



MANITOBA OPERA 2013|14 Annual Report



Overview

Now in its 41st season, Manitoba Opera (MO) continues to play a leading role in our community as a cultural organization essential to the quality of life in Manitoba. Through music and song, Manitoba Opera offers insights into the human condition, rich experiences for learning about ourselves and educating our children. We play an important role in the development of local and Canadian artists, as well as contributing significantly to the lives of the people who live in our community.

The 2013/14 Season

Don Pasquale - November 23, 26 & 29 *La Bohème* - April 5, 8 & 11

DON PASQUALE

"...Manitoba Opera's new production teemed with soaring arias and vocal pyrotechnics delivered almost flawlessly."

- WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

"One of the best artistic performances of the past several years. It was superb entertainment."

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS

LA BOHÈME

"...a wonderful, wonderful production. I LOVED IT!...so well done that it's able to capture the hearts and souls of any age. BRAVO!"

- CLAUDIA GARCIA DE LA HUERTA

Above: Don Pasquale.

Cover: La Bohème. Photos: R. Tinker

Artistic Programming

Manitoba Opera's 41st season kicked off with a wild-west production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. Veteran performer, Peter Strummer returned to Winnipeg to sing the title role. He was joined by former Winnipegger, Nikki Einfeld in the role of Norina, her sixth leading role with the company. Making their MO debuts were Canadian baritone Brett Polegato as Dr. Malatesta, and rising American tenor Michele Angelini singing the role of Ernesto. Robert Herriot's stage direction was crisp and funny. MO Music Advisor and Principal Conductor Tyrone Paterson led the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in the pit, creating a lively and entertaining evening for everyone.

Following his success with last season's *Aida*, Brian Deedrick returned to stage Manitoba Opera's season closer *La Bohème*. The cast featured a number of artists making their Manitoba Opera debuts including Americans Danielle Pastin as Mimi, Eric Fennell as Rodolfo and Keith Phares as Marcello. Canadians Peter



Eric Fennell (Rodolfo) and Danielle Pastin (Mimi), *La Bohème.* Photo: R. Tinker

McGillivray as Schaunard and Giles Tomkins as Colline also made their first appearances with the company. Lara Ciekiewicz sang the role of Musetta and David Watson, a MO regular, sang the two roles of Alcindoro and Benoit. Daniel Lipton, Artistic Director of Opera Tampa, conducted the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. The production was musically rich and visually stunning. The Café Momus scene was boisterous with Lara Ciekiewicz giving a delightful performance as the overwrought Musetta.

Manitoba Opera's Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki prepared the Manitoba Opera Chorus for both productions. Carolyn Boyes prepared the Manitoba Opera Children's Chorus for *La Bohème*.

We are proud of the relationships we have with many of North America's finest artists. We offer exciting opportunities for artists to develop their craft and add roles to their repertoires. We give veteran performers opportunities to revisit roles and emerging artists the chance to share the stage with international stars. We are honoured that so many talented artists choose to perform at Manitoba Opera, bringing to life great stories told through beautiful music.



Don Pasquale. Photo: R. Tinker

Don Pasquale Artistic Team & Cast

Composer Librettists

Conductor Director Original Production Director Lighting Designer Set Designer Costume Designer Set and Props executed by Wardrobe executed by Stage Manager Assistant Stage Managers Gaetano Donizetti Giovanni Ruffini and Gaetano Donizetti Tyrone Paterson Robert Herriot David Gately Bill Williams Tony Fanning Helen Rodgers San Diego Opera Scenic Studio San Diego Opera Costume Shop Evan Klassen Kathryn Ball Leigh McClymont Sheldon Johnson



Projected Titles by

PRINCIPAL CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

Don Pasquale, an elderly bachelor Dr. Malatesta, his physician Ernesto, Don Pasquale's nephew Norina, a young widow Hop Sing, Don Pasquale's servant A Notary Peter Strummer

