

Keller Auditorium Closure Proposal Concerns

Portland Opera Supports Alternative Location

After months of reflection, Portland Opera announces its full support of Portland State University as the alternative location for a new performance venue to replace the Keller Auditorium.

Portland Opera has deep concerns regarding the Halprin Landscape Conservancy's proposal requiring a staggered closure of the Keller. In previous statements addressing the potential impact of this closure, Portland Opera emphasized the severe consequences a complete closure would have on the organization, and the broader arts community.

"The arts community in Portland was devastated by COVID-19, especially the Portland Opera," said Carole Morse, Portland Opera Board chair. "Thanks to our wonderful partners, staff, donors and subscribers, we are slowly coming back. The Halprin Landscape Conservancy's



The Keller Auditorium. Photo by M.O. Stevens

proposal would close the Keller for two to three years, undo all our efforts, and essentially force us to go through pandemic-level impacts again." The performing arts sector was among the hardest hit during the pandemic, being one of the first to shut down and the last to reopen. The extended closure caused significant financial and emotional strain on countless individuals and organizations that depend on venues like Keller Auditorium for their survival. Another

disruption would exacerbate this trauma, particularly for those whose jobs and livelihoods are contingent on work at the Keller.

"The Keller Auditorium remaining open until a new one is built is not only key to rebuilding our performances and revenue, but also necessary for our continued existence," said Sue Dixon, General Director and CEO of Portland Opera. "Closing the Keller, even for one day, threatens the arts community and all of the artists,

performers, technicians and support staff who all contribute to a thriving arts ecosystem."

The proposed Keller renovation project by Halprin would require full or periodic shutdowns, which would have a significant impact on the Portland Opera's finances. In contrast, the PSU project presents a more practical and less disruptive option, allowing continued operations of the existing Keller Auditorium until the new replacement is

built five blocks away on a large four-acre parcel.

"We cannot afford to undermine the progress we have made in recovering from the pandemic's effects on the arts sector," said Dixon. "We have a responsibility to our employees, the community who benefit from the arts in so many ways, and future Oregonians who one day may sit in a beautiful 21st-century venue on PSU's campus and experience performances put on by a thriving arts community."

Metro conducted a study that estimates a two-year closure would cost nearly \$100 million in lost economic benefit, particularly at a time when downtown Portland is still recovering. The Portland City Council is scheduled to discuss the proposals again on August 14th.

"It is crucial that we support the continuity and growth of our cultural institutions," said Dixon. "We strongly urge the City Council to reject Halprin's Keller renovation project in favor of endorsing PSU as the most viable solution."

Summer EBT is Available

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achievement and strengthens student well-being, Summer Meals keep students connected to proper nutrition so they can stay active and engaged while classes are out. And its why Oregon jumped at the chance to provide Summer EBT to eligible families this year. Giving our families more access to groceries during the summer means students will show up for the first day of class ready to learn."

ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht said, "On June 28, 2024, more than 321,000 children were automatically enrolled in Summer EBT because they participate in other programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or receive services through Medicaid. So far, 322,500 children have received Summer EBT. This adds up to \$38.7 million in federal funds that families are spending at grocery stores and farmers' markets in their communities."

ODHS estimates another 30,000 children in Oregon may be

eligible for Summer EBT if they apply. To be eligible, children must attend a school participating in the national school lunch or breakfast programs and be in households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

ODHS encourages families to visit the Summer EBT website in English and Spanish to review eligibility criteria. If a family believes their children may be eligible, please call the Summer EBT Call Center to verify that they need to apply. The Summer EBT Call Center number is 833-673-7328 and can provide customer service in many languages.

Families that need to apply can do so online in English or Spanish, or by email or regular mail in multiple languages.

Don't delay—the deadline to apply is Sept. 2, 2024. Families have 122 days from the day they received Summer EBT food benefits before they expire. For example, if benefits were issued on June 28, 2024, families have until Oct. 28, 2024, to use Summer EBT benefits.



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