

ANNIE DAVIDSON OPERA

CREATING A CONTEMPORARY CALGARY-BASED OPERA



The Calgary Public Library is a trusted institution that shares Calgary’s rich history and champions arts and culture in our city. A very special partnership with Cowtown Opera in 2015 created the Annie Davidson Opera to help Calgarians connect with our city’s history and celebrate the inspirational story of a little-known change agent.

The Annie Davidson Opera was created from a partnership between the Calgary Public Library and Cowtown Opera, with support from the Rozsa Foundation, the Calgary Foundation and Friends of the Library. This major new arts partnership created a contemporary opera to recognize a little-known change agent in Calgary’s history.

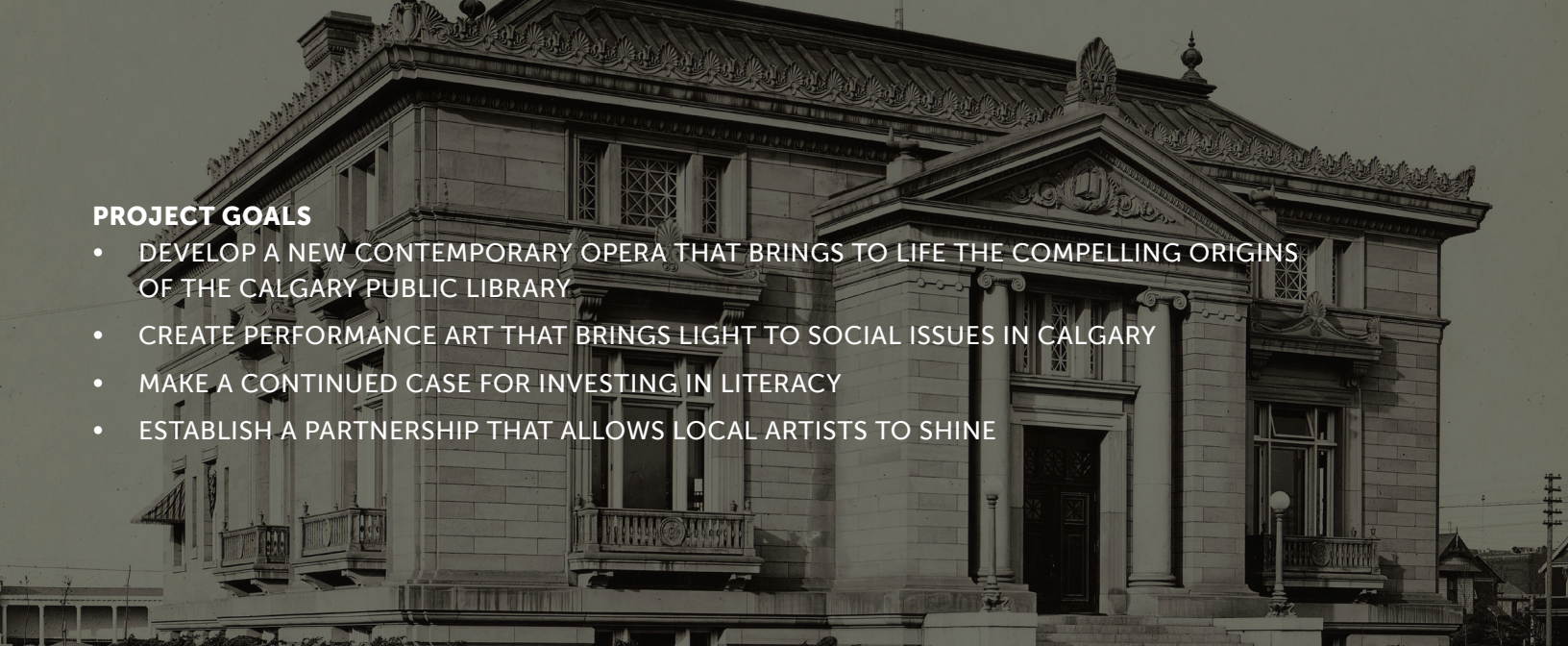
The opera celebrates Annie Davidson’s life and inspires families and individuals to discover their “inner Annie” and create meaningful change within their communities.