Brett Polegato Michele Angelini

Nikki Einfeld Alan Wong

Michal Kowalik

MANITOBA OPERA CHORUS

SOPRANO Linda Feasby Deborah Ginther Kadri Irwin Sarah Kirsch Kathryn Patrick Deanna Smith

MEZZO

Kathy Gawlik Donnalynn Grills Micheline Hay Christina Pyrz-Kowall Susanne Reimer Karla Weir TENOR Peter John (PJ) Buchan Michal Kowalik George Nytepchuk Craig Oliphant Lawrence Pauls Adam Sperry

BASS James Dutton Neil Grewar Richard Gusnoski Don Larsen Fred Simpson Jonathan Talbot

DON PASQUALE

"Manitoba Opera is to be commended for taking creative risks..."

- WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

Peter Strummer as Don Pasquale (above) and Nikki Einfeld as Norina (below), *Don Pasquale.* Photos: R. Tinker



La Bohème Artistic Team & Cast

Composer Librettists

Conductor Director Lighting Designer Set Designer Costumes provided by Set and Props provided by Stage Manager Assistant Stage Managers

Projected Titles by

Giacomo Puccini Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica with assistance from Giulio Ricordi and Giacomo Puccini Daniel Lipton Brian Deedrick Bill Williams Wolfram Skalicki Malabar Ltd. (Toronto) Edmonton Opera Robert Pel Kathryn Ball Candace Maxwell Sheldon Johnson

PRINCIPAL CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

Marcello, a painter Rodolfo, a poet Colline, a philosopher Schaunard, a musician Benoit, the landlord Mimi, a seamstress Musetta, a girl of the Latin Quarter Alcindoro, an admirer of Musetta Parpignol, a toy vendor A Custome House Officer A Sergeant Keith Phares Eric Fennell Giles Tomkins Peter McGillivray David Watson Danielle Pastin Lara Ciekiewicz

David Watson Peter Klymkiw Jonathan Talbot Paul Wiens

MANITOBA OPERA CHORUS

SOPRANO Christy Bergen Ashley Boychuk Linda Feasby Deborah Ginther Kadri Irwin Kathryn Patrick Rebecca Paulding Marlise Ritchie Ana Toumine Cathy Wach-Dueck MEZZO Victoria Borg Chelsea Froese Kelley Fry Kathy Gawlik Micheline Hay Celoris Miller Agata Ploszanski Christina Pyrz-Kowall Mavis Ritchie Karla Weir



LA BOHÈME

"I was entertained with beautiful voices, expert acting, excellent time period scenery and wonderful symphonic sounds resulting in 2 1/2 hours of pure enjoyment! I loved it, every bit of it; the wonderful music and beautiful sets. This opera was outstanding."

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS

Above: La Bohème.

Below: Eric Fennell (Rodolfo) and Danielle Pastin (Mimi), *La Bohème.* Photos: R. Tinker



La Bohème Artistic Team & Cast Continued

BASS

John Anderson

David Boves

Chris Caslake

James Dutton

Don Larsen

Eric Loepp

Paul Wiens

Fred Simpson

Jonathan Talbot

Alejandro Hinojosa

Keenan Lehmann

Alexander Mayba

Ben McIntyre-Ridd

Selwyn Sarmiento Brandon Ward

Anthony Leicht

Michal Kowalik

TENOR

Ben Erickson Russ Foster Peter Klymkiw David LaRue George Nytepchuk Craig Oliphant Lawrence Pauls Trygve John Ringereide Ernst Stiglmayr Adam von Lau

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Antonietta Bueti Shea Carter Alyssa Dalrymple Camryn Dewar Mairin Douglas Geraldin Padilla Alexandra Pereira

SUPERNUMERARIES

Connie Sarchuk

Tim Brenan William Jordan Thomas Miles Dennis Ng Scott Plett Aiden Ritchie Matthew Wall Tim Webster



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LA BOHÈME

"What a beautiful production, from the set to the music to the characters, everything was fantastic."

