



MANITOBA OPERA

2016 | 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 • Executive Summary
- 6 • Artistic Programming
- 8 • *Falstaff* Artistic Team and Cast
- 10 • *Werther* Artistic Team and Cast
- 12 • Community Engagement
- 19 • Mentoring and Support
- 20 • Student Programming
- 23 • Special Events
- 26 • Finance
- 29 • Board of Trustees and Committees
- 30 • Staff
- 32 • Volunteers
- 33 • Governance and Leadership
- 35 • Partners in Opera
- 36 • Supporters



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manitoba Opera's 2016/17 season transported patrons to jolly old Windsor with *Falstaff*, then to bucolic Germany with *Werther*. Both productions were new repertoire for Manitoba Opera and were programmed in response to patron feedback which has seen recent seasons blending new with standard repertoire, for example, featuring *Of Mice and Men* and *Fidelio* alongside *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Turandot*.

In November, audiences were thrilled by Todd Thomas as the incorrigible Falstaff. His antics were thwarted by a lively quartet of Canadians including Lauren Segal (Meg Page), Monica Huisman (Alice Ford), Lynne McMurtry (Mistress Quickly), and Sasha Djihanian (Nannetta), with Gregory Dahl as the headstrong Ford. Role debuts were made by Monica Huisman and Gregory Dahl.

Lauren Segal returned to the Manitoba Opera stage in April as Charlotte in *Werther*. She was joined by John Tessier (Werther),

Keith Phares (Albert), and Winnipegger Lara Secord-Haid (Sophie). Role debuts were made by Lauren Segal, John Tessier, and Lara Secord-Haid.

Manitoba Opera saw an opportunity to use the production of *Werther* to speak to the community about mental health and suicide. An advisory panel which included mental health professionals from Mood Disorders of Manitoba and Manitoba Health was formed. Some of the resulting initiatives included lectures, suicide prevention ribbons being distributed at performances, and a panel discussion on suicide moderated by Ace Burpee of 103.1 Virgin Radio. This free event was exceptionally moving for the capacity audience.

A free Opera Class workshop for grades K-6 launched in the new year, received an overwhelmingly positive response with the 15 available spots quickly filled and a wait list of 13 more. Over 450 students participated in the workshops led by professional singers.



The demand clearly shows that opera has a place in the curriculum for elementary school children. Building the audiences of tomorrow must happen today.

In November, children in northern Manitoban communities were delighted when Manitoba Opera sent renowned children's entertainer, Al Simmons, to perform his one-man adaptation of *The Barber of Seville*. The Northern School Tour made 18 stops in communities such as The Pas, Wabowden, Thompson, and Flin Flon, reaching 3,200 captivated children.

The commitment of Manitoba Opera to engaging the community and exploring current issues through the lens of its productions has earned the company international recognition. Manitoba Opera was one of only two Canadian companies invited to participate in the Opera America Civic Action Group. The Group emphasizes learning new ways to engage community

members and to have an impact on the community through opera.

Manitoba Opera posted a loss of \$161,483 on the season, or 8% of the operating budget. The loss was due to a shortfall at the box office, though both productions came in under budget. However, Camerata membership (individual donor program) set a new record in 2016/17, with a 17% increase in donations over the 2015/16 season.

In the 2016/17 season, Manitoba Opera strengthened its role in the community, offered new repertoire to Manitobans, introduced new education programs, and received international recognition for its community engagement work. As one of Manitoba's leading arts organizations, the company looks forward to working with all its community partners in continuing to bring the power of voice to Manitobans in 2017/18.



Falstaff. Photo: R. Tinker

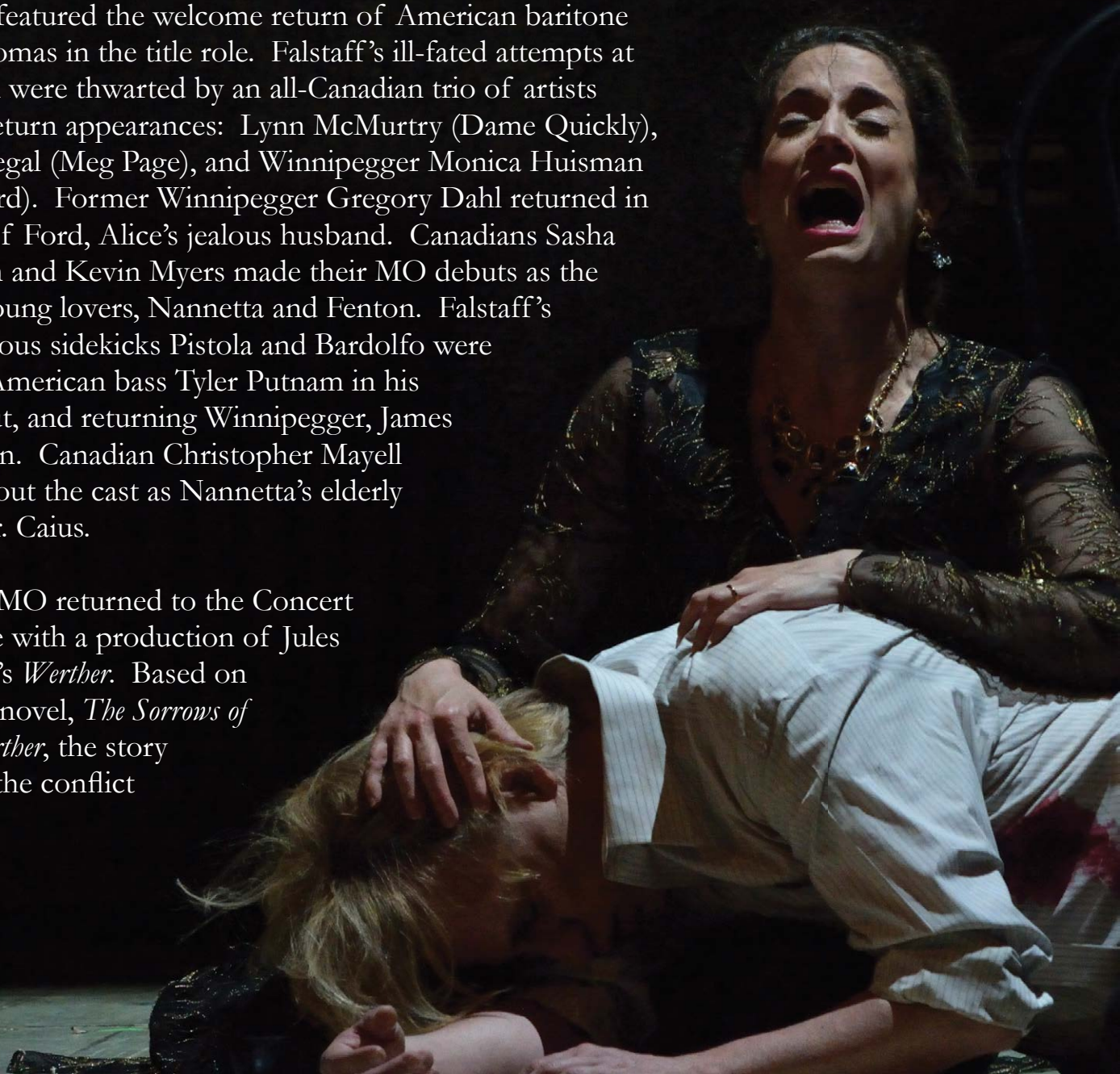
ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

