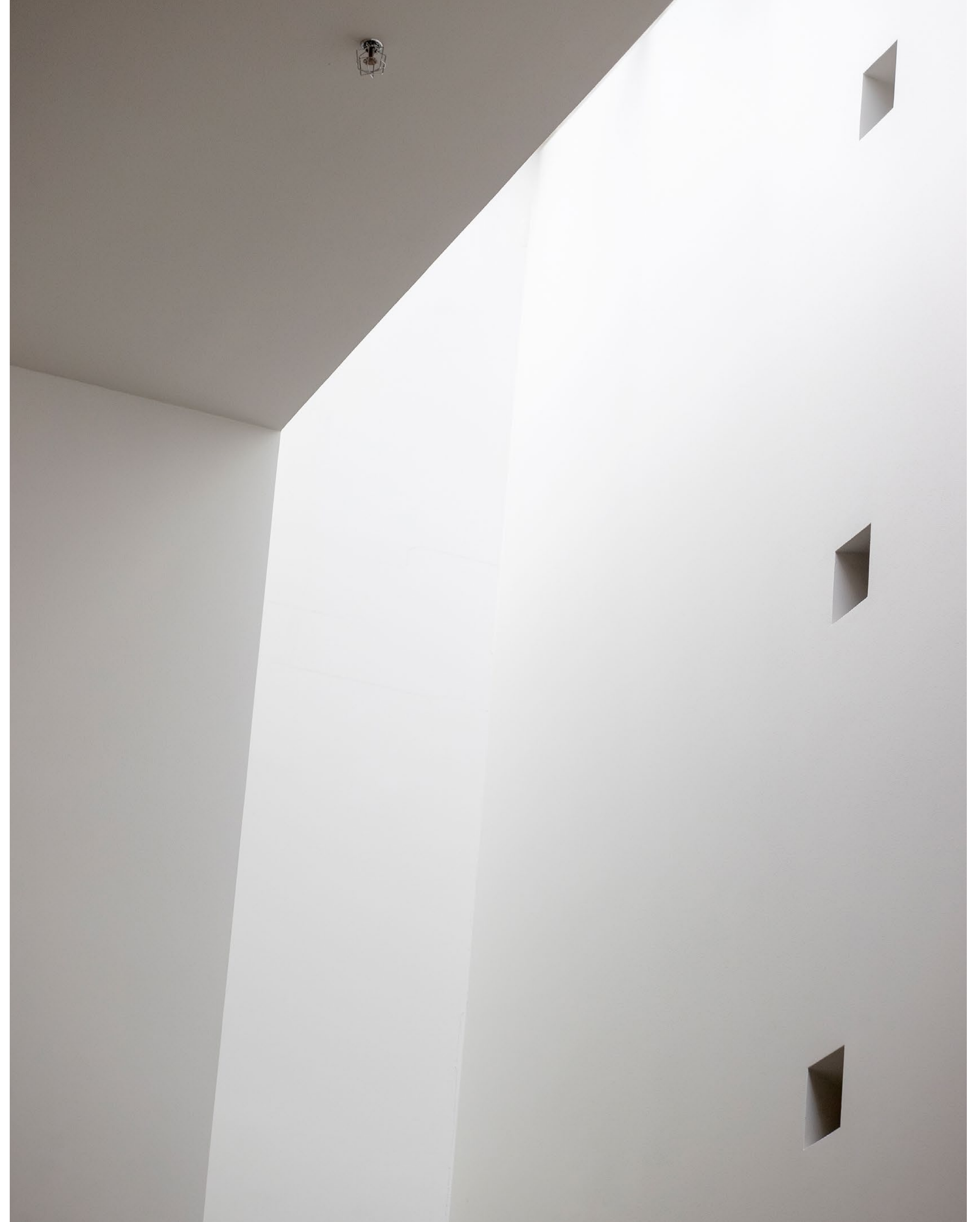
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2025 in brief

# Engaged with our time and society

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet is a national cultural institution whose principal mission is to offer high-quality and deeply moving opera and ballet experiences to diverse audiences and age groups across Finland.

Over the past year, new audiences have been reached at the Opera House as well as through digital channels and touring productions. In particular, the Youth Company of the Finnish National Ballet and the Chorus of the Finnish National Opera have gained significant attention with their performances beyond the Opera House.

We have collaborated with a wide range of communities locally, nationally and internationally. This has allowed us to develop the opera and ballet art forms in active dialogue with diverse partners.

Numerous development projects have also been under way, relating both to artistic renewal and the possibilities offered by modern technology. In both areas, the common thread has been a pioneering spirit.

Throughout the year, our choices have been guided by social, ecological and financial responsibility. In this respect, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet's multidisciplinary international collaboration has provided valuable points of comparison.

## Message from General Director Gita Kadambi



# Pioneering spirit and collaboration

We want the Finnish National Opera and Ballet to be for everyone. In 2025, as before, one of our core values was to offer repertoire that is both experiential and meaningful. I am proud of how much we have engaged with topical themes in our productions. Our performances have met the highest international standards, while pushing the boundaries of our art forms.

*Giselle*, created under the direction of Javier Torres, stands out among our ballet productions. In addition to combining classical and contemporary ballet traditions, it also engaged with social issues. On the opera side, the Sugar Factory – New Opera Works initiative reached full momentum. The Sugar Factory, conceived by Thomas de Mallet Burgess, aims to bring new and diverse stories and fresh perspectives to contemporary opera. It proudly carries forward opera's tradition of taking a stance on pertinent questions. The first new works will be performed in autumn 2026.