- JENNA KHAN

"Outstanding work!!! We are so lucky here in Winnipeg to have such talented, competent people producing rich cultural experiences for its citizens.

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS

Above: Keith Phares (Marcello), La Bohème.

Left: La Bohème. Photos: R. Tinker

Enriching the Opera Experience

A wide array of events and presentations were offered throughout the season to enrich the audience experience. Most were free or had a nominal charge.

OPERA PRIMERS

For each production, a 60-minute presentation which features musical excerpts, powerpoint, and DVD excerpts was given by music expert Don Anderson. Patrons had their choice of an afternoon or evening session and learned about the composers, stories, artists, and music for each opera.

The *Don Pasquale* Primer was held at the Fort Rouge Leisure Centre on Wednesday, November 13 and the primer for *La Bohème* took place in the lecture room at the Winnipeg Art Gallery Wednesday, March 19.

PRE-SHOW CHATS

The 20-minute pre-show chats were once again offered prior to performances at the Centennial Concert Hall.

Donna Fletcher, actor/singer/director, was the featured speaker at all three *Don Pasquale* chats. Announcers Michael Wolch, Chris Wolf, and Terri Klippenstein from Winnipeg's Classic 107 Radio each presented a chat for *La Bohème*.

GO FIGARO: AL RAE'S OPERA CHAT AND PRE-SHOW DINNER

On both closing nights this season, patrons had the opportunity to enjoy dinner and a half-hour presentation by comedian and opera lover Al Rae.

A western-inspired buffet-style dinner was held at City Hall's Grace Café for closing night of *Don Pasquale*, Friday, November 29; the three-course dinner for closing night of *La Bohème* took place at the Peasant Cookery on April 11.



DON PASQUALE

"This was an absolute delight – if music is salve for the soul, this production was a miracle cure."

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS

Above: Students from the Red River College International Business program at the Tuesday night performance of *Don Pasquale*. Staff members Darlene Ronald, Director of Marketing and Livia Dymond, Education and Outreach Coordinator in centre. Photo: L. Varga Below: MO General Director and CEO, Larry Desrochers discusses the rehearsal process at the MO Open House. Photo: J. Hiebert Bottom: A *La Bohème* Pre-Show Chat on the Piano Nobile



SEASON OVERVIEW WITH THE MET'S WILL BERGER

Opera expert, Will Berger from the Metropolitan Opera shared his insights into opera from Donizetti to Puccini, providing an overview of the season ahead. The presentation took place on Saturday, November 9 at the Manitoba Museum auditorium.

Mr. Berger is a writer, producer and on-air commentator for the Metropolitan Opera, as well as being responsible for the Opera Quiz. He is the author of numerous books on opera, including one on Verdi and speaks and writes on opera throughout the U.S.

WILD WEST NIGHT AT THE OPERA

Patrons were encouraged to dust off their cowboy boots and channel their inner "cowperson" and attend *Don Pasquale*, which was set in the wild west, dressed in their western wear. Manitoba Opera staff also joined in the fun and even conductor Tyrone Paterson made sure he had on his ten-gallon hat!

THE FEVER OF GENIUS: ART AND BOHEMIA IN 19TH CENTURY FRANCE

Art historian, Emily Doucet provided an hour-long presentation on the visual art of the 19th century in relation to the ideas of bohemia, the bohemian artist and lifestyle in Paris' Latin Quarter at the time in which *La Bohème* was set.

The talk took place Saturday, March 22 in the lecture room of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTISTS AT PROMENADE CAFÉ

A Parisian-themed afternoon in the heart of Winnipeg's French Quarter was held Sunday, March 30, enabling patrons to enjoy a variety of French pastries and coffee while taking in a Q & A with the *La Bohème* cast, conductor – Daniel Lipton, and director – Brian Deedrick. Larry Desrochers, Manitoba Opera's General Director & CEO led the discussion.