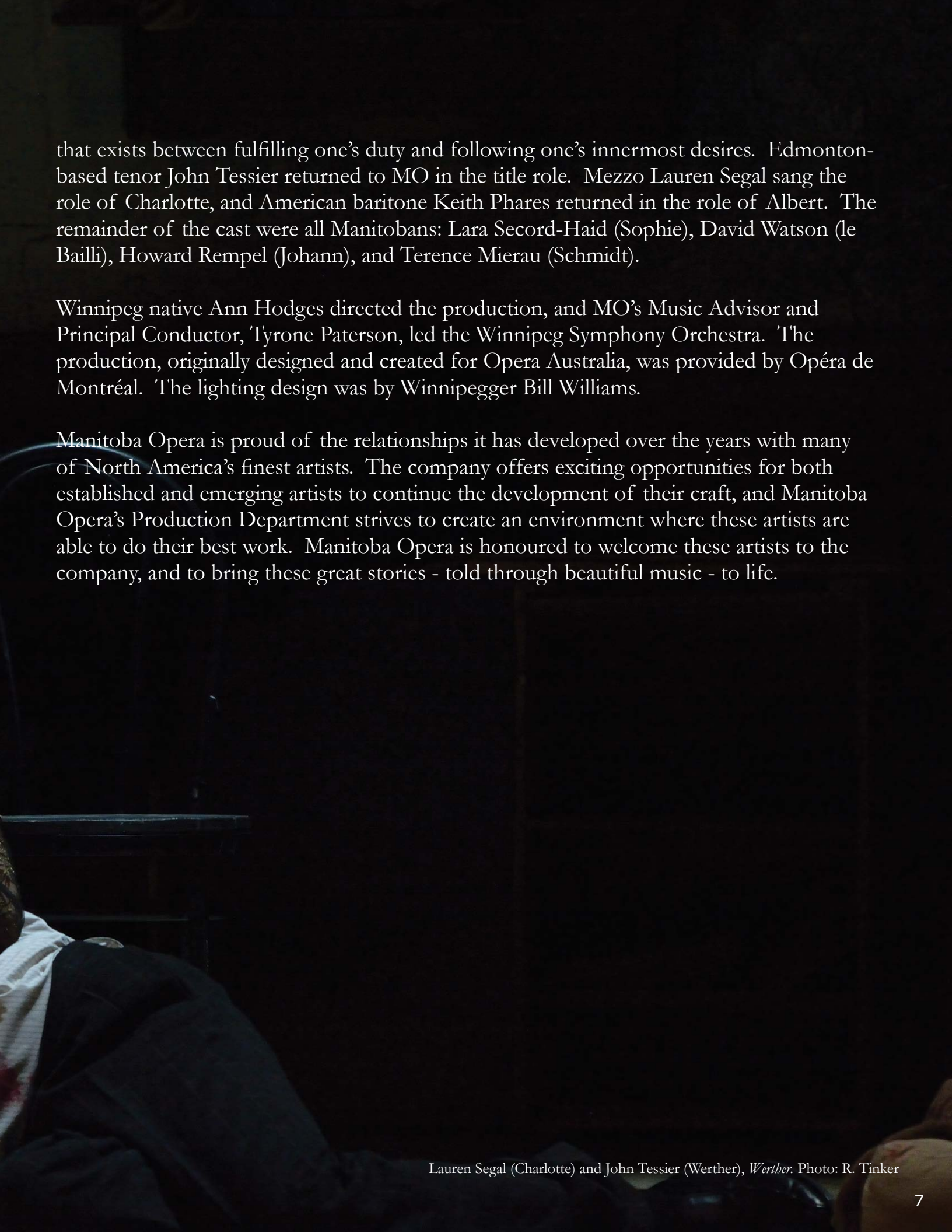
Manitoba Opera's 44th season featured productions of two operas never before seen in Manitoba.

The season began in November with a production of Giuseppe Verdi's final opera, a timeless tale of comic misadventure, *Falstaff*. Winnipeg native Michael Cavanagh directed the production, and MO's Music Advisor and Principal Conductor, Tyrone Paterson, led the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. MO's Assistant Music Director and Chorus Master, Tadeusz Biernacki, prepared the 40-member Manitoba Opera Chorus. The production's scenery and costumes, originally designed for New York City Opera by American stage designer John Conklin, were provided by Opéra de Montréal. The lighting design was by Winnipegger Bill Williams.

The cast featured the welcome return of American baritone Todd Thomas in the title role. Falstaff's ill-fated attempts at seduction were thwarted by an all-Canadian trio of artists making return appearances: Lynn McMurtry (Dame Quickly), Lauren Segal (Meg Page), and Winnipegger Monica Huisman (Alice Ford). Former Winnipegger Gregory Dahl returned in the role of Ford, Alice's jealous husband. Canadians Sasha Djihanian and Kevin Myers made their MO debuts as the pair of young lovers, Nannetta and Fenton. Falstaff's two hilarious sidekicks Pistola and Bardolfo were sung by American bass Tyler Putnam in his MO debut, and returning Winnipegger, James McLennan. Canadian Christopher Mayell rounded out the cast as Nannetta's elderly suitor, Dr. Caius.

In April, MO returned to the Concert Hall stage with a production of Jules Massenet's *Werther*. Based on Goethe's novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the story explores the conflict





that exists between fulfilling one's duty and following one's innermost desires. Edmonton-based tenor John Tessier returned to MO in the title role. Mezzo Lauren Segal sang the role of Charlotte, and American baritone Keith Phares returned in the role of Albert. The remainder of the cast were all Manitobans: Lara Secord-Haid (Sophie), David Watson (le Bailli), Howard Rempel (Johann), and Terence Mierau (Schmidt).

