

A *vimeo* Resource



Vimeo OTT Ebook

How to bring performing arts alive and online with OTT

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OTT streaming: A new outlet for performing arts content

The OTT space has seen unprecedented growth over the past year as millions stayed home and tuned in to streaming video more than ever before. In fact, 57% of viewers spent more time streaming in 2020 than the year prior, according to [Conviva](#).

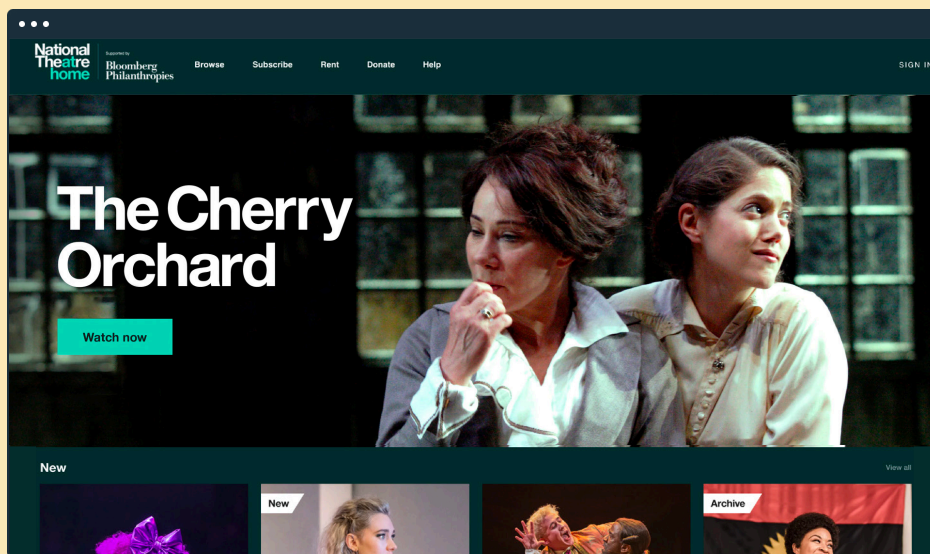
Like so many industries, performing arts organizations faced unprecedented challenges when their doors closed. Yet the resiliency of artists and musicians shone through, leveraging video to share performances at home or in empty theaters. Even Yo Yo Ma went viral when he went from Bach to “Baby Beluga” in a [video in collaboration with Raffi](#).

OTT streaming, named as such because it goes “over the top” of traditional broadcast television, is the new standard in content consumption. Why? Because it’s not just for Millennials or Gen Z. One [report](#) from MediaLogic found that 55% of viewers aged 63+ subscribed to a streaming service in 2020.

Performing arts organizations of all sizes from around the world are learning that an OTT strategy is a path forward to:

- Connect with your existing audience
- Attract new patrons and donors of all ages, and
- Source a new stream of revenue to complement live performances.

Best of all, launching branded streaming apps across mobile devices, connected TVs and the web *can* be more plug-and-play and layperson-friendly than technical. This guide will show you how.



Launching an OTT channel for the performing arts

With the growing number of cord cutters and people turning to streaming video, it's the perfect time to create a dedicated channel for your video content and find new performing arts lovers online.

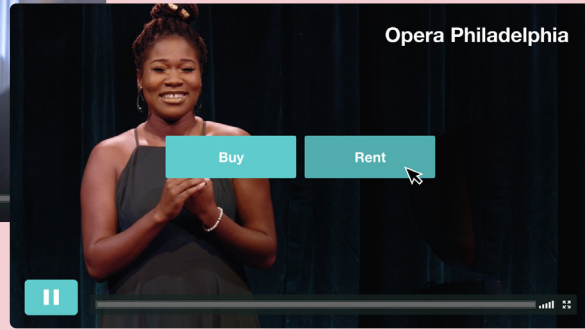
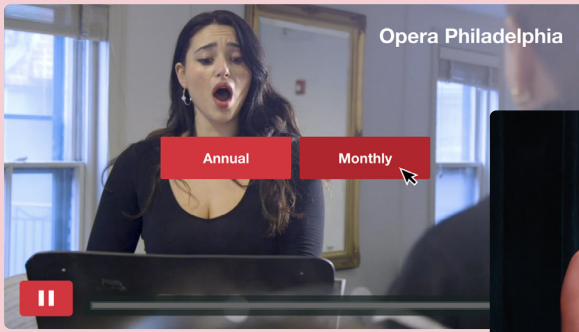
There are a number of ways to go about launching an OTT strategy for your organization. Working with independent app developers for a custom build, hacking together workarounds using free tools like YouTube, or pursuing a turnkey, end-to-end OTT solution are just three examples.