As a country, Finland has a strong reputation for innovation. It is only natural, then, that the Finnish

National Opera and Ballet also wants to be at the forefront of new developments. It is crystal clear that we must find ways to reach and engage new audiences alongside our existing ones, and we are already achieving that. In 2025, 34% of ticket buyers were first-time visitors. We must break with conventional ways of being and working. The way people experience opera is changing, and it must change.

One of our strategic projects is called Xtreme (Mixed Reality Environment for Immersive Experience of Art and Culture). This EU Horizon-funded initiative involves arts institutions, technology companies and universities from across Europe to explore the possibilities of mixed reality. Its aim is that, in the future, people will be able to experience performances via VR headsets, sharing a virtual space with friends from the other side of the world from the comfort of their home.

In Xtreme, we are exploring what kind of interactive connection can be built between a live performance and virtual reality. At the same time, we are

## Message from General Director Gita Kadambi

<< gathering data on how our productions affect audiences. We must, of course, find the right stories to tell, in compelling ways and for audiences of all ages. It is wonderful that new technology allows art experiences to bring communities together in an ecologically sustainable way. That is an inspiring thought.

Looking to the future is an integral part of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet's strategy, though without forgetting our history. Our strategy, updated in autumn 2023, is built around four themes: meaningful repertoire, openness and presence, participation, and societal impact. During the past year, we took that strategy deeper by adopting indicators to track our goals with greater precision. Our values, which are creativity, openness, responsibility and respect, have already guided our work for some time, and today they remain as relevant as ever.

The 80th anniversary of our Chorus has provided a valuable counterpoint to our forward-looking work. The impressive history, celebrated through several events during the year, has helped bring into the spotlight the extraordinary expertise found across the Opera House. The Orchestra of the Finnish National Opera's concert series at Musiikkitalo is another such example. The Chorus's anniversary

year culminated in a performance of Finlandia at the Presidential Independence Day reception. It was a moment that surely made all of us at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet immensely proud of our colleagues.

Furthermore, we have not retreated into our own bubble. As an example of our societal engagement, we have contributed to the preparation of a new cultural policy report. We also voiced our support for legislation on tax deductions for private donations. Our artists read aloud stories written by children from Gaza as part of the Stories from Gaza campaign, and as General Director I participated in the Towards Reconciliation event, where the historic final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Sámi issues was read in its entirety.



During the year we also began work on spatial design, exploring how the Opera House can serve more broadly as a cultural venue. We want to be an open meeting place in the capital region and part of the city's vibrant cultural life.

A significant administrative development was the introduction of a new production planning and working-hours management system, Diése by IT4Culture. This is part of a broader transformation to improve our operational efficiency. The data on space, personnel and time resources that the system provides will make it easier to monitor workloads and support decision-making.

The past year also saw the arrival of a new Board of Directors and Supervisory Board. Introducing them to the organisation has been rewarding and has given us a fresh perspective on our own work as well.

The highlights of the Chorus's 80th anniversary year included the Organ Night & Aria Festival concert at Tapiola Church on 7 August 2025 ("The Magic of Opera on a Summer Evening"), as well as a joint concert by the Chorus and Orchestra at Musiikkitalo on 4 November 2025 (Brahms: Requiem).

The Chorus of the Finnish National Opera also performed at the Presidential Independence Day reception on 6 December 2025. The anniversary year was marked in many ways across our website, season brochure and social media channels. The Chorus's history was presented in a photography exhibition on the arched wall of the Opera House's Main Foyer.

**Art is an experience  
for everyone.**

**T**he strategic goal of Opera and Ballet for All is ambitious, but our art forms are for everyone. Our existing audiences are precious to us, while we simultaneously pursue new visitors. This is one of the reasons why we invest in participation work.

Collaboration, both internationally and nationally, benefits everyone and makes our institution even more open. Most important of all, however, is that our repertoire resonates with our audiences. That resonance is high, with our ticketed performances 89 per cent full. The occupancy rate on the Main Stage reached as high as 90 per cent. Nine out of ten visitors would recommend what they saw.