Winnipeg native Ann Hodges directed the production, and MO's Music Advisor and Principal Conductor, Tyrone Paterson, led the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. The production, originally designed and created for Opera Australia, was provided by Opéra de Montréal. The lighting design was by Winnipegger Bill Williams.

Manitoba Opera is proud of the relationships it has developed over the years with many of North America's finest artists. The company offers exciting opportunities for both established and emerging artists to continue the development of their craft, and Manitoba Opera's Production Department strives to create an environment where these artists are able to do their best work. Manitoba Opera is honoured to welcome these artists to the company, and to bring these great stories - told through beautiful music - to life.



Falstaff

ARTISTIC TEAM AND CAST

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
 Libretto in Italian by Arrigo Boito
 Based on characters from Shakespeare's
The Merry Wives of Windsor and *Henry IV*

Conductor Tyrone Paterson
 Director Michael Cavanagh
 Set Design by Olivier Landreville
 for Opéra de Montréal

Costume Design by Opéra de Montréal

Lighting Design by Bill Williams

Stage Manager Robert Pel
 Assistant Stage Kathryn Ball
 Managers Matthew Lagacé

Projected Titles by Sheldon Johnson

Production Personnel

Director of Production Sheldon Johnson
 Chorus Master/Répétiteur Tadeusz Biernacki
 Chorus Rehearsal Pianist Cary Denby
 Apprentice Stage Manager Zoë Leclerc-Kennedy
 Wardrobe Supervisors Barry Malenko
 Alena Zharska

Wardrobe Alterations Canada's Royal
 Winnipeg Ballet
 Hair/Wig Designer Lori Houston
 Hair/Wig Assistant Jill Buhr
 Hair Crew Jamie Dorge

Make-Up Designer Mariecel Tamayo
 Make-Up Assistant Andrea Yurkiw
 Make-Up Crew Christian Hadley
 Jean-Marc Lafond
 Melissa Hart
 Sarah Leighton
 Stephanie Porrior
 Theresa Thomson
 Projected Titles Cueing Cary Denby

Principal Cast (in order of vocal appearance)

DR. CAIUS, a physician
 SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, a fat knight
 BARDOLFO, one of Falstaff's cronies
 PISTOLA, another of Falstaff's cronies
 MEG PAGE, a neighbour
 ALICE FORD, wife of Ford
 MISTRESS QUICKLY, a neighbour
 NANNETTA, daughter of Ford
 FENTON, a young gentleman,
 FORD, a wealthy man
 Also Appearing:
 ROBIN, a page boy

Christopher Mayell
 Todd Thomas
 James McLennan
 Tyler Putnam
 Lauren Segal
 Monica Huisman
 Lynne McMurtry
 Sasha Djihanian
 Kevin Myers
 Gregory Dahl
 Keenan Lehmann



Lauren Segal (Meg Page), Lynne McMurtry (Mistress Quickly) and Monica Huisman (Alice Ford)

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Soprano

Emily Diehl-Reader
 Linda Feasby
 Svetlana Gharagyozyan
 Deborah Ginther
 Kadri Irwin
 Joanne Kilfoyle
 Sarah Luby
 Katherine Mayba
 Deanna Smith
 Cathy Wach-Dueck

Mezzo

Kelley Fry
 Kathy Gawlik
 Donnalynn Grills
 Micheline Hay
 Celoris Miller
 Christina Pyrz-Kowall
 Susanne Reimer
 Deanna Rempel
 Mavis Ritchie
 Karla Weir

Tenor

Chris Donlevy
 Russ Foster
 Nolan Kehler
 Peter Klymkiw
 George Nytepchuk
 J Craig Oliphant
 Lawrence Pauls
 Richard Ryland
 Ernst Stiglmayr
 Adam von Lau

Bass

John Anderson
 David Boyes
 James Dutton
 Michal Kowalik
 Don Larsen
 Elliot Lazar
 Eric Loepp
 Fred Simpson
 Ted Wiens

"The impressive cast of principals is among the
 finest assembled on this stage..."

Holly Harris, Winnipeg Free Press



Scenes from *Falstaff*. Todd Thomas (Falstaff), James McLennan (Bardolfo), and Tyler Putnam (Pistola)

Page 8: Lynne McMurtry (Mistress Quickly), Todd Thomas (Falstaff) and Lauren Segal (Meg Page)

Photos: R. Tinker



Werther

ARTISTIC TEAM AND CAST

Music by Jules Massenet
 Libretto in French by Édouard Blau, Paul Milliet,
 and Georges Hartmann
 Based on Goethe's novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*
 (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*)

Conductor	Tyrone Paterson
Director	Ann Hodges
Set Design by	Michael Yeargen for Opera Australia
Costume Design by	Barilà for Opéra de Montréal
Lighting Design by	Bill Williams
Stage Manager	Robert Pel
Assistant Stage Managers	Kathryn Ball Candace Maxwell
Projected Titles by	Sheldon Johnson



"The high quality production of this not-overly-familiar work is
 a strong closing to another fine season of Manitoba Opera."

Lara Rae, CBC Radio

Left: Terence Mierau (Schmidt), David Watson (Le Bailli), and Howard Rempel (Johann)
 Above: Lauren Segal (Charlotte) and John Tessier (Werther), *Werther*. Photos: R. Tinker

Principal Cast (in order of vocal appearance)

LE BAILLI, The Magistrate
 JOHANN, a friend of Le Bailli
 SCHMIDT, another friend of Le Bailli
 SOPHIE, Charlotte's younger sister
 WERTHER, a young poet
 CHARLOTTE, daughter of Le Bailli
 ALBERT, a young man, engaged to Charlotte

David Watson
 Howard Rempel
 Terence Mierau
 Lara Secord-Haid
 John Tessier
 Lauren Segal
 Keith Phares

Also appearing:

BRÜHLMANN,
 KÄTCHEN, Brühlmann's fiancée
 LE BAILLI'S other children:
 FRITZ
 MAX
 HANS
 KARL
 GRETEL
 CLARA

Michal Kowalik
 Deanna Rempel

 Jyoti Jhass
 Seanne Buenafe
 Michael Prokipchuk
 Keenan Lehmann
 Mary Zoe Delos Santos
 Kristian Cahatol



John Tessier (Werther)

Production Personnel

Director of Production
 Répétiteur
 Children's Music Director
 Children's Rehearsal Pianist
 Production Assistant