While we can't make the decision for you, if you think people may be interested enough in your live performances to stream them online (hint: chances are your live audience is already online!), here are six factors to consider when exploring your OTT options.



What internal resources does your team have available to support an OTT video channel?

When you create an OTT video channel, you'll need high-quality video content to offer to your audience. Who might create this content (in-house, or freelancers)? How might you create, record, or store it? Many performing arts organizations, which operate on tight budgets and small teams, find that end-to-end OTT solutions are a good fit — they're user-friendly for your team and simple for any audience to access.



What content will you offer? How will you produce it?

Think about whether you have an existing library of content or if you'll be recording new performances or concerts. Then think of what filming equipment, tech-savvy team members, and performers you'll need to get started.



How will you monetize your content?

Many performing arts organizations have membership models, which can accommodate additional benefits, like a streaming channel. Within the OTT streaming world, there are a few different monetization models you can choose from (we'll review them in detail shortly).



How do you choose a monetization model that fits the needs of your organization, donors, and patrons?

Consider how much your audience pays now and what a new, digital audience might be willing to pay for your new OTT streaming content. Could an OTT channel bring a new membership tier to your organization? Would individual performance rentals be a better fit? What price point do you need to hit your membership or donation goals?



How will you reach existing and new patrons to watch your content?

Think through your target demographic and where they live online. You'll want to choose options that are easy to use for all audiences and accessible on all devices. How might an OTT channel expand your digital presence online to reach new members, too?



How are other performing arts organizations implementing OTT?

For inspiration, look at how your peers have handled adopting an OTT model of video content, you may be able to learn from or collaborate with them to keep your content fresh.



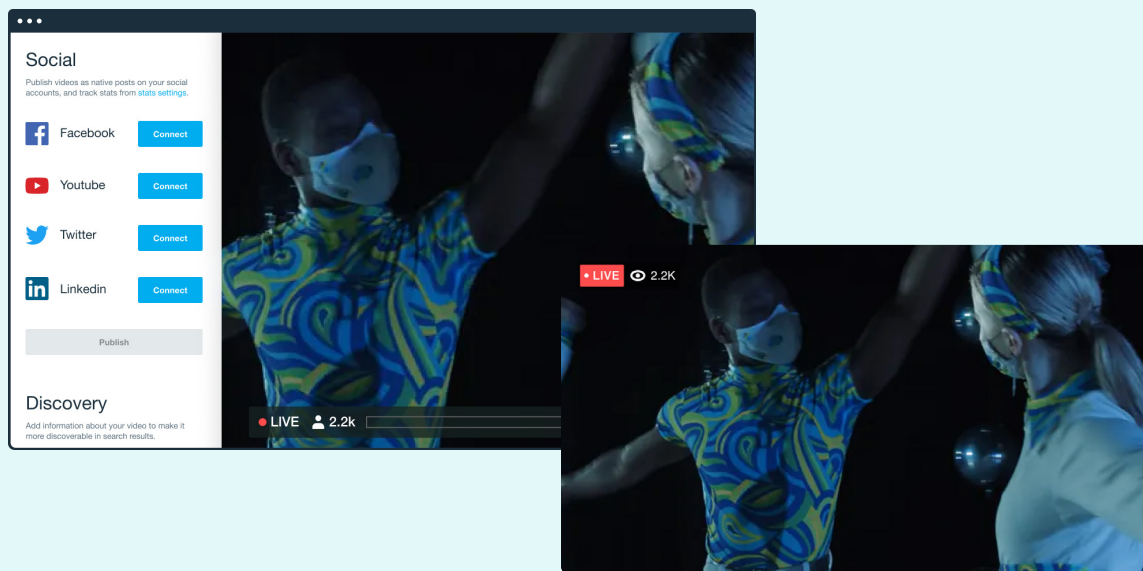
Lights, camera, curtain: content production tips

Pre-pandemic, the extent of professional video production at live stage performances was largely supplementary. According to *The New York Times*, the Boston Symphony Orchestra filmed video clips that were used only in marketing materials or on social media. That is, until COVID-19 hit, then they began [filming concerts and publishing them online](#) as the main event. Through closed theater doors, many arts organizations have gotten creative as they adjust to creating content meant for the screen, not a stage.