OPEN HOUSE

The biennial Open House was held Sunday, April 6 from 12 to 4 at the Centennial Concert Hall, enabling people to find out how opera is brought to life and get a behind-the-scenes look on a backstage tour. Over 100 people were able to visit the orchestra pit, go on stage and in the wings, as well as see demonstrations on hair and make-up and learn about the rehearsal process.



Above: Will Berger, Metropolitan Opera

Below Left to Right: Darlene Ronald, Director of Marketing, Livia Dymond, Education & Otreach Coordinator, Natasha Macdonald-Sawh, Patron Services Representative, and Michael Blais, Director of Administration at *Don Pasquale* Student Night at the Opera

Bottom: Lori Houston, MO Hair/Wig Designer chats with one of the Open House tour groups





OPERA MATTERS

Once again, essays by Board member, Robert Vineberg, providing insights into the operas, composers, and times in which the operas were created were posted on the company website.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Manitoba Opera annually distributes complimentary tickets through a number of service organizations so that people from all walks of life are able to experience a live opera performance. In 2013/14, tickets were distributed to the Independent Living Resource Centre, Manitoba Conservatory of Music and Arts, Behavioural Health Foundation and the YMCA/YWCA Learning & Leisure Centre, Mental Health Services.

REVERB: PATRON FEEDBACK FORUM

The patron feedback email survey, launched in the 2011/12 season, continued to be popular with Manitoba Opera patrons this season. Subscribers and casual ticket buyers who have provided their email addresses are invited to share their opinions on aspects such as the quality of the vocal performance, acting, staging, venue, pricing, and overall enjoyment of the production.

OPERA LIVE ON THE ROOFTOP

Manitoba Opera participated in the Winnipeg Art Gallery's Live on the Rooftop summer series for the first time this season. However, Opera on the Rooftop became "Opera Under the Rooftop" when high temperatures and the threat of thunderstorms the day of the concert, Thursday, July 4, resulted in the event being relocated to the air conditioned and thunderstorm-free Muriel Richardson Auditorium.

The full house was treated to over 2 ½ hours of music and song conducted by Tadeusz Biernacki with pianist Cary Denby, emcee Kathryn Patrick, and a 68-voice chorus. An array of arias, duets, ensembles and chorus pieces featured soloists Lara Ciekiewicz, Donnalynn Grills, Terence Mierau, and David Watson, along with Dawn Bruch, P.J. Buchan, Sarah Kirsh, Michal Kowalik, Kathryn Patrick, Susanne Reimer, and Paul Wiens.



Opera Live on the Rooftop



Special Events

DINNER AT DE LUCA'S

The always popular, sold-out dinner at De Luca's Cooking Studio was held in October. Guests enjoyed a night of good company, wine, cooking demonstrations and Italian cuisine, topped off with a performance of Italian arias by tenor Aaron Hutton.

OPENING NIGHT DINNER

In November, to celebrate the opening of the season, the annual Opening Night Dinner was held on the Piano Nobile. Following the opening performance of *Don Pasquale*, guests, donors, and other VIPs took in the post-show reception and had an opportunity to meet the cast.

BRAVO GALA

The sixth annual Bravo Gala was held in March at the Delta Winnipeg. Drawing 290 guests, the evening included appetizers, a three-course meal followed by dessert, live and silent auctions, dancing with the Danny Kramer Event Band, and performances by soprano Sarah Kirsch. Above: Guests at Bravo Gala, March 2014.

Below: Soprano Sarah Kirsch performs at the Bravo Gala. Photos: Artistic Impressions



Student Programming

STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA

This season, a total of 1,904 students, ranging in age from five to 75, attended the dress rehearsals of *Don Pasquale* and *La Bohème* through the Student Night at the Opera initiative. This initiative provides educational groups with an opportunity to experience live opera at just \$12 a ticket. Students from public and private schools, home schools, and music programs throughout Winnipeg and as far away as Russell and Swan River, took part in the program this year.

24 rural schools traveled a total of approximately 75 hours and 5,735 kilometres in order to attend the *Don Pasquale* and *La Bohème* Student Nights this season.