Sheldon Johnson
 Tadeusz Biernacki
 Carolyn Boyes
 Lisa Rumpel
 Holly LaJambe

Hair/Wig Designer
 Hair/Wig Assistant
 Hair Crew
 Make-Up Designer
 Make-Up Assistant
 Make-Up Crew

Lori Houston
 Jill Buhr
 Adrianna Oliphant
 Christian Hadley
 Jean-Marc Lafond
 Sarah Leighton
 Stephanie Porrior
 Theresa Thomson
 Cary Denby

Wardrobe Supervisors

Barry Malenko
 Alena Zharska
 Canada's Royal
 Winnipeg Ballet

Wardrobe Alterations

Projected Titles Cueing

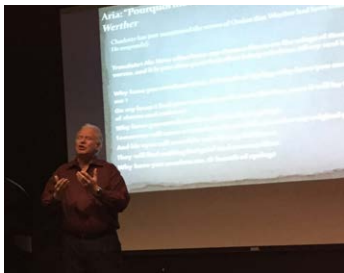
Scenes from *Werther* (L to R):
 Lauren Segal (Charlotte) and Keith Phares (Albert); John Tessier (Werther) and Lara Secord-Haid (Sophie); Lauren Segal (Charlotte)



Photos: R. Tinker

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For Manitoba Opera, being part of the community extends beyond the works presented on stage. Community engagement activities and initiatives provide context for the stage productions and demonstrate the relevance of opera to our 21st century lives. As well, Manitoba Opera serves the community in a variety of ways that are not directly related to a season production, but provide opportunities for a broad spectrum of people to experience opera in a wide range of forms. From sampling English beer at *Falstaff* to attending a deeply moving panel discussion on suicide, throughout the 2016/17 season, through community engagement, Manitoba Opera was a part of the conversation of our community.



Tenor Robert MacLaren performs at the Werther Effect Lecture.



Laura Loewen, pianist, Dr. Michelle Faubert, and tenor Robert MacLaren presented at the Werther Effect Lecture.

OPERA ACCESS PROGRAM

In 2016/17 Manitoba Opera distributed 707 complimentary tickets to performances of *Falstaff* and *Werther* through the Opera Access program.

Over 400 people were able to attend performances with tickets received through social service agencies like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Immigrant Centre, Urban Circle Training Centre, Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, and Winnipeg School Division EAL program. Dozens of tickets were also provided to the Winnipeg military community and their families and 114 tickets were donated to various provincial fundraising activities.

WELCOME REFUGEES INITIATIVE

Over 100 Syrian refugees and other new Canadians had their first taste of opera at *Falstaff*, thanks to funding from the Canadian Council for the Arts



and Sun Life Financial. Manitoba Opera was one of just 75 arts organizations in Canada awarded this funding through a new initiative that was created

"Thank you for making our visit memorable and encouraging for all of us. You can be sure the communities and families of these refugees will hear of your hospitality."

Fadel Alshawwa, Welcome Place

to welcome Syrian refugees to Canada and connect these newest members of our communities to arts organizations.

Tickets were distributed with the help of the

Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc., Accueil Francophone, and the Winnipeg School Division Adult EAL Program. An additional 66 tickets were also given to non-Syrian newcomers and chaperones.

Manitoba Opera provided a “What to Expect at the Opera” information sheet and opera synopsis translated into Arabic.



Newcomers from Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council's Welcome Place at *Falstaff*.

SENIORS' SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

Throughout July and August, with the support of Manitoba Opera, soprano Laurelle Froese, accompanied by pianist Christopher Kayler presented an hour-long “Summertime in Paris” concert at 19 retirement and assisted living residences and hospitals.



Performing at the Buhler Gallery in St. Boniface Hospital.

Stops included Kildonan House, Riverwood Square, St. Amant, and St. Boniface Hospital.

The program featured a selection of familiar war-time tunes, beloved Broadway classics, opera arias, and Parisian art songs.

“This experience has been incredibly rewarding and deepened my understanding of how deeply integral the arts is to every community,” commented the series creator, Laurelle Froese.



Guests at the *Falstaff* Opening Night Dinner.

PATRONS TREATED TO FREE SCREENING OF *FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS*

Manitoba Opera patrons were the lucky recipients of an advance screening in August of the film, *Florence Foster Jenkins*, based on the inspiring true story of the “world’s worst opera singer” and featuring Meryl Steep and Hugh Grant.

MO patrons were the first in Winnipeg to enjoy this inspirational celebration of the human spirit, the power of music and the passion of amateurs everywhere. The screening at Silver City, St. Vital was sold out.

CHORUS PARTICIPATES IN NATIONALLY BROADCAST MYSTERIOUS BARRICADES CONCERT

Members of the Manitoba Opera Chorus volunteered to be part of *Mysterious Barricades*, a live-streamed Canadian concert event in aid of suicide awareness, prevention and hope.

The concert occurred on Saturday, September 10 - World Suicide Prevention Day - at Canadian Mennonite University.

Thirty-six chorus members took part in Bernstein's "Make our Garden Grow" from *Candide*, resulting in an incredibly moving and powerful ending to the concert.

OPERA PRIMERS

For each opera, music expert Don Anderson provides an hour-long presentation focusing on the composer and synopsis. This season the *Falstaff* primer was held November 6 at the Deaf Centre Manitoba and the *Werther* primer was presented at the University of St. Boniface on April 23.

PRE-SHOW CHATS

For every production, a 20-minute presentation on the opera is held a half-hour before curtain at each performance. *Falstaff's* chats were presented by Simeon Rusnak, Classic 107 Radio host and baritone; in April tenor and vocal instructor, Robert MacLaren provided insight into singing the role of *Werther*.



Mysterious Barricades Concert at CMU.

SIT IN ON THE SITZ & CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR

A few days before Opening Night of every production, donors of \$100 or more have the opportunity to take part in a Q and A with the stage director and then take in a rehearsal.

General Director & CEO Larry Desrochers led both Q and A's this season with *Falstaff's* director Michael Cavanagh and Ann Hodges, the director of *Werther*.

CLOSING NIGHT DINNERS

Held on the Piano Nobile prior to the final performance of each production, the Closing Night Dinner offers patrons an opportunity to enjoy a themed buffet dinner and a pre-show chat. In November, *Falstaff* opera goers enjoyed an Old English-style dinner including bangers and mash; in April a French-inspired dinner was featured.



"If opera ultimately is about 'bel canto' – beautiful singing – then one need not look any further than Manitoba Opera's company premiere of Massenet's *Werther*, a lushly scored portrait as an artist as a young man that showcases a powerfully strong cast of principal artists."