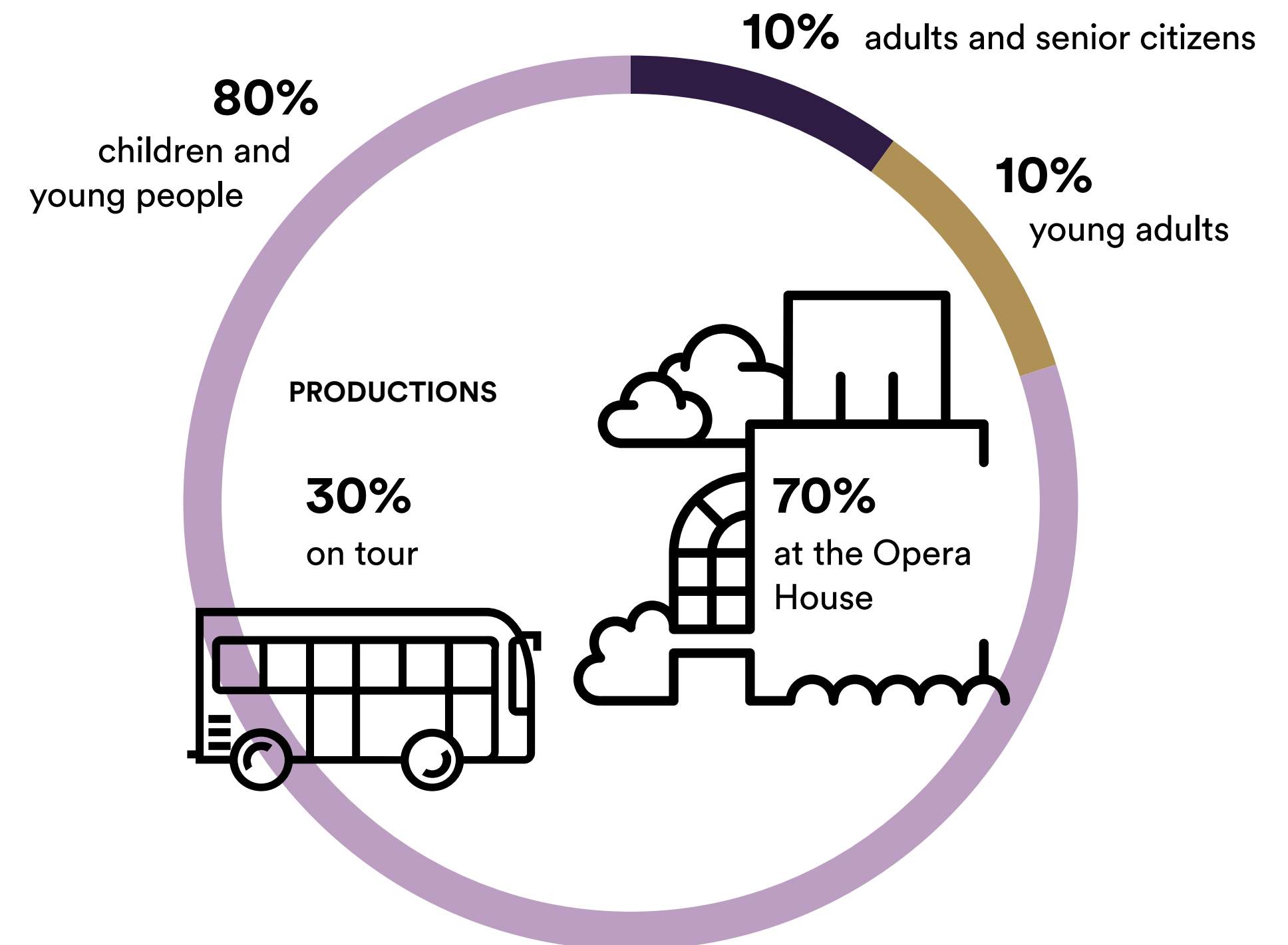
## Participation work expanded further

It is important to the Finnish National Opera and Ballet that our art forms are, in some way, familiar to all Finns. In practice, we have pursued this goal for decades in numerous ways across different departments of our organisation. In spring 2025, a new strategy was created for what we call participation work, comprising activities to support our core mission. Those working in this area were brought together into their own department, sharing a common vision and action plan.

A central goal is to spark interest in our art forms among people of all ages, to raise awareness and to inspire engagement with opera and ballet. Children and young people are our most important target group. The guiding principle is that as many people as possible should have the opportunity to experience opera and ballet.

The renewed approach focuses on increasing the number and scale of contacts, and on improving the quality of our participation projects. Accessibility and reach are priorities in all activities, while collaboration with municipalities remains important. Tours are focused on a few regions, though school operas, for example, are now performed in concert

### PARTICIPATION TARGET GROUPS



halls to larger audiences than before. The highlight of participation work in 2025 was the Ballet Day we offered for the first time to every comprehensive school in Finland on 17 December. More than 4,000 schools or classes registered to view a recording of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, which was seen by 150,000 children in total.

Another new initiative was launched earlier in the autumn when the Magic Moment performance embarked on a tour of daycare centres. This 30-minute interactive performance was themed around *Cinderella* and featured dance, music and song. In addition, performances of the mini opera *The Barber of Seville* for daycare groups continued in the Opera House foyer spaces. The mini opera retells the story at a level accessible to young children, while introducing them to the musical highlights of the work, performed by two singers and two musicians.

November saw the launch of the Opera Calling series, designed to deepen audiences' experience through accompanying events. These included craft workshops for children linked to performances of *Hansel and Gretel*, and a discussion session on parenting and child development with child psychiatrist Jari Sinkkonen. The Ballet Energy for Boys tour, familiar from previous seasons, also continued, as did the Opera

Teatime Dances, cherished by senior audiences. The number of schoolchildren attending dress rehearsals has been increased.

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet takes part in the Art Testers programme, which offers all Finnish eighth-graders and their teachers one to two visits per school year to high-quality arts events. Ballet and opera tickets are also offered to school groups at a special price.

[Learn more about our participation work](#)



The popular, free Saturday afternoon Music in the Foyer matinée concerts feature repertoire highlights performed by the musicians and singers of the Finnish National Opera.