OPERA IN A TRUNK

This program was started four years ago as a means to enhance the experience for students attending the dress rehearsal through Student Night at the Opera or for teachers looking to introduce opera to their students in a classroom setting.

A trunk filled with props, costumes, books, games, CDs, DVDs, as well as a study guide related to one of the season's operas is compiled annually and made available to teachers on loan. This year the trunks were designed for *La Bohème*. Trunks for *Aida*, *Carmen, The Daughter of the Regiment*, and *The Magic Flute* are also available for loan.

Since the program's inception, over 1,000 students have been introduced to opera through the Opera in a Trunk program.



STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA - DON PASQUALE

"Manitoba Opera is always such a HUGE success with our students... students were raving about the experience..."

> - EDUCATOR, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA - *LA BOHÈME*

"It was absolutely wonderful. The beautiful singing and playing nurtures the soul. La Bohème is such a well loved opera and it was a thrill to see it, as well as introduce it to the next generation."

- JOANNE KILFOYLE

OPERA IN A TRUNK

"The trunk immediately captured the children's interest – and they LOVED acting out the synopsis with the props!"

> - DIANNE SJOBERG, PACIFIC JUNCTION SCHOOL

Above: Chilean students from St. James-Assiniboia International Student Program at intermission of *La Bohème*.

Below: Lara Ciekiewicz, Musetta in *La Bohème*, (back row, centre) on a visit to Christ the King School in March 2014.



Finance

Manitoba Opera's operating budget for 2013/14 was \$1,816,482. With a transfer of \$222,574 from its Operating Reserve Fund, Manitoba Opera posted a loss on the season of \$21,316. This marks only the second time since 2000 that Manitoba Opera has posted a loss on the season. Manitoba Opera's accumulated debt is \$240,065.

Grants

Funding from the Manitoba Arts Council (\$220,000) and the Winnipeg Arts Council (\$100,000) remained at 2012/13 levels. Funding from the Canada Council for the Arts was reduced from \$142,000 to \$134,900 representing the lowest level of support from the Canada Council since 1985.

Box Office

Subscriptions declined by 8% from 2,908 in 2012/13 to 2,683 in 2013/14. This number of subscribers is slightly higher than the 14-year average number of subscribers (2,642) since 2000/01. At \$329,303, revenues from subscriptions reached 95% of budget goal.

Don Pasquale sold the fewest single tickets of any production since *The Turn of the Screw* in 1998, resulting in single ticket sales reaching just 60% of budget goal.

At \$527,854 (85% of budget goal), the 2013/2014 season generated the fourth highest box office revenues of the last 10 seasons.

Subscription prices for the 2013/14 season averaged \$60.90 per seat, and single tickets averaged \$68.75 per seat.

Fundraising

Contributions from all campaigns were up over 2012/13. Sponsorships were up by \$10,000 (11%), and corporate annual gifts increased by 3%. Camerata gifts (more than \$1,250) were up by 11%; major gifts increased by 88%; gifts from individuals (less than \$1,250) increased by 7%. Fundraising from special events increased by 30% over 2012/13.

Gifts from foundations decreased by \$7,685 (12%) due to the completion of specific projects in 2013.



Expenses

Management continues to maintain good control of expenses, achieving savings in all departments, including productions.

Endowment Fund

To help solidify the long-term future of Manitoba Opera, the Board of Trustees established an endowment fund through The Winnipeg Foundation. Launched in 2009/10, gifts made to the Manitoba Opera Endowment Fund will grow over time and provide a significant stream of revenue to help Manitoba Opera continue to serve the community with meaningful and inspiring programming.

In 2013/14, the fund grew by \$19,937.85 including matching contributions of \$6,071 from Canadian Heritage through the Endowment Incentives program and \$711.40 from The Winnipeg Foundation. As of May 31st, the Manitoba Opera Fund has a balance of \$78,932.86.

LA BOHÈME

"I do not remember ever being so drawn into the action and drama on stage as I did on Saturday evening at La Bohème."