Holly Harris, Winnipeg Free Press

Lauren Segal (Charlotte) and John Tessier (Werther), *Werther*. Photo: R. Tinker

FALSTAFF

LECTURE: VERDI IN THE SHADOW OF THE SYMPHONY

An exploration of Verdi's operas in the broader context of 19th century musical culture given by Professor James Maiello, Desautels Faculty of Music, University of Manitoba, was presented October 29 at the Deaf Centre Manitoba.

LECTURE: THE MANY FACES OF FALSTAFF

An illustrated talk by Brandon Christopher, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, University of Winnipeg, on the history of the character of Sir John Falstaff, from his roots pre-Shakespeare to the present day, was held November 9 at the Carol Shields Auditorium in the Millennium Library.

FILM SCREENING: CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

A unique opportunity to see the recently released, newly restored 1965 classic by Orson Welles featuring Welles as Falstaff was held November 12 at Cinematheque.

BEER TASTING

Patrons sampled the award-winning British beer Tanglefoot Premium Ale at *Falstaff*, courtesy of McClelland Premium Imports.



The Centennial Concert Hall lobby at *Werther*.

ADVISORY PANEL

The following individuals provided their time and expertise to help shape initiatives related to the discussion of suicide, mental health, and depression in conjunction with *Werther*.

- Tara Brousseau Snider, Executive Director, Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba
- Charlotte Sytnyk, Director of Development, Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba
- Nancy Parker, Provincial Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Manitoba Health, Seniors & Active Living
- John Melnick, Suicide Prevention Advocate

INITIATIVES AT PERFORMANCES

Out of respect for *Werther's* subject matter, the program featured two pages of resources available in the community for suicide prevention, hope, and mental health. Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba (MDAM) provided the content.

Trained volunteers from MDAM were also present at a table in the lobby at all performances for anyone who wanted more information on resources.

Prior to the Student Night at the Opera performance, MDAM's Education Coordinator, Griffin Jenkins addressed the audience to advise patrons of the content of the opera, and refer them to resources listed in the program and on display in the lobby. General Director and CEO, Larry Desrochers addressed the audience prior to regular performances.

Hundreds of suicide prevention ribbons were also distributed to patrons, upon their arrival, to wear at the performance.

Manitoba Opera provided information to schools on a MDAM workshop called "Building Healthy



Lobby at *Werther*.

Relationships", in advance of students attending the *Werther* Student Night at the Opera.

PANEL DISCUSSION: SUICIDE AND THE MEDIA

On April 12, a panel discussion was held at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to examine the impact of media reporting on suicidal behaviour and the importance of promoting mental health resources to prevent suicide.

Panelists included Dr. James Bolton, Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba and Tara Brousseau Snider, Executive Director of Mood Disorders of Manitoba.

Panelists Chelsea Hertzog and Corinna Voth, two young women with lived experiences, also spoke on the power of music in healing and recovery.

Close to 100 people attended the event which was moderated by Ace Burpee, morning show host at Virgin Radio. Audience members actively participated in the discussion and shared personal stories as well.

LECTURE: THE WERTHER EFFECT AND ROMANTIC-ERA PERCEPTIONS OF SUICIDE

Dr. Michelle Faubert, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Film, and Theatre, University of Manitoba,



Panel Discussion: Suicide and the Media with moderator Ace Burpee.

discussed the literary and cultural influences of Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and explored Romantic-era notions of suicide as a theme in literature.

The presentation, held April 20 at the Carol Shields Auditorium in the Millennium Library, also included select arias from Massenet's *Werther* performed by tenor Robert MacLaren and pianist Laura Loewen.



Understanding the Music of *Werther* with Dr. Colette Simonot.

LECTURE: UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC OF *WERTHER*

Dr. Colette Simonot, Assistant Professor of Musicology, Brandon University, explored the music of *Werther* in a presentation that included listening to excerpts, and was given April 1 at the University of Winnipeg. The lecture provided insight into the composer's approach to presenting this literary work as an opera, as well as historical and social context.

LECTURE & DISCUSSION: GOETHE, *LE WERTHER DE MASSENET ET LE STURM UND DRANG À L'OPÉRA* (GOETHE, MASSENET'S *WERTHER* AND THE STORM AND DRIVE)

Tenor Robert MacLaren and Professor Paul Morris' presentation discussed Massenet's celebrated opera in the literary and cultural context of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Goethe's sensational novel captivated an entire generation at the end of the 18th century and contributed to the rise of *Sturm und Drang* in German culture.

The lecture, presented in partnership with the University of St. Boniface, was given in French at the university on April 4.



Guest lecturers tenor Robert MacLaren and Professor Paul Morris.

FASHION FRIDAYS LAUNCHED AT *WERTHER*

A night at the opera is always an evening that features a dazzling array of personal styles on display throughout the Centennial Concert Hall. In celebration of this beautiful diversity, Manitoba Opera launched Fashion Fridays at Closing Night of *Werther*, May 5.

A roving photographer was on the hunt for patrons with “notable style.” Photos of notable style makers were posted on the company’s social media channels. Manitoba Opera patrons have inimitable style, whether in gowns, jeans, or anything in between!



Patrons participate in Manitoba Opera’s #FashionFridays.



FASHION BLOGGER DESIGNS PHOTO SHOOT AROUND *WERTHER*

This spring, Winnipeg fashion stylist and blogger, Tara Cole-McCaffrey (Patron of Dreams), in collaboration with Manitoba Opera, photographer Michael Sanders and local fashion artist Lennard Taylor, devoted a blog and fashion shoot to *Werther*.

Her blog post about opera and *Werther* included 10 images that were inspired by the story and characters and photographed throughout the Centennial Concert Hall.

MENTORING AND SUPPORT ROLE



Manitoba Opera continues to support the work of young producers and singers, as well as smaller arts organizations, particularly those that feature a vocal element, through mentorship, providing publicity and promotion, and education.

This past season Manitoba Opera worked in various capacities with the following organizations:

- The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Winnipeg
- Three Little Birds
- Flipside Opera
- Red Hen Productions
- Dry Cold Productions
- Manitoba Underground Opera
- University of Manitoba Desautels School of Music

Artistic development opportunities were also provided to Aaron Hutton who shadowed director Ann Hodges during the rehearsal process for *Werther*. As well, Briana Mason, a grade 11 student from Erickson Collegiate (Erickson, Manitoba) who is interested in pursuing a career as a theatrical make-up artist, was allowed backstage during *Falstaff* to observe make-up artist Christian Hadley in action.