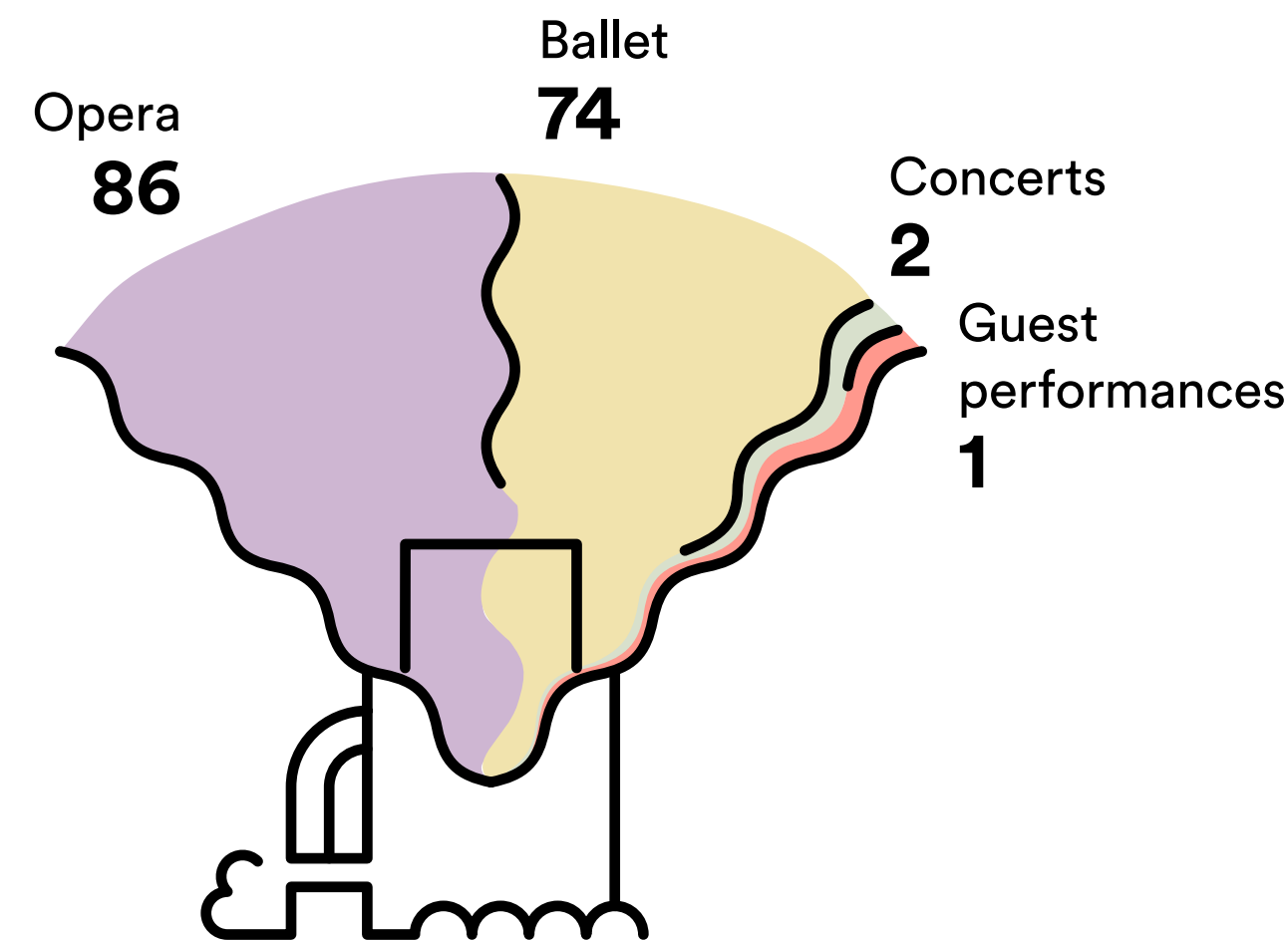


Magic Moment is a 30-minute interactive session for preschoolers, incorporating dance, music and song: its autumn 2025 theme was the Cinderella ballet. In November and December, Magic Moment also toured daycare centres across the Helsinki metropolitan area.

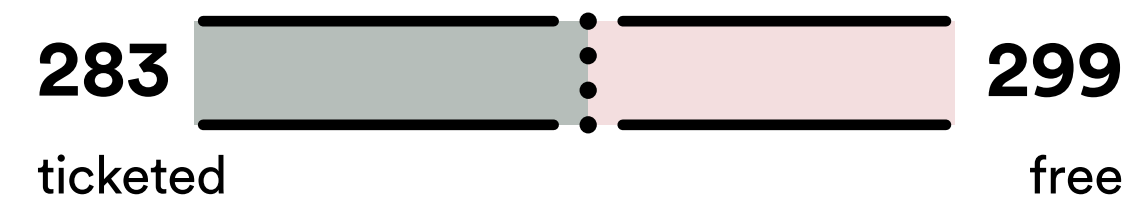
# 2025 in numbers

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet reached a total audience of 0.8 million through all its channels. We staged 860 performances or events in 23 locations. We are an arts institution for all.

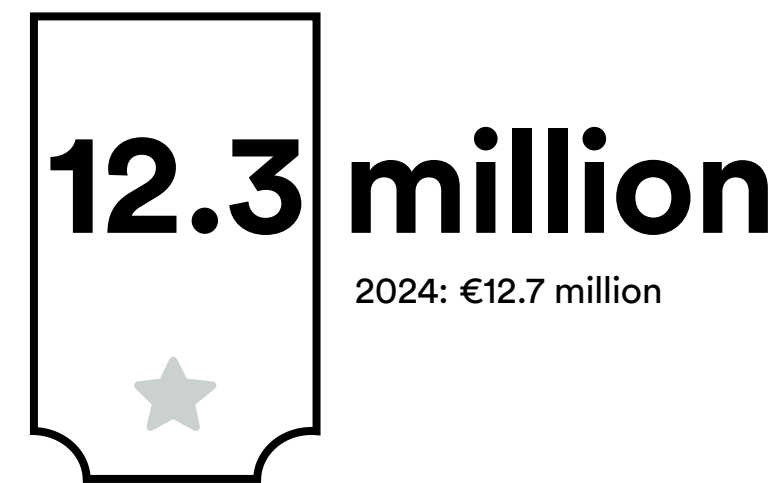
## TICKETED PERFORMANCES ON THE MAIN STAGE