Some organizations, like the Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA) have created a cinematic experience, using additional cameras to capture every angle. TAPA saw this as a priority before the pandemic hit: they started broadcasting symphony performances projected on large screens throughout the theater, in real-time, so every audience member could appreciate the small details from any seat in the house.

One of the biggest innovations that we saw was this idea of putting real-time video in-house to help the attendees zero in on the performance that was happening in front of them,” says Zak Vassar, President and CEO of TAPA. Soon, the investment in a video strategy began to pay off. “Our patron satisfaction numbers shot up right away,” he says. “We had a lot more people retaining their subscriptions because they felt that they were getting more out of the concerts, and we were able to charge more for the tickets.

By the time their theater doors closed for in-person performances in 2020, this multi-camera filming framework enabled TAPA to create rich content for their subscribers. Since then, they’ve filmed socially distanced ballet, symphonic concerts, and recitals — many of which had never been filmed before.



If your organization is new to capturing your art through video, don't worry. Here are our tips for content and production strategy for digital content.

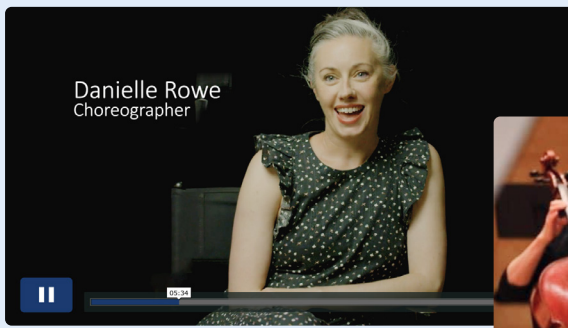
1. Consider your audience when filming performance for online vs. in-person.

Like TAPA experienced, filming for a digital audience means rethinking how you capture performances. Sitting in a live theater versus watching on a phone, tablet, or even TV are quite different viewing experiences, so cater to your new streaming audience. Capture close-up moments, clear audio, sharp details, and use a platform that won't lag or frustrate your subscribers (more on that last part in a bit).

2. Think about what your content library will look like.

Rule number one: don't worry if you don't have a ton of existing video content to share from Day 1. If you can time your OTT channel launch with an upcoming season or performance, promoting future events is enough to entice people to pay for your content.

- Film teaser content or performance trailers and make them available on your channel
- Show previews of past performances to give new subscribers a taste of what they can expect
- Repurpose existing video content you already have on hand (performance archives, musician interviews, etc.)



3. Offer more than just performances.

This past year, countless performing arts organizations pivoted online and experimented with different types of digital content — and many have been surprised by what clicks with viewers. L.A. Dance Project (LADP) held fitness classes with their dance instructors and they took off.

After pivoting online and offering dance films they'd created over the years, interviews with choreographers, and dance/fitness classes, Executive Director of LADP Lucinda Lent found a curious discovery. "When we look at our analytics and what people are watching, primarily they're watching the dance classes and fitness classes," she says.

[Ballet Idaho](#)'s streaming channel offers behind the scenes footage, world premieres, and never-before-seen archival footage. The Portland Symphony Orchestra's OTT channel, [Portland Symphony TV](#), allows potential new subscribers to browse their library of performances including special holiday concerts, along with educational videos like "How to Make a Homemade Rain Stick."

Try offering:

- Interviews with conductors, performers, or choreographers
- Educational content like dance classes or music lessons
- Fitness classes with dance instructors
- Behind the scenes content



4. Make sure you have your distribution rights in place.

A note for those new to the digital streaming and distribution space: make sure to confirm your contracts and digital distribution rights. Some contracts with orchestras and performances don't include clearance for digital distribution, so they may need to be amended. Consult your legal team or a legal contractor and make sure you have the rights in place before you hit publish and start charging viewers.