Student Briana Mason backstage with make-up artist Christian Hadley

STUDENT PROGRAMMING

STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA

“It is a total experience.”

This season, 56 schools and education groups attended the dress rehearsals of *Falstaff* and *Werther* through the Student Night at the Opera program. For many students this is their first experience attending a live opera performance.

Student Night at the Opera is open to students from public and private schools, home schools, music conservatories, and through private music educators. Ticket prices are just \$12.50 per student to ensure price is not an obstacle to attendance.

Teachers give their students the opportunity to learn and grow in several art forms when they attend Student Night at the Opera. Studies show that attending opera is an active form of engagement that elicits critical thinking, artistic and cultural literacy, and personal interpretation.

“Opera is so much more than just understanding the words sung,” explains Val Pierce, EAL teacher at Grant Park High School. “It is a total experience, from thinking about the production beforehand to actually participating as an audience member. My students just loved the performance and I will definitely take them again. Thank you for making the opera so accessible to our students.”

“We had four Japanese exchange students in our group who thought it was an amazing experience. Thank you for making this affordable for our students.”

Melissa Klassen, Teacher
Major Pratt School, Russell, MB



Students at a B.E.E.P workshop playing with props.



Wolseley School Opera Class with mezzo-soprano Laurelle Froese.

OPERA CLASS

“Everything about it was fantastic.”

Opera Class is a new education initiative that was launched in 2016/17. Opera Class is a free, 45-minute in-classroom workshop led by a professionally trained opera singer.

Developed for grades K-6, the workshop offers a crash course on opera. Students participate in hands-on learning activities that explore storytelling through music. They also experience the power of live operatic singing with a performance by the singer.

Over 450 students experienced Opera Class this year. Singers Laurelle Froese and Susanne Reimer led 15 Opera Class workshops at schools throughout Winnipeg.



B.E.E.P. workshop at Governor Semple School with soprano Lara Ciekiewicz.

“Opera Class offered my students a new musical experience which was interactive and engaging.”
- Lori Schweiger, teacher, King Edward School

“[The singer] was very prepared to deliver an engaging educational experience. The stories, photos, music samples, script, props, games, music terms, choreography and singing examples were relevant and entertaining.” - Melissa Ryz, teacher, Dufferin School

“This was such a valuable experience for our students! Everything about it was fantastic. The students had so many questions and were so engaged throughout the entire presentation.”

Kara Dueck, Teacher, Linden Meadows School

OPERA IN A TRUNK

In its seventh year, Opera in a Trunk is a self-contained education resource designed for teachers to bring opera directly into their K-6 classrooms. Trunks are available for teachers to book at no cost for a three-week period.

Themed around popular operas, the trunks are filled with props, costumes, books, CDs, DVDs, and musical instruments related to each opera, as well as a study guide which includes hands-on music and drama activities, crafts, games, and more.

This season, the *Hansel and Gretel* trunk made its

classroom premiere. Themed around the popular children’s opera by Engelbert Humperdinck, students explored the music and story and participated in activities such as gingerbread house making, producing a puppet theatre, building a musical soundscape, and recreating Hansel and Gretel’s “Dream Pantomime.”

Other available trunks are based on the operas *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, and *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

This year, trunks travelled to elementary schools throughout Winnipeg, as well as Souris and Woodlands, and reached over 1,500 students.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE STYLED BY AL SIMMONS - NORTHERN TOUR

“The kids had an amazing time!”

In November, popular children’s performer, Al Simmons, travelled throughout Manitoba



“My friend Reece and I made a slight miscalculation with my William Tell routine!” - Al Simmons

to perform his one-man, 45-minute version of Rossini's classic comic opera, *The Barber of Seville*. Commissioned by Manitoba Opera in 2009, *The Barber of Seville*, *Styled by Al Simmons* has been performed for thousands of students and continues to be a school favourite.

Al visited 16 schools (grades K-8) in 12 Manitoban communities including Portage la Prairie, Oakville, Neepawa, Gladstone, Dauphin, Swan River, The Pas, Flin Flon, Wabowden, Thompson, Grand Rapids, and Gypsumville. The tour also included free performances at the Thompson Public Library and The Pas Library.

Reflecting on the tour, Al remarked:
 “What relevance does a 200-year-old European opera have for children, especially Indigenous kids in Northern Manitoba? Well, it turns out *The Barber of Seville*'s story does resonate with today's youth and the music still touches the soul. Every day for 15 days I experienced an amazing thing: I saw students genuinely touched by music.”

DISCOVER OPERA

“The students loved it!”

Offered to schools at no cost, additional education opportunities that reached more than 750 students across Winnipeg include the following:

I Love to Read Month

Manitoba Opera visited schools throughout Winnipeg School Division for *I Love to Read Month*. Chorus members Susanne Reimer and Fred



Soprano Susanne Reimer reads to grade 1 and 2 students at River Elm School.

Simpson read Tess Weaver's *Opera Cat* to over 250 students from grades K-6.

“The students loved it! Thank you so much for the opportunity!” - Brittanie Haworth, teacher/librarian, Laura Secord School

B.E.E.P. (Balanced Experiential Education Program)

In July and August, Manitoba Opera introduced the art form to 500 students through Seven Oak School Division's B.E.E.P., an activity-based summer learning program.

Students from grades 1-8 participated in singing exercises, music activities, costume displays and dress-up, and were treated to a performance by soprano Lara Ciekiewicz.

Opera workshops took place at Margaret Park Community School, Elwick Community School, O.V. Jewitt School, Governor Semple School, and Constable Edward Finney School.




“Thank you so much for choosing us as one of the venues for the tour! We are so grateful and the kids had an amazing time!”

Amanda Sanders, Library Assistant
 Thompson Public Library

Al Simmons at The Pas Library with some attendees after the show.

DINNER AT DE LUCA'S



The annual Dinner at De Luca's took place in the spring on May 11. The evening began with a reception, followed by a performance and seated dinner with cooking demonstrations throughout. Guests enjoyed drinks at the bar, hors d'oeuvres, table wine from Poplar Grove winery, cooking demonstrations from Chef Mike Brown and authentic Italian cuisine. Soprano Andrea Lett serenaded the audience with works by composers Puccini, Thomas and Donizetti. Andrea was accompanied by Lisa Rumpel. Abbie Grieder won the raffle prize for a private wine tasting provided by Poplar Grove.

Chef Mike prepares food at Dinner at De Luca's.