## ALL PERFORMANCES IN TOTAL



## TICKET REVENUE



## FIRST-TIME TICKET BUYERS

**34%**

## RETURNING FIRST-TIMERS

**19%**

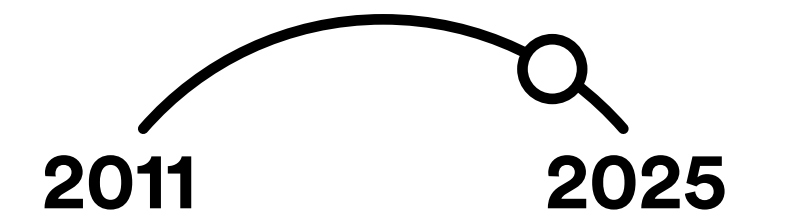
## MAIN STAGE OCCUPANCY RATE

**9 productions**  
**above 90%**



The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, Sleeping Beauty, The Ostrobothnians	100%
Circ Opera 2.0, Edith Piaf – La vie en rose	99%
Don Carlos	98%
Animal Farm	94%
The Merry Widow, Tosca	92%

## CONSUMPTION TRENDS



Electricity consumption

**-37%**

District heating consumption

**-60%**

Water consumption

**-27%**

## PERSONNEL AND OPERATIONS

**546**  
EMPLOYEES ON A MONTHLY SALARY

2024: 545

**33**  
NATIONALITIES

34

**89%**  
OVERALL OCCUPANCY RATE

85%

**251 822**  
AUDIENCE MEMBERS

247 939

**0,8**  
MILLION AUDIENCE CONTACTS

0,7 million



The Young Dancers' Evening at Almi Hall featured the world premiere of Marco Goecke's *Blushing* as one of two contemporary dance works, along with an excerpt from a classical ballet. This year the performance was broadcast as a free live stream on the Finnish National Opera and Ballet's Stage24 platform, in collaboration with OperaVision and the EU's Creative Europe programme.

**WATCH** on Stage24: Behind the scenes: *Blushing*



## International collaborative projects: Next Stage, Xtreme and Next Generation

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet is involved in several European collaborative projects. The three-year Next Stage project, started in 2025, is supported by the EU's Creative Europe programme and administered by the European civil society organisation FEDORA. Its themes are sustainability, inclusion and digitalisation in opera and ballet.

Among other occasions, these themes were explored at the Opera Europa autumn conference in Geneva. It became clear that in terms of the UN Agenda 2030 sustainable development measures, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is one of the leading institutions in its field. Digitalisation, too, is one of our core strengths. The conference offered valuable opportunities to learn from other institutions across the continent, who are all tackling the same issues in different ways.

International collaboration has also included the Xtreme project, which explores how new technologies and arts organisations can jointly

create new types of experiences in an inclusive and ecologically sustainable way. The project involves four creative organisations and fourteen partners, including several universities. It is administered by the EU's Horizon Europe programme. In January, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet and Aalto University co-hosted a project seminar at Almi Hall. The first public pilots are expected in late 2026.

Next Generation, coordinated by Opera Europa, was a further project to launch at the start of 2025. It supports emerging artists in opera and dance by offering training, visibility and networking opportunities. The project's first live stream was *Blushing* by the Youth Company of the Finnish National Ballet in March 2025. It was broadcast on OperaVision's YouTube channel, attracting more than 7,400 viewers. The network comprises 44 European partners. The project continues until 2028 and is also supported by the EU's Creative Europe programme.



### Award-winning artists

**Sofia Gustafsson**, 2nd soloist dancer:  
Pro Dance Lifetime Achievement Award

**Giulio Diligente**, dancer:  
Outi and Jan Vapaavuori Foundation's  
Young Dancer Award

**Iris Candelaria**, soprano:  
Finnish Cultural Foundation Grand Award

**Maija Linkola**, first violinist:  
Finnish National Opera and Ballet Grant  
Foundation Award

**Jaakko Välimäki**, horn player:  
Helsinki Musicians' Association's Jaska Award

# Towards more sustainable culture



**T**he Finnish National Opera and Ballet's strategy for 2025–2028 is built on our core values, one of which is responsibility. The essential areas of responsibility work are artistic responsibility, environmental responsibility, social responsibility and good governance.

*During the year, we have carried out work on a carbon reduction pathway as well as begun to create a responsibility roadmap. Our carbon footprint calculations have continued, and the psychological support framework for those working on challenging productions has been developed further. Alongside this ongoing work, we have reached a number of milestones.*



The orchestra and the Opera House's specialists were closely involved throughout the design and commissioning of the rehearsal hall. Photo: Akukon / Janne Hirvonen.