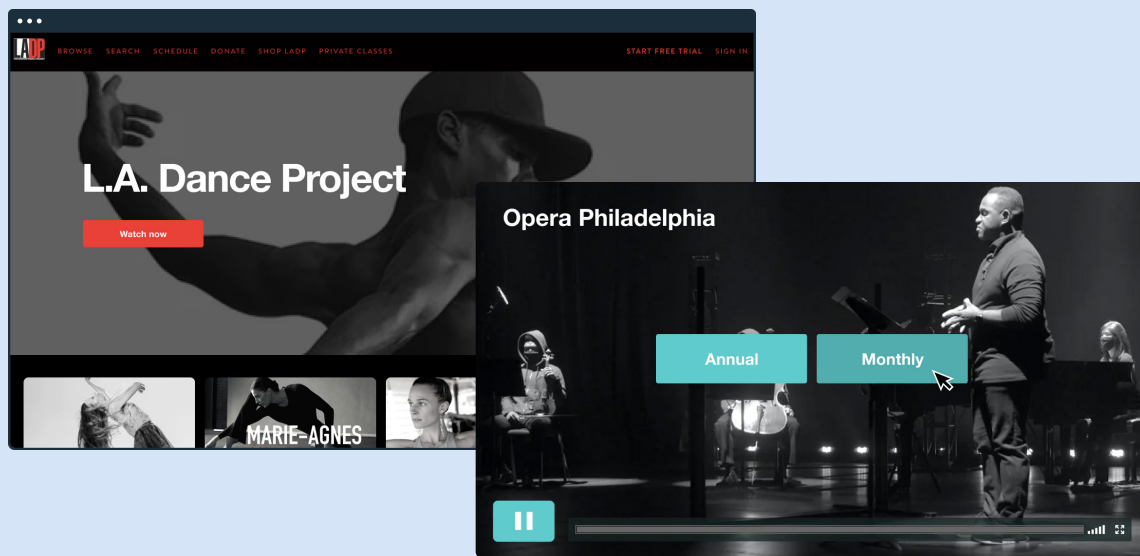
5. Choose a reliable, high-quality viewing platform.

Your patrons pay good money to watch high-quality performances from your organization. That remains true whether they're in a theater or on a couch. Conduct due diligence that the platform responsible for streaming your content is both reliable and beautiful. Another important factor? It needs to be easy to use and accessible across devices, operating systems, and playback options.

Streaming is here to stay — it's accessible to everybody. Before, people couldn't go to these massive arts institutions and see opera. Now, the world can experience art in a really innovative way.

Lucinda Lent

Executive Director,
L.A. Dance Project



Pricing models and how to monetize your channel

The big question most people have when starting an OTT channel is what to charge. How do you translate a live performance membership model into digital sales? Flexibility is key for performing arts organizations to iterate and figure out what resonates with their members.

When you choose a platform that offers multiple pricing and monetization options, you'll give your team the freedom to experiment, pivot, and try different pricing, free trial, and promotion options. Using a tool that has different options built-in means that you won't have to deal with the headache of transferring your content from platform to platform before you find the right fit.

OTT pricing models: What are SVOD, TVOD, FVOD, and live PPV?

The OTT world sure loves acronyms. Let's break down three common pricing models performing arts organizations use to monetize their content.



SVOD: Subscription video on demand

SVOD is when you charge your members a monthly subscription fee for unlimited access to your content library, like Netflix.



TVOD: Transactional video on demand

TVOD is when you offer your library of on-demand content for individual purchase or rental, like buying or renting a video from Google Play or Amazon Prime. Depending on the size of your content library, you can blend TVOD and SVOD into one model. For example, you may utilize TVOD to offer a selection of different performances that your audience can purchase individually, and a larger content library available as part of a monthly subscription (SVOD).



FVOD: Free video on demand

FVOD is an OTT strategy where you offer some or all of your content at no cost in exchange for a free registration on your channel, including contact information. From there, you can nurture your leads with additional content from other revenue streams, such as annual memberships, special events, or ticketed performances.



Live PPV: Live pay-per-view

Live PPV is when you offer a live digital broadcast that viewers can pay to watch only during the live viewing time. A lot of folks may think of sporting events, like boxing matches, when they hear “live PPV,” but it applies to any kind of entertainment content.

The difference between TVOD and live PPV is that live PPV is time-sensitive and TVOD is available for purchase any time. In the performing arts world, you may choose to offer a live PPV for a specific performance streamed at 7 PM on Friday, where TVOD is selling various bundles of video on demand (not necessarily *live streamed*) content.

Or, mix and match

Your OTT strategy doesn't have to be black and white. Many performing arts organizations opt for a hybrid approach — such as an FVOD and TVOD model — to grow their digital audience while also bringing in revenue. As such, it's important to find a streaming platform that permits flexibility with pricing models and structures, so you can find what works best for your community.

What do pricing models look like in action?

As a creative organization, your team will need to experiment to figure out what works best for your patrons and donors. Some ideas to get started are to offer existing members free access to your channel with a coupon code or access code. Allow them to register for free and enjoy your video on-demand (VOD) content library, then follow up via email with special promotions for paid content like live PPV events or TVOD performances.