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS

"I enjoyed my first opera tremendously! I cannot wait to attend more. Bravo to Manitoba Opera on a stellar production."

- PATRON RESPONSE FROM REVERB FEEDBACK SURVEYS



Governance & Leadership

The Board of Trustees has made good governance a cornerstone of Manitoba Opera. The Board of Trustees operates by the principle that, as the governing body, it holds the organization in trust for the future benefit of the community. The Board of Trustees uses this principle as a guide to make important decisions about the organization.

The 2014 Annual General Meeting marked the final year of Jennifer Snyder's term as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Under Jennifer's leadership, Manitoba Opera has continued to strengthen recruitment, ambassadorship, and advocacy practices of the Board of Trustees. Four new trustees were added to the Board at the 2014 AGM.

Robert Vineberg was elected as the new Chair. Retiring from the Board of Trustees were the Honourable Chrisopher J. Mainella completing a seven-year term, and Carolin Taubensee serving four years as a trustee.

Trustees continue to play important roles in advocacy at local and national levels with their involvement in conferences and committees committed to strengthening the field of opera.

Trustee Elba Haid attended the Opera America National Trustees Forum in New York in February, while Robert Vineberg attended the Opera America Conference in San Francisco in June. Locally, Robert Vineberg was elected to the board of Manitobans for the Arts, an organization dedicated to the advancement of arts and culture in Manitoba.

General Director & CEO Larry Desrochers served on Opera America's Strategy Committee and was elected to the Board of Trustees for Opera America at the June Conference. Staff members Valorie Block, Darlene Ronald and Monica Wood also attended the Opera America Conference. In May, Darlene Ronald and Michael Blais attended the 2014 Canadian Arts Marketing, Development & Ticketing Conference put on by Arts Reach in Toronto. Larry Desrochers also attended the Opera.ca Annual General Meeting in Toronto in October, 2013 with workshops on the Lean Business Model.

The activities not only offer professional development opportunities for Board and staff but also demonstrates MO's commitment to serving as leaders in the cultural sector and to advancing the interests of the opera at home and afar.

LET'S TALK OPERA: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OPERA IN WINNIPEG

Over the summer, Manitoba Opera undertook a community consultation process - Let's Talk Opera - in which input was collected regarding the future direction of Manitoba Opera.

Two in-person discussions facilitated by Probe Research were held with subscribers, single ticket buyers, and donors at the Caboto Centre in June. An online survey, developed in conjunction with a marketing class from the University of Manitoba Asper School, was also sent to all patrons providing

email addresses.



Patrons at the Let's Talk Opera Community Consultation

Participants in the discussions and the online survey indicated that they clearly want Manitoba Opera to maintain a minimum of two fully staged productions accompanied by full orchestra at the Centennial Concert Hall. In fact, 35% of subscribers indicated that they would not subscribe, should Manitoba Opera move to another format of presenting opera in the community. Survey participants also expressed a desire for a broader selection of operas. Many opera companies face this same challenge these days: how to balance "old" favourites that will attract an audience against new repertoire unfamiliar to single ticket buyers.

Let's Talk Opera provided valuable feedback for the Board and staff on what the community wants from its opera company. Since the consultation process, the Board and staff have been working to find the resources to address the desires of the community while creating a sustainable organization.



Marketing students from the University of Manitoba's Asper School who developed, compiled, and analyzed the Let's Talk Opera online survey

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Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and financial support given by many individuals, foundations, businesses, and corporations in 2013/14, allowing us to bring opera to Manitobans. Listings include donations made between June 1, 2013 and May 31, 2014.



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You can make your gift go even further if your company participates in a matching giving program. Ask your employer for an application before making your donation to Manitoba Opera.

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Left to Right: Peter Strummer (Don Pasquale), Michele Angelini (Ernesto), and Alan Wong (Hop Sing), Don Pasquale. Photo: R. Tinker



MANITOBA OPERA

Lara Ciekiewicz (Musetta), *La Bohème.* Photo: R Tinker.