## Full renovation of the orchestra rehearsal hall completed

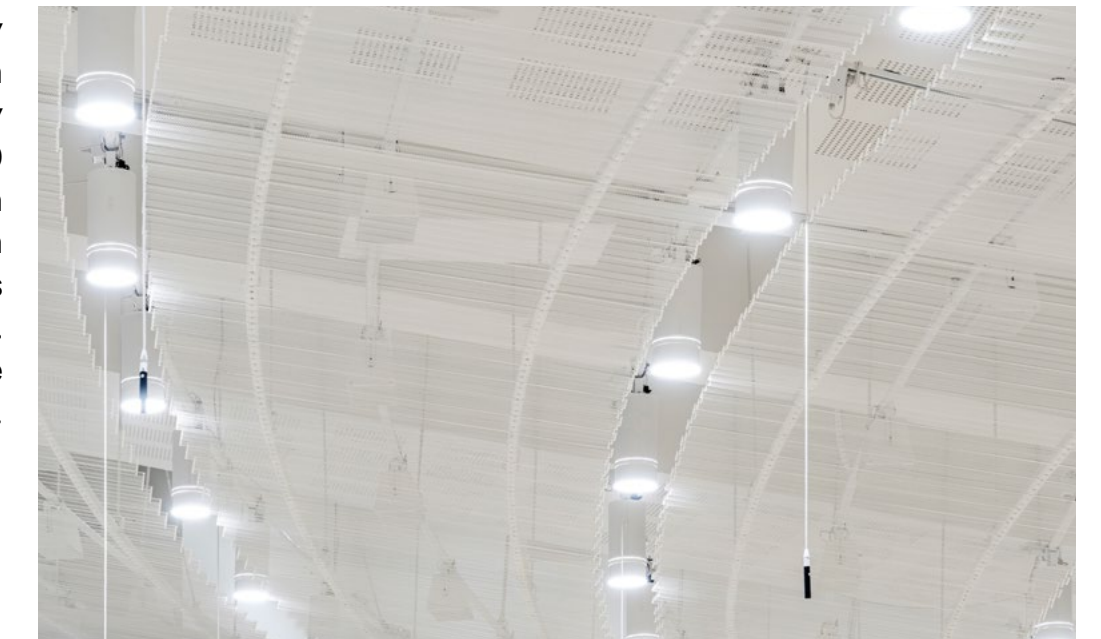
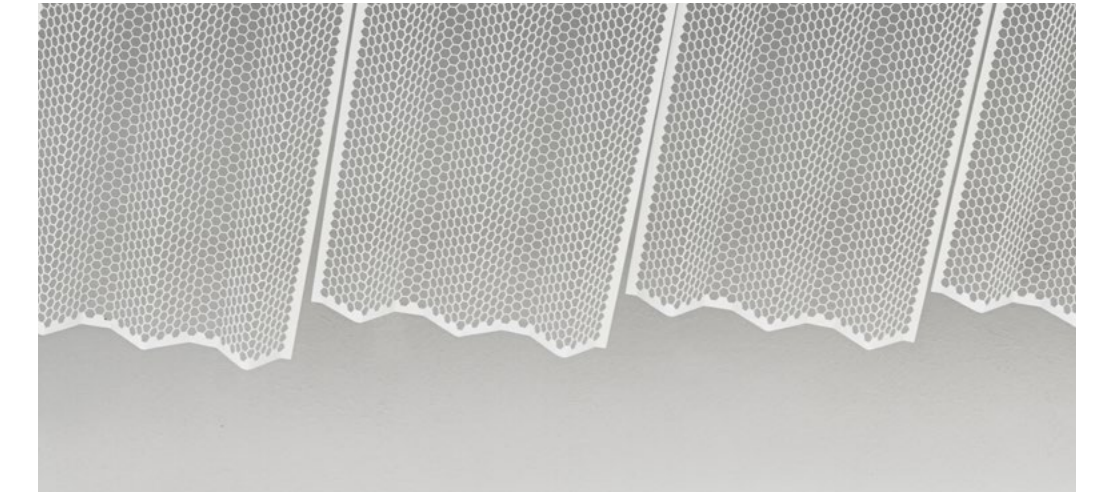
The long-awaited renovation of the orchestra rehearsal hall was completed at the start of August. The significant transformation improved musicians' working conditions in terms of ventilation, lighting and, above all, acoustics. The floors were sanded and other surfaces softened for sound absorption.

Senate Properties carried out the renovation in close consultation with the Finnish National Opera's musicians and sound department. The design phase began with acoustic measurements, and building work began at Easter. Thanks to excellent collaboration between the facilities team, contractors and Senate Properties, the revamped

space was ready for the musicians when they returned from their summer holiday. The most significant change was the introduction of an effective electro-acoustic system in the rehearsal hall: reverberation is now reduced electronically, with sound returned at a slight delay. This makes the space feel acoustically larger than it is.

Since the renovation, musicians have found it easier to hear both their own and each other's playing. Every member of our audience can judge the impact of the changes for themselves, as the musicians move from the rehearsal hall to the orchestra pit.

The electronically assisted acoustic system includes approximately 120 loudspeakers and 40 microphones, together with amplifiers and processors. In technical terms, the system is considered stage technology. Photo: Akukon / Janne Hirvonen.



**”** We are very happy with the new setup. Previously the hall was both noisy and reverberant, which made it hard to hear your own playing. The acoustic image could change dramatically if you moved just one metre in any direction. After rehearsals, you often felt completely exhausted.”

— Double bass player Marko Mikkola

## Audience engagement frameworks for situations involving harassment or discrimination

In 2025, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet developed frameworks and principles for handling challenging situations involving audience members. The process involved front-of-house services, customer service, restaurant and security services, and communications. Discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed firmly; they are not to be tolerated. The development work went beyond defining principles. Above all, it was a process of learning together and openly discussing what a safe working environment really means in our organisation. Thirteen cross-team workshops were held over the course of the year. These focused on the core questions of how to guarantee respect for equality and diversity, and how to ensure all our public events are positive experiences for both audiences and staff. In a five-hour session organised in October, human rights educator Dakota Robin guided participants through questions of diversity and inclusion. The training will continue in 2026.



The development of safer space principles and practices is an ongoing process, built on the combined effort and open dialogue of those working directly with audiences. The principles will be introduced at the start of the 2026–2027 season.



Cast information for each performance is now available digitally and updated in real time through the new cast details service: [osajaot.oopperabaletti.fi](https://osajaot.oopperabaletti.fi)

## Cast information goes digital

The printing of nightly cast sheets was discontinued at the start of the 2025–2026 season. Cast details can now be accessed via QR codes printed in programmes and displayed in the foyers. Ticket holders also receive an email link to performance details two days in advance. In the digital service, English has been added as a language option alongside Finnish and Swedish. Cast information is also available on the touchscreen displays of the Main Foyer.

A wealth of information is available through the Encore online service. Its archive of Finnish National Opera and Ballet productions and cast details can be browsed all the way back to 1911.

Digital cast details also benefit the environment: over the past ten years, a total of 1.5 to 2 million individual cast sheets were printed and delivered to the Opera House by courier van on more than 1,500 occasions.