Another strategy to get started with pricing your OTT channel is to offer live PPV of one-off seasonal performances, like *The Nutcracker*. Some theater-goers only go once a year for a seasonal show, and now they can do the same online. At the start of each new season, offer discounts for those who want to purchase multiple shows upfront.

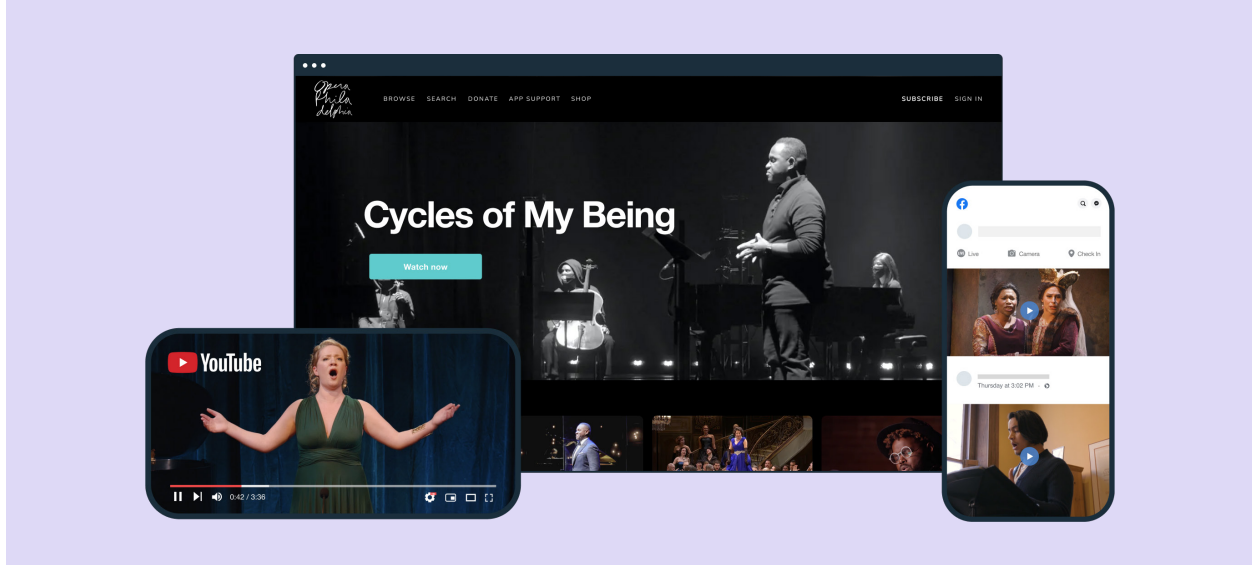
Of course, a popular choice for performing arts organizations is an SVOD pricing model. You can grant your existing membership and donor base access to a digital subscription, and also create a net new offering for future patrons.

A final strategy for monetizing your online streaming content is considering how sponsors can be a part of your OTT channel. In a traditional performing arts organization, sponsors are a huge part of the marketing strategy within the program and live experience. Sponsors could provide branded content, a pre-roll promotion before a broadcast, or live advertisements before paid performances. Expand your existing sponsorship opportunities and bring your partners into your OTT platform.

For 80 years, our way of doing business never changed. But now, the product we create can be watched live, rented, paused, rewind. When we finish a concert, we usually leave it online for a month or two, so people can engage with it and re-watch it, and we can attract new audiences to that content.

Zak Vassar

President and CEO,
Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts



Promoting your OTT channel

Now that you have all the strategies in place to start creating unique performing arts video content, how are you going to find these so-called new audiences and promote your channel to your existing members? The main promotion strategy is twofold: use social media and tap in to your existing member base using email, social, and direct mail.

Leverage social media

Leverage social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that embrace and prioritize video content. Live stream events as a teaser for your channel, or post behind the scenes content as a sneak peek. Ask existing members to tag friends in your posts, follow your channels, and offer prizes in return. Experiment with live social media content and publish trailers for your feature-length content.

Complement your OTT content with YouTube

Many performing arts organizations opt to use YouTube as an entry point for their OTT channel. Post teaser content, upcoming performance trailers, sneak peeks, or even sample content from your OTT channel on YouTube to educate and inform viewers about your OTT channel. It's important to see YouTube as a conduit to your OTT channel — they are complementary to one another, not mutually exclusive.