SPECIAL EVENTS



Manitoba Opera Chorus Master and Assistant Music Director, Tadeusz Biernacki, tenor Adam Sperry, and soprano Ainsley Wray perform at the Camerata Event.

OPENING NIGHT DINNER

The Opening Night Dinner was held on the Piano Nobile prior to *Falstaff*, in celebration of the beginning of Manitoba Opera's 2016/17 season. Guests arrived to a champagne reception and hors d'oeuvres. The reception and dinner were catered by Bergmann's on Lombard. Following the performance of *Falstaff*, guests were invited to meet the cast at the post-show reception.

CAMERATA EVENT

On April 13, Camerata members were invited to join MO at one of Winnipeg's finest heritage homes, "Moss House," for a reception. The 60 guests in attendance had a chance to meet the board and staff, as well as the talented artists who brought MO's production of Massenet's romantic tragedy, *Werther* to life. The evening began with wine and hors d'oeuvres. WOW Hospitality catered and Banville and Jones Wine Co. provided wine selections.

Guests gathered in the studio where soprano Ainsley Wray and tenor Adam Sperry performed opera selections accompanied by Manitoba Opera Chorus Master and Assistant Music Director, Tadeusz Biernacki. Everyone joined in on "Libiamo" from *La Traviata*.



"...it was superb...Add a dose of hilarious and voices that take you to heaven and you've got this performance of *Falstaff*. Felt like all my Christmases came at once."

Christine Duyck, Patron

Falstaff. Photo: R. Tinker



Akoulina Connell, CEO, Manitoba Arts Council, volunteer Lena Horne and Rob Vineberg, MO Past Chair, Board of Trustees.

JOINT-BOARD RECEPTION

Annually Artspace, Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall, Manitoba Museum, Manitoba Opera, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra host a joint reception to recognize the contributions board members make to their respective companies. This year MO hosted the event on the opening night of *Werther*. Bergmann's catered the hors d'oeuvres and the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall provided wine and prosecco.

CORPORATE RECEPTION

Prior to the Tuesday performance of *Werther*, Manitoba Opera held a reception for the organization's corporate donors in appreciation of their support. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres catered by Bergmann's and an open bar of wine and prosecco. The reception took place in the Red Room Extension.



AWARD-WINNING DESIGN

Manitoba Opera's 2016/17 season marketing images for *Falstaff* and *Werther*, designed by McKim Communications Group, received this year's Signature Award for Best Poster (Single or Series).

The Signature Awards is an annual celebration of local creative talent in advertising, marketing, and design with judging by an international panel of industry peers.



Garth Grieder, Nancy Phillips and Abbie Grieder, Board of Trustees, at Dinner at DeLuca's.

FINANCE

Manitoba Opera posted a deficit of \$161,483 representing 8% of its operating budget for 2016/17 of \$2,102,941. The accumulated debt is now \$461,647, down from \$654,000 in 2000.

GRANTS

Funding from the Winnipeg Arts Council remained at \$135,000. An additional grant of \$25,000 was received during 2015/16 and recognized in 2016/17. Manitoba Arts Council grant remained at \$220,000. The Province of Manitoba provided permanent operating funding of \$150,000 augmented with a special grant of \$25,000. This replaced the special grant from the Manitoba Arts Council in 2015/16. Funding from the Canada Council for the Arts remained at \$134,900.

BOX OFFICE

Subscriptions decreased from 2,690 in 2015/16 to 2,302 in 2016/17. Single tickets decreased from 2,469 in 2015/16 to 1,681 in 2016/17. Total box office revenues decreased by 21% from \$511,565 in 2015/16 to \$404,541 in 2016/17. Subscription prices for the 2015/16 season averaged \$57.94 per ticket, and single tickets averaged \$71.30 per seat. Subscription prices for the 2016/17 season averaged \$59.26, and single tickets averaged \$62.42.

FUNDRAISING

Overall fundraising of \$577,040 was achieved in 2016/17. Camerata donations increased by 17% to \$140,191 in 2016/17 from \$119,912 in 2015/16. Major gifts were \$72,752 in 2016/17 versus \$127,386 in 2015/16. Cash sponsorships dipped by \$3,000 in 2016/17 to \$121,300 from \$124,300 in 2015/16. Gifts from foundations were \$100,000 for community engagement activities and specific projects in 2016/17 compared to \$95,000 in 2015/16.

Net proceeds from Special Events were \$10,581 in 2016/17 compared to \$48,930 in 2015/16. The Bravo Gala was discontinued in 2016/17 and the Development Department was restructured to focus on donor relations and individual giving.



Falstaff. Photo: R. Tinker



"John Tessier donne une superbe interprétation du rôle titre de Werther..."

Pierre Meunier, *Musique Classique à Winnipeg*

Translation:

"John Tessier gives a beautiful interpretation of the title role of Werther..."

John Tessier (Werther) and Lara Secord-Haid (Sophie), *Werther*. Photo: R. Tinker



Cast of *Werther*. Photo: R. Tinker

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS AND IN-KIND SPONSORSHIPS

In the normal course of operations, Manitoba Opera exchanges tickets for its productions in consideration for various goods and services. These transactions are accounted for in the statement of operations at the fair value of the tickets exchange which amounted to \$91,089.

Similarly, Manitoba Opera receives in-kind contributions related to donated advertising, marketing, and musician services. These services were recorded at their fair value in the statement of operations at \$141,570.

EXPENSES

On the expense side of the budget, management achieved savings in all departments, as well as bringing all the productions in under budget.

ENDOWMENT

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 2016/17, the fund grew by \$42,321 including matching contributions of \$21,226 from Canadian Heritage through the Endowment Incentives program and \$3,252 from The Winnipeg Foundation. As of May 31st, the Manitoba Opera Fund has a balance of \$266,784.



Gregory Dahl (Ford) and Todd Thomas (Falstaff), *Falstaff*.
Photo: R. Tinker

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◇ Retired during season

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Larry Desrochers,
General Director & CEO

Tyrone Paterson
Musical Advisor & Principal Conductor

Tadeusz Biernacki,
Assistant Music Director & Chorus Master

Claudia Alvares
Development Coordinator
(Until August 2016)

Michael Blais
Director of Administration

Judy Braun
Communications Coordinator
& Patron Services Representative

Livia Dymond
Education and Outreach Coordinator

Alicia Faucher
Executive Assistant to the General Director & CEO
(Since September 2016)

Sheldon Johnson
Director of Production

Liz Miller
Annual Giving Manager
(Since September 2016)

Darlene Ronald
Director of Marketing

Sandra Schmidtke
Grants and Corporate Gifts Manager
(Since September 2016)

Dale Sulymka
Chief Financial Officer

Sophie Waldman
Interim Education & Outreach Coordinator
(Until August 2016)

Monica Wood
Director of Development
(Until September 2016)

"...the fun and hilarity starts from [*Falstaff's*] opening scene and carries through right until the grand and boisterous finale."