Thomas de Mallet Burgess

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**E**ight opera productions were seen on the Main Stage in 2025. Premieres included Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Giuseppe Verdi's *Don Carlos*, Alexander Raskatov's *Animal Farm* and Aulis Sallinen's *The Horseman*. The autumn season saw the transition to the repertoire planned by Thomas de Mallet Burgess, who took up the role of Artistic Director of the Opera in 2023.

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## The way we work must be challenged

We have celebrated opera's power to tell stories. Our work has been supported by the strong relationship we have with our audiences, by our outstanding professionals, and by the high standard of stage technology across our productions.

Yet it is clear that opera no longer enjoys the popularity it once had. A growing number of people find it old-fashioned and not particularly interesting. We must find our way through this.

The Finnish National Opera's aim is to be an organisation that reimagines and challenges the way opera is made. This means making opera that resonates not just in Finland but anywhere in the world. During the year we have been preparing, among other productions, the operas *Morgonstjärnan – The Morning Star* and *Festen* for spring 2026. Both of these engage with contemporary social issues, contain psychological tension and have a theatrical quality to their storytelling.

We also want to develop more fertile collaborations with different partners. While the Finnish National Opera cannot do everything, we can use our influence to advance the work of others. We lend credibility to our partners' initiatives and share our expertise for their benefit. Our aim is to find new approaches to culture, while breaking boundaries and championing bold, contemporary thinking.



## The Sugar Factory reimagines opera

With the support of the Finnish Cultural Foundation, we have launched the Sugar Factory – New Opera Works programme. Its objective is to promote the creation of new opera works and to bring the art form closer to our time and place.

Over three consecutive years, the programme offers a remarkable opportunity to opera professionals who would not otherwise have access to our expertise and resources. Through the Sugar Factory, they can make use of the Finnish National Opera's facilities and infrastructure. We, in turn, have the opportunity to bring together composers, writers, directors and other creatives, working in small groups to create new short operas.

At the heart of the Sugar Factory is the process itself: how opera is created and directed, how to work collaboratively in a multidisciplinary team, and

what new perspectives on opera might emerge. We are not looking for finished scripts. The twelve artists selected each year take part in masterclasses organised by the Finnish National Opera and led by world-class artists, many of whom are not usually based in Finland.

The first selections were made in spring 2025 from a pool of more than 300 applicants. In autumn 2026, we will see the first four short operas at Almi Hall. Each runs ten to twenty minutes and has its own creative team: a director, a writer and a composer.

My intention is for the Sugar Factory to give artists the opportunity to explore and approach contemporary opera in many different ways. The programme is open to all, although participants must be Finnish or resident in Finland. Age is not a determining factor: in the current season, there is a gap of roughly forty years between the oldest and youngest participants. Through the Sugar Factory, I want to position opera as a subject of inquiry. A large group of professionals is developing new thinking about not only what opera is, but also how it is made and how the challenges at each stage of production can be addressed. The Finnish National Opera provides artists with a collaborative platform, and I expect the outcome to be far greater than the sum of its parts.

The Sugar Factory pays homage to history through its name — a nod to the building that preceded the Opera House on this very site. Still, what essentially drives the programme is a determination to break free from how opera was made in the past.

## Open recruitment launched for Chief Conductor

The search for a new Chief Conductor for the Finnish National Opera was launched in spring 2025. We revised the selection process to ensure the recruitment was broad-based, transparent and capable of assessing candidates comprehensively.

We deliberately broke with previous practice in structuring the search. An internal nomination process and an open search, conducted in partnership with an international recruitment company, were launched simultaneously. This enabled us to consider a large pool of candidates. Of the 54 applicants, 17 were invited for interview.

Candidates were evaluated in the interviews by a panel representing several professional groups, and seven were invited to the next round. Of these, three conductors have progressed to the final stage, which will continue until late 2026.

## Three-year collaboration with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra begins

*One of the aims of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is to share its expertise more widely than before. This applies to the world-class professionals working within the organisation, to production technology and to audience relations.*

*To this end, we launched a collaboration with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra. This is made possible by a grant of €504,000 from the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation to establish a permanent, musically and theatrically complete baroque opera presence in Finland. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet serves as the principal partner in the initiative. In addition to concrete productions, the three-year project includes the development of a sustainable funding and partnership model.*

*The collaboration will give rise to performances at Almi Hall and in the foyer spaces, as well as a full-scale baroque opera production on the Main Stage. The partnership model is an excellent fit for both parties: the Finnish National Opera and Ballet's resources and infrastructure support a leading independent organisation in the field. The artistic collaboration aims to renew baroque opera in Finland, grow audiences and support artists.*

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Javier Torres

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**S**even different ballet productions were showcased on the Main Stage during the year. Premieres included *Édith Piaf – La vie en rose*, choreographed by Reija Wäre to music by Jukka Nykänen; *T(r)anssi*, an evening of three contemporary dance works; and Javier Torres's new choreography for the beloved ballet classic *Giselle*. The repertoire was curated by Artistic Director Javier Torres. His tenure, which began in 2022, was extended to July 2029.

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productions currently on stage, we have been preparing the upcoming repertoire. This includes *Pulse*, a production that will take over the entire Opera House in spring 2026. It is a fine example of expanding the audience experience of dance.

## Reaching new audiences

This year our repertoire has comprised both cherished classics and works that push the boundaries of traditional ballet. Once again, several productions sold out quickly. I greatly value our committed audiences, yet reaching new audiences is a central goal.

Cultivating new audiences is essential. I have worked consistently to make ballet more accessible than ever. It is important to me to present a repertoire that appeals to audiences of all ages.

Ballet, like opera, is a handcrafted art form that relies on the contribution and expertise of a great many professionals. As an experience, it is unique — a carefully honed gem. It offers a depth that sets it apart from other forms of entertainment.