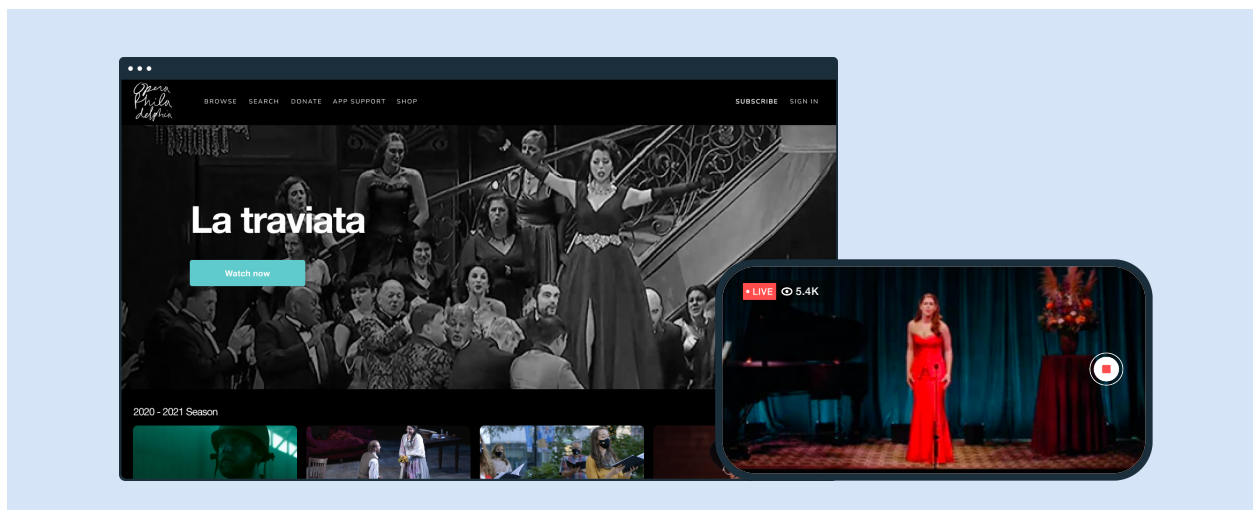
Tap into your existing member base

Your existing audience is an indispensable tool to grow your online presence. First and foremost, let them know about your channel! Send out an announcement via social media, email, or even a direct mailer. Provide coupon codes and discounts for patrons and donors, and encourage them to invite others to experience the OTT channel. Word of mouth can be a great way to grow your audience.

Success stories

Fellow performing arts organizations have validated and proven the success of pivoting online and starting OTT channels. Remember, performing arts is a community, never hesitate to reach out to fellow organizations to ask how they did it or if they have any tips. Here are a few success stories from performing arts organizations and how they grew their digital video channels.

Opera Philadelphia



Like many, Opera Philadelphia had to close its doors because of the pandemic. They quickly needed to figure out a way to provide content to their existing members and expand their audience. The team launched a full season of music, performances, and artist spotlights, and soon gained 1,300+ subscribers.

The channel launched with a blend of free and transactional video content streaming via branded apps across Android, Apple, Google, Roku, and Amazon devices.