Travel Manitoba

Manitoba Opera staff take in a Winnipeg Goldeyes game.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are essential to the success of Manitoba Opera. Whether they are helping in the office or at performances, we are so grateful for their hard work. This season, our incredible volunteers donated over 600 hours of their time.

Carol Beardsley
Jan Carmichael
Margot Christie
Donna Cuming
Marina Dalton
Hedie Epp
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Gail Fine
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Teresa Tacchi
Maria Tschritter
Robert Vineberg
Ljiljana Zlatanovic-Kovacevic



Teresa Tacchi, volunteer, Judy Braun, staff, and Maggie Kahler, volunteer at *Werther*.



Volunteers at the Volunteer Reception held at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg on June 28.



"Manitoba Opera does a phenomenal job in offering education events about upcoming operas."

Andrea Rankin-Scott, Patron

Volunteers Hedie Epp and Rita Greco at *Falstaff*.



Terence Mierau (Schmidt), David Watson (Le Bailli), and Howard Rempel (Johann), *Werther*. Photo: R. Tinker

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Board of Trustees has made good governance a cornerstone of Manitoba Opera. As the governing body, the Board of Trustees operates by the principle that it holds the organization in trust for the present and future benefit of the community.

The 2016/17 Annual General Meeting marked the completion of Elba Haid's first year as Chair of the Board of Trustees. With Manitoba Opera's long-term success in mind, Elba focused her efforts on building the infrastructure of the organization. Her leadership has guided the company as it developed and restructured its staff, built new community relationships, and continued its role as a leader in the opera field.

At the Annual General Meeting, Daniela Ignat, Lori Yorke, and Maria Mitousis were elected to the board, having been appointed to the board during the season. Dustin Schneider was also elected to the board as a new trustee.

Current trustees re-elected were Brent Bottomley, Abbie Grieder, Leona Herzog, Luisa Matheson, and Dr. Bill Pope.

Returning trustees in mid-terms are Peter George, Elba Haid, Sue Jurkovic-Bracken, Dr. Hermann Lee, Alex Robinson, Dr. Jeffrey Sisler, and Robert Vineberg.

Manitoba Opera is thankful for the leadership and service of Wayne Benson, Dr. Amanda Huminicki, and Dr. Anthony Iacopino who resigned from the board this season.

The Governance Committee continued its work to develop and update policies for Manitoba Opera. Originally drafted in 2008, the Gift Acceptance Policy was revised and approved by the Board of Trustees at the May board meeting. This policy is a guiding document that forms the basis for Manitoba Opera's fundraising practices and procedures. The committee has also begun the process of reviewing the Human Resource Policy and identified a review of the Manitoba Opera Bylaws as the committee's next major governance project.

Staff have also continued their professional development. In August, Director of Administration, Michael Blais participated in Opera

America's Leadership Intensive Program. As one of two Canadian candidates selected, Michael joined 13 other opera professionals in New York for a week-long session to build essential leadership skills, foster strong professional connections, and address strategic issues in the opera field.



Lynne McMurtry (Mistress Quickly) and Todd Thomas (Falstaff), *Falstaff*. Photo: R. Tinker

This season, Manitoba Opera was selected as one of two Canadian companies to participate in Opera America's newly formed Civic Action Group. This two-year initiative is designed to build the field's capacity for strengthening communities through opera. In December, General Director & CEO, Larry Desrochers and Director of Marketing, Darlene Ronald joined representatives from five other opera companies at Opera America headquarters in New York to discuss deepening their service to communities through opera.

Feedback from the initial meeting was shared with the field at Opera America's annual conference in

May. Darlene Ronald and Education and Outreach Coordinator, Livia Dymond attended the conference as representatives for Manitoba Opera.

Judy Braun, Communications Coordinator and Patron Services Representative, participated in the Advertising Association of Winnipeg's Digital Marketing seminar in February 2017. Judy furthered her knowledge of the current tactics and strategies in web and digitally based marketing.

The Development staff, Alicia Faucher, Elizabeth Miller, and Sandra Schmidtke attended the Western Canada Fundraising Conference where they learned about the best practices in analyzing fundraising campaigns, deepening donor relationships, and writing sponsorship proposals.

Larry Desrochers continues to serve as a member of the Board of Directors for Opera America, serving on the Membership, Artistic, and Governance Committees. He also serves on the Strategy Committee for Opera.ca and the Governance Committee for Manitobans for the Arts.

Conference participation, committee work and special programs at Opera America not only offer professional development opportunities for board and staff, but also demonstrates Manitoba Opera's commitment to leadership in the cultural sector and to advancing the interests of opera locally, nationally, and internationally.



Werther. Photo: R. Tinker

PARTNERS IN OPERA

Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and financial support given by many individuals, foundations, businesses, and corporations in 2016/17, allowing it to bring live opera to Manitobans. Listings include donations made between June 1, 2016, and May 31, 2017.

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Season Sponsors



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Werther. Photo: R. Tinker

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Gregory Dahl (Ford) and Todd Thomas (Falstaff),
Falstaff. Photo: R. Tinker

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Lynne McMurtry (Mistress Quickly), Lauren Segal (Meg Page), Sasha Djihanian (Nannetta), and Monica Huisman (Alice Ford), *Falstaff*.
Photo: R. Tinker

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Werther. Photo: R. Tinker

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"For fans of good music and good fun it's not to be missed.
 The [*Falstaff*] opening night ovation was
 one of the loudest I've heard for the company."

Lara Rae, CBC Radio



James McLennan (Bardolfo) and Todd Thomas (Falstaff). *Falstaff*. Photo: R. Tinker



Tenor John Tessier at CJOB.



Todd Thomas (Falstaff), James McLennan (Bardolfo), and Tyler Putnam (Pistola), *Falstaff*. Photo: R. Tinker

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"L'une des plus belle réussites du Manitoba Opera des récentes années..."

Pierre Meunier, *La Liberté*

Translation: One of the most glorious achievements of the Manitoba Opera in recent years.

Sasha Djihanian (Nannetta) and Christopher Mayell (Dr. Caius), *Falstaff*. Photo: R. Tinker

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Werther shoot for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Lauren Segal (Charlotte) and John Tessier (Werther).

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