At 70 years old, Annie Davidson, widow and mother of 10, helped build Calgary’s first public library. Mrs. Davidson and the Calgary

Women’s Literary Club were the first champions of the Library cause in Calgary. In a time when women could not vote, they successfully secured community support for Alberta’s first public library and obtained the financial donation from the Carnegie Corporation.

PROJECT GOALS

- DEVELOP A NEW CONTEMPORARY OPERA THAT BRINGS TO LIFE THE COMPELLING ORIGINS OF THE CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY
- CREATE PERFORMANCE ART THAT BRINGS LIGHT TO SOCIAL ISSUES IN CALGARY
- MAKE A CONTINUED CASE FOR INVESTING IN LITERACY
- ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP THAT ALLOWS LOCAL ARTISTS TO SHINE

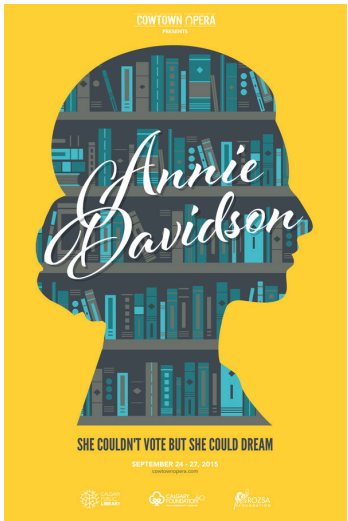


PRODUCTION

The Annie Davidson Opera is Cowtown Opera’s first full-length original opera, and the speed at which the company developed the opera was unconventional, much like the opera itself. Cowtown Opera had a large audition process, which focused on finding Albertans to tell the story. Arthur Bachmann was commissioned as the composer, and the opera was co-written by Wendy Froberg and Aaron Coates. J.P. Thibodeau directed the opera,

which featured mezzo-soprano Sarah Staples leading the all-Albertan cast.

The Annie Davidson Opera premiered as the lead performance for Cowtown Opera’s 2015-2016 season and ran from September 24-27, 2015. In addition, a series of pop-up shows at community libraries helped reach a broader audience, including families and other Calgarians without the means to participate in the stage performance.



"It was a wonderful showcase of history and art! I almost cried hearing the wonderful voices – bravo!"



IMPACT

The Annie Davidson Opera helped build profile and increase recognition of one of Calgary’s newest and most distinctive homegrown arts organizations, Cowtown Opera. By creating a new contemporary opera set in Calgary, Cowtown was able to build capacity and strengthen its relationships with Calgary’s artistic community and members of the public.

The opera also allowed the Calgary Public Library to further two of its strategic directions: contributing to the social fabric of Calgary’s neighbourhoods and improving patron’s experience of using the Library.

By sharing the Library’s history and celebrating the contributions of Annie Davidson and Andrew Carnegie at the full production and in pop-up performances, individuals were introduced to the Library and

Cowtown Opera, and we hope, will seek Cowtown and other local arts performances out in the future.

The Library Foundation is currently exploring possibilities for expanding the opera to different audiences through community outreach, with the hopes of one day having an abridged version performed in local schools. This joint investment has created an asset for the future as opportunities arise to celebrate Calgary’s history.

Photos courtesy Benjamin Laird



"The library was so packed that we ran out of chairs. One of the singers mentioned how meaningful it was to perform it in the library, and the crowd truly enjoyed the experience."

INVESTMENT AT THE LIBRARY

The financial support of the Rozsa Foundation, the Calgary Foundation and Friends of the Library enabled the commission of a new contemporary opera that connected Calgarians with an important figure in the city’s history, engaged local artists, introduced individuals to a new form of artistic expression, and

supported Cowtown Opera’s efforts to become more well-known in Calgary.

Thank you to the partners of this project for supporting *Add In*—the Campaign for Calgary’s Library, and helping create the best public library in the world for Calgarians.



The \$350 million city-wide campaign is building capacity for each and every community library and includes projects with a strong impact for Library customers. *Add In* will take a great library and make it exemplary to ensure that the citizens of Calgary have the best public library in the world.