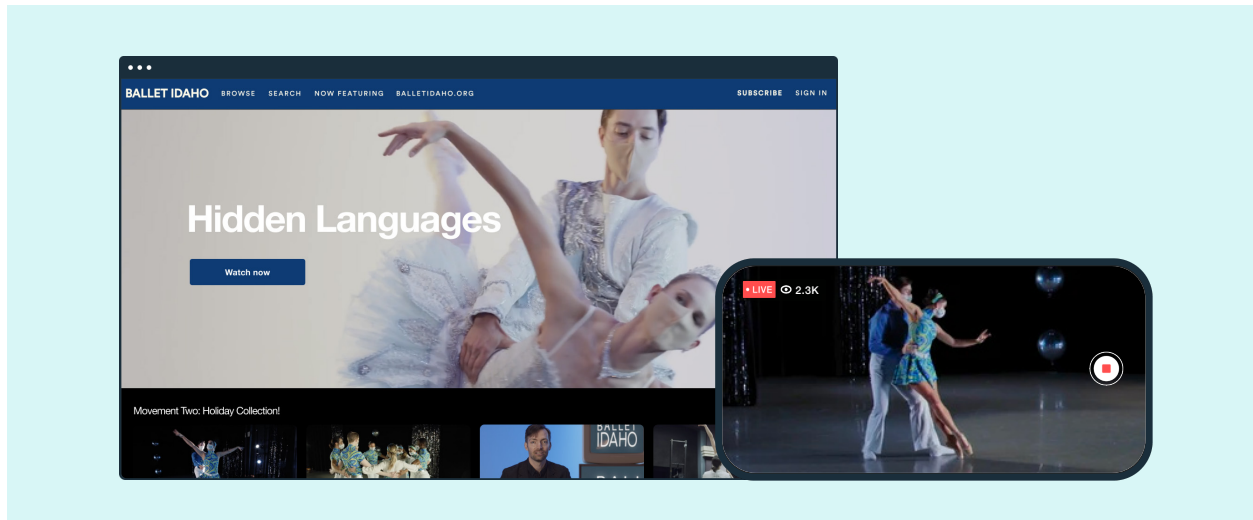


We're going to see where our OTT strategy goes. It does not feel like it's a temporary band-aid, or that it's a forced innovation. This is going to cause us all to up our game.

Frank Luzi

VP of Marketing and Communications,
Opera Philadelphia

Ballet Idaho



Ballet Idaho typically offered a full performing season, but when the pandemic hit, they [pivoted to an entirely online platform](#) and streamed their season. Dancers, choreographers, and other creators shared their art beyond the confines of the Boise, Idaho region. Ballet Idaho adjusted pricing and was excited to make its art more accessible overall.

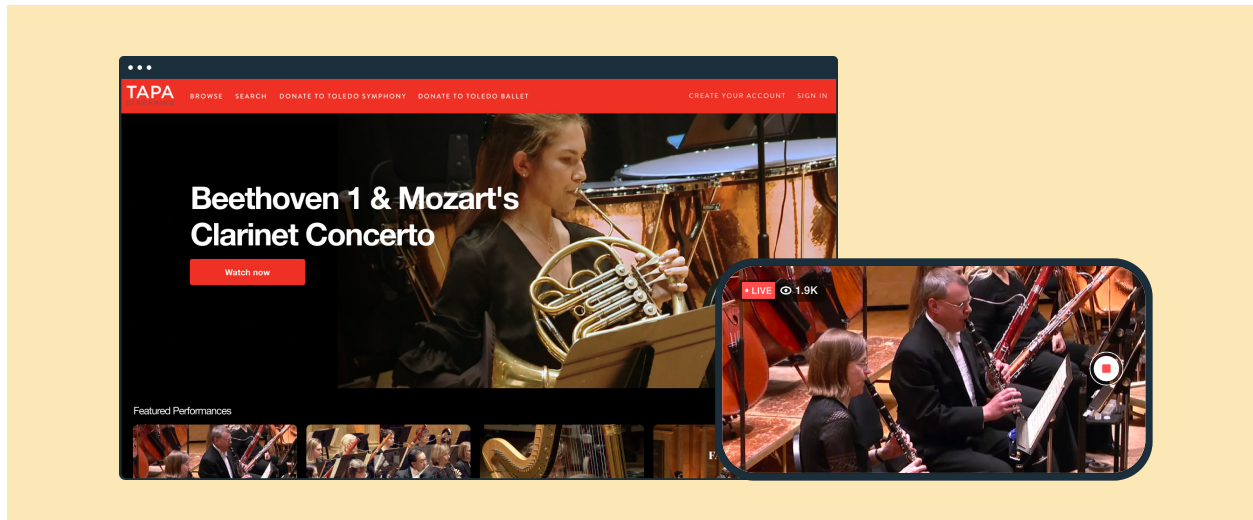
Alanna Love, Marketing Director at Ballet Idaho, comments on the impact on art consumption on a bigger picture scale: “We’ve been able to reduce the cost of individual pay-per-view events, and keep a similar price for our full season subscription. But because we are able to do that, now more people can watch the work. It’s a very exciting opportunity and something that could expand the reach of classical art in a way that it hasn’t before.”



Alanna Love
Marketing Director,
Ballet Idaho

One of the most fantastic things we realized is how much larger our reach ever was when we thought we are a very local company. We’re looking forward to creating beautiful art in whatever circumstances the world may throw us.

Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts



The Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts lost the opportunity to earn revenue using live, in-person performances, so they flexed their creative muscle with a digital season. After launching their holiday season online, they generated sales from 22 states and multiple countries within the first month.

They ultimately expanded their reach and their audience spanned 41 states and 10 countries. Weekly live streamed performances attracted 1,700 subscribers and changed the way TAPA thinks about their revenue streams and programs.

