



MANITOBA OPERA

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MANITOBA OPERA TO HONOUR GAIL ASPER FOR HER EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP AND VISION WITH A GALA RECEPTION, SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

Manitoba Opera announced today that the company will honour Winnipeg native Gail Asper for her exemplary leadership and vision with a Gala Reception which will be held Thursday, September 13, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Manitoba Club, 194 Broadway, Winnipeg.

Canadian generosity is exemplified in Gail Asper, who is a tireless champion for arts and culture. A visionary dreamer whose courage and conviction inspire others to see Manitoba's vast potential, Asper inspires us to serve, to give, and to make our community a better place. Asper has created a legacy of philanthropy in our country which resonates from coast to coast, standing as a benchmark for those who will come after. Her decades of service to others have made an indelible and unparalleled imprint on Canadians, and it is fitting that Manitoba Opera is honouring Asper with the inaugural Gail Asper Award.

"We are thrilled that Gail has agreed to be honoured by Manitoba Opera and the entire community," commented Elba Haid, Chair of Manitoba Opera's Board of Trustees. "Gail is a supporter of so many organizations and causes. Her dedication, vision, and leadership have resulted in numerous dreams becoming a reality and have benefitted countless numbers of people, both now and into the future. We are so fortunate to have such a champion in Winnipeg."

The Gail Asper Award will also be unveiled at the Reception. In future seasons, Manitoba Opera will present this award to individuals who, like its namesake, also demonstrate exemplary leadership in a field of endeavor or pursuit of a visionary goal.

"I am very humbled to be honoured by the Manitoba Opera Association (MOA), an organization that is very near and dear to my heart," said Gail Asper. "My life has been immeasurably enriched since the MOA introduced me to the wonderful world of opera nearly 40 years ago. I actually owe them a huge debt of gratitude and feel like I should be thanking them! I sincerely hope this event strengthens the Manitoba Opera Association for the benefit of artists and audiences for many decades to come."

2. *MB Opera Honours Gail Asper, September 13, 2018*

Manitoba Opera has created an Honorary Committee to oversee the organization of the Gala Reception and to garner support for the event. It is being led by Honorary Co-Chairs: Brenlee Carrington-Trepel, Moe Levy, and Hope Morry. The Honorary Committee is comprised of Ruth Asper, David and Gursh Barnard, Mariam Bernstein, Marjorie Blankstein, Diane Boyle, John and Bonnie Buhler, Jean Giguere, Susan Glass, Debbie Gray, Peter Herrndorf, Richard Morantz, Howard Morry, John Stefaniuk, Deborah Thorlakson, Arni Thorsteinson, Sheree Walder, and Jayne Watson.

Also working on this initiative is Manitoba Opera's Special Events Committee chaired by Abbie Grieder (MO Board of Trustees). It includes Donna Balcaen, Diane Berger, Karen Bryk, Larry Desrochers, MO General Director & CEO, Elba Haid, (Chair, MO Board of Trustees) Luisa Matheson (MO Board of Trustees), Liz Miller (MO staff), Aleksandra Ossipova, Shelley Robertson, Alex Robinson (MO Board of Trustees), Sandra Schmidtke (MO staff), and Dustin Schneider (MO Board of Trustees).

There are a number of sponsorship opportunities available ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000, as well as commemorative program advertising. To book or for more information, contact Sandra Schmidtke, 204-942-7473, sschmidtke@mbopera.ca

Individual reception tickets will be available in late August and are \$200 and \$250 per person. Call 204-944-8824 for more information.

Manitoba Opera is the only professional opera company between Toronto and Calgary annually attracting more than 25,000 people to its productions and programs. The company's mission statement is to change people's lives through the glory of opera.

The 2018/19 season marks the company's 46th. Manitoba Opera is a vital part of the province's rich vocal tradition. It annually presents two fully staged mainstage productions held at the Centennial Concert Hall which also feature the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra; as well as a number of community engagement initiatives and education programming. Manitoba Opera has an annual operating budget of over \$2,300,000.

Gail Asper, O.C., O.M., LL.D.

Gail Asper was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is President of The Asper Foundation, a private charitable foundation which has spearheaded the creation of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. She received her call to the Bar of Nova Scotia in 1985 and practiced corporate and commercial law before joining Canwest Global Communications Corp. in 1989 as General Counsel, Corporate Secretary, and a Director.

A longtime supporter of the arts in Canada, Asper has served on the boards of Business for the Arts, Arts Stabilization, and as Chair of the Board of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre where she also co-chaired their capital and endowment campaigns. In 2005, she joined the board of the National Arts Centre Foundation and was its chair from 2013 to 2017. She is also a member of the board of The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and a governor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Asper believes strongly in the importance of supporting arts organizations and artists and has been recognized for her leadership with the Business for the Arts Bovey Award, The Governor-General's Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, and the City of Winnipeg's Arts Champion award. She also was delighted to receive Canadian Actors' Equity Association's Honorary Lifetime Membership Award for contributions to the arts. Asper has received the Order of Manitoba and is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

She enjoys singing and acting in her spare time and has been involved with the Manitoba Opera Chorus, as well as the Manitoba Bar Association/Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's lawyers' plays. Asper is married to Michael Paterson and has two sons, Stephen and Jonathan.