I am open to all kinds of collaboration. I want to offer not just outstanding performances but also a broader sense of occasion. Street art, contemporary dance and audience participation can all find a home at the Finnish National Ballet. In addition to the

## Javier Torres

### Why is Giselle special?

I have wanted to direct the French ballet classic *Giselle* for thirty years. I am glad, however, that the opportunity came only later in my career. In my view, the work is more relevant today than ever before. As a ballet, it is simple and brief. The plot has just the right amounts of love, betrayal and forgiveness. All the ingredients of great drama.

The second act is visually stunning in its beauty, and I largely kept it intact. The first act, on the other hand, I reimagined entirely. I wanted my *Giselle* to speak to the audiences of today. For that reason, I moved away from the original story set in the Middle Ages, in which the woman is little more than a doll, an object without agency dying of heartbreak. My protagonist is an independent, self-aware woman, who nonetheless falls in love.

In 1950s Italy, people dressed beautifully and the era was full of passion. To me, the compelling story of a *Giselle* who knows her own mind is well suited to that setting. Italy in that period was hypocritical in the sense that equality between women and men was proclaimed in public but far removed from reality. Although domestic appliances freed up time, a woman's place was still considered to be in the home.



Giselle's costume designer Erika Turunen drew inspiration from old photographs of an Italian village familiar to her.



In my version, *Giselle* is the victim of deception and faces disappointment. She is a strong woman who is capable of saying no, but she must bear the consequences of doing so. *Giselle* is brutally killed by a jealous man. The core of the work lies in the horror of violence against women, which is, sadly, as real today as ever. I believe one of ballet's most important tasks is to move people, to make them think. That is why I no longer find it justifiable to present dusty old stories without questioning them.

Another key dimension is that the ballet *Giselle* offers meaningful roles for dancers at different stages of their careers. It features children, but also experienced dancers in their thirties and forties, even some approaching retirement age.



For the white act of *Giselle*, with its supernatural Wilis, Javier Torres chose to honour tradition.

Through *Giselle*, I also want to make ballet more accessible to a younger audience, particularly those around the age of thirty. If we can attract these people, who are just starting out in their working lives, once this year, we hope they will return twice next year.

We are not competing with conventional entertainment, but with carefully crafted, handmade experiences. Our tickets cannot be entirely cheap, because making this art requires enormous resources, but we want to move those who come to us. We are an important part of Finnish culture.

*Giselle* had its premiere in October.

## Javier Torres

### Finnish ballet renews itself

I am glad that my work as Artistic Director of the Finnish National Ballet has given me opportunities to work as a choreographer and to modernise productions, and at the same time to reshape thinking about what ballet demands of dancers.

For our dancers, the Finnish National Ballet is, I believe, an excellent working environment, but I have wanted to make it even better. An important goal for me has been to move away from a cycle of negative feedback, of nurturing through fear, from the belief that the only way to become a good dancer is to hear the harshest possible things about yourself. This does not mean making things easy. The work can be demanding, but it can still be based on respect and warmth. Hierarchies have no place here.

This thinking has over the past three years been embraced by the Ballet School as well. It has been my principle that a dancer's psychological wellbeing is grounded in a healthy body image. There is no room for intimidation.

Ballet technique and aesthetics do not preclude respect for the individual, and not every dancer's body needs to fit the same mould.



“The Youth Company of the Finnish National Ballet opened the Next Generation Festival bringing not only young dancers but young ideas. It was a joy to watch them.”

— Maggie Foyer,  
seeingdance.com

My goal is for the Ballet School to produce graduates who, in the future, are more distinctively themselves as artists, and who respect themselves and their health; artists who dare to ask questions when they do not know or understand something.

In recent years we have renewed our teaching approach across all age groups. We analysed everything we teach here, and in what order. This renewal has also meant moving away from the Russian school of training. We have rejected the prevailing view that traditions cannot be broken, as well as the emphasis on discipline at its core.

We still have some way to go before the results of these changes become visible in the professional

world. I hope that we are already today leaving behind the era of body-shaming. This will be crucial in helping young dancers to stay healthier and to avoid injuries.

Our physiotherapy team has been working throughout the year on body image guidance. This will be made available across the entire Finnish National Ballet organisation. The aim is to raise awareness of appearance-related harassment and to encourage a healthier relationship with our own bodies. The cultural shift is significant and not only an issue for ballet dancers. We are adamant about ensuring that the kinds of comments once considered normal in our world are no longer tolerated. That era is over.

### The Youth Company shines at home and in London

*The 14-member Youth Company is a vital part of the Finnish National Ballet's activities. A third of its members are Finnish, and the rest come from eight different countries across four continents. The dancers in the group have recently completed their ballet education.*

*In addition to the Youth Company's own productions, the young dancers perform alongside the main company in Main Stage productions. While working with seasoned professionals, they gain valuable performance experience and routine for their emerging careers. A year-long engagement instead of individual roles brings much-valued stability to young artists' lives.*

*Coordinated by Nicholas Ziegler, the Youth Company of the Finnish National Ballet has gained international recognition for its extremely high standard. It comes as no surprise, then, that performances of the Youth Company's own productions *Blushing at Almi Hall* in February and March, and *Shining Through* in October, both sold out. The group also participated in four of the Finnish National Ballet's Main Stage productions.*

*In summer, the Youth Company performed at the Royal Ballet and Opera's Next Generation Festival in London. The members of the Youth Company are valuable ambassadors for the organisation.*

*The Youth Company operates with the support of a three-year grant from the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation.*



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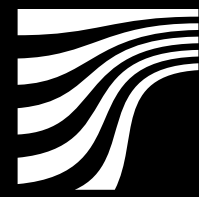
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