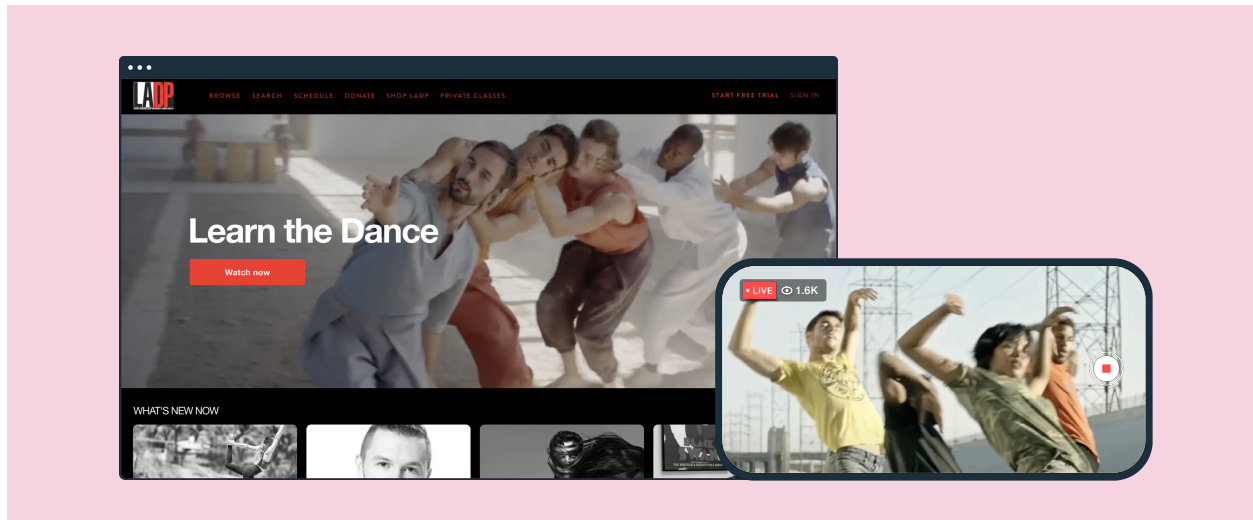


Until now, the value of our performances ended at the last note of a concert. All that's different now — we have an elongated life cycle of our programs. Vimeo OTT allows us to think of other avenues to use for distribution.

Zak Vassar

President and CEO,
Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts

L.A. Dance Project



The L.A. Dance Project (LADP) had to close their doors due to the pandemic and had to get creative with how to earn revenue in other ways. By utilizing their existing video content, filming upcoming performances, and offering digital dance and fitness lessons, they found a new source of revenue and expanded their audience from the L.A. area to around the world.

“The first time we put up a live stream for free we had 175,000 viewers. And that was viewers globally around the world,” says Lucinda Lent, Executive Director of LADP. The channel now offers hundreds of videos streaming across Android, iOS, Chromecast, and the web.



The hope is that our audience is ever-expanding because of Vimeo OTT and our ability to reach people digitally.

Lucinda Lent
Executive Director,
L.A. Dance Project

How Vimeo can help

Vimeo powers over 1,500 OTT subscription services around the world, including performing arts organizations, with its best in class, end-to-end, turnkey streaming solution. We're here to serve as your partner in bringing show tunes, opera, dance and classical arts to online audiences, wherever they are.



Let us take care of the tech

Our dedicated, in-house team of developers will build branded apps across iOS, Android, Apple TV, Android TV, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, XBOX, and Samsung Tizen — keeping you in the loop the whole way through. We aim to build, submit, and launch your apps within 90 days.



Top-notch support and onboarding

We guide you through creating your OTT channel and prepare you to launch your channel and charge subscribers. You'll have a dedicated account manager who will ensure you are comfortable navigating your account, and to brainstorm strategies.



User-friendly interface, back to front

Vimeo OTT offers an out-of-the-box solution that makes content management and distribution on the backend user-friendly. Our web templates make it simple to launch a branded channel, and easy for your viewers to browse and discover content.



End-user support: We handle your customers' questions

In addition to white glove support for your team, we also support your audience as well. If one of your patrons is having trouble with streaming, playback, or account issues, our support team is ready to help.



Tessitura integration + custom API

Vimeo OTT can work with the systems your organization already uses. We offer a direct integration with Tessitura, and with Vimeo's API, your existing third party platforms, too.

Drop us a line. Questions? We're here to help. [Contact us today](#) to see how Vimeo OTT can help bring your performances to life through beautiful, branded apps.