



MANITOBA OPERA

2015 | 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manitoba Opera (MO) capped off its 2015/2016 season in April with a gripping production of the contemporary American masterpiece *Of Mice and Men* by Carlisle Floyd, marking only the third time in the company's 43-year history of programming an American opera.

In the past two seasons, programming has included *Fidelio* and *Of Mice and Men*, and the upcoming season features two operas, *Falstaff* and *Werther*, which are both new repertoire for Manitoba Opera. These programming choices are in response to a call from subscribers for Manitoba Opera to offer a broader range of operas. By the end of the 2016/2017 season, four of the six operas presented by the company will be new repertoire for Manitoba Opera. Future programming will continue to include top 10 masterpieces, traditional repertoire, and Manitoba premieres.

Strong casting remains a hallmark of Manitoba Opera productions. *The Marriage of Figaro* featured an all-Prairie cast led by two Winnipeg sopranos, Andriana Chuchman and Lara Ciekiewicz. Gordon Bintner, who heads to Oper Frankfurt in December, made his role debut as Figaro. After his performance as the Count, Daniel Okulitch was featured on the cover of *Opera News*.

In *Of Mice and Men*, Michael Robert Hendrick was riveting in his MO debut in the role of Lennie. Former Winnipeggers Gregory Dahl and Nikki Einfeld were equally brilliant in their role debuts as George and Curley's Wife, respectively.

While both productions fell short of box office projections, they also came in under budget, offsetting the shortfall at box office. It should be noted that 53% of all single ticket buyers for *Of Mice and Men* were new attendees to Manitoba Opera. As well, 450 subscribers were new to the company this year.

Community engagement plays an increasingly important role in connecting the company's work to the community. With the help of advisory committees and by partnering with like-minded organizations, productions are used to address themes, ideas, and issues relevant to Manitoban audiences. With *Of Mice and Men* for example, MO created a wide-ranging community conversation around intellectual disability.

MO also expanded the education program this year to offer more opportunities for young people to experience opera in schools, in the community, and at the company's main performance venue, the Centennial Concert Hall.

Although Manitoba Opera had the third highest year of fundraising in its history, the company posted a loss of \$35,363 or 2% of its operating budget.

The cultural sector throughout North America is changing rapidly. There is increasingly more competition for the patron's time, attention, and money. Manitoba Opera, like its sister organizations, locally and throughout North America, must continue to innovate. It must continue to create meaningful experiences for its audiences and become indispensable to its communities.

Producing opera is a high-wire act that balances constant vigilance with considered risk-taking. Opera in this community is made possible by the governance, ambassadorship and fundraising of the Board of Trustees; the tireless efforts of staff; the support of private individuals and corporations; funding from the public sector; and thousands of hours of volunteer time. Manitoba Opera is appreciative of the support and efforts of all of these stakeholders.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING



Gordon Binter (Figaro) and Andriana Chuchman (Susanna), *The Marriage of Figaro*. Photo: R. Tinker.



Peter Strummer (Candy) and Cailean (Candy's Dog), *Of Mice and Men*. Photo: R. Tinker.

“Frothy Figaro a dazzling delight... production bore witness to the world-class vocal talent that continues to spring from our province, including a dream team of accomplished sopranos.”

– Holly Harris, *Winnipeg Free Press*

Front cover: Gordon Binter (Figaro) and Andriana Chuchman (Susanna), *The Marriage of Figaro*. Photo: R. Tinker

Manitoba Opera’s 43rd season began in November with a delightful production of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s witty, yet profound tale of love, betrayal, and forgiveness, *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The production was directed by Canadian Brent Krysa in his MO debut, with MO’s Assistant Music Director and Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki leading the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

The all-Canadian cast featured two of Winnipeg’s rising stars, sopranos Andriana Chuchman (Susanna) and Lara Ciekiewicz (Countess Almaviva), with Gordon Binter (Figaro) and Daniel Okulitch (Count Almaviva) playing their respective partners. Anne-Marie MacIntosh (Barbarina), Alicia Woynarski (Cherubino), and David Menzies (Curzio/Basilio) made their MO debuts. Donnalynn Grills (Marcellina), Peter McGillivray (Bartolo), and David Watson (Antonio) made return appearances.

The production, a co-creation of Calgary Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria, memorable for its gorgeous period wigs and costumes, as well as two impressive sets of revolving glass doors, was designed by legendary Canadian stage designer Cameron Porteus, and ably lit by Winnipegger Bill Williams.

In April, MO returned to the Concert Hall stage with American composer Carlisle Floyd’s musical drama *Of Mice and Men*. Composed in 1970, and based on the classic novella and play by John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* tells the tragic story of two migrant ranch workers in dust bowl-era America and their ill-fated dream of one day owning a place of their own.

American tenor Michael Robert Hendrick made an impressive MO debut in the role of Lennie, with Canadian Gregory Dahl as his protector-friend, George. Joel Sorensen (Curley) made his MO debut, and former Winnipeggers Nikki Einfeld (Curley’s Wife) and Peter Strummer (Candy) made welcome return appearances. The cast was rounded out by David Watson (Slim), Terence Mierau (Carlson), and Peter John (PJ) Buchan (The Ballad Singer).

Winnipeg native, Michael Cavanagh directed the production, and MO’s Music Advisor and Principal Conductor, Tyrone Paterson led the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra through Mr. Floyd’s challenging, yet touchingly beautiful, score. Tadeusz Biernacki prepared the 12-member all-male chorus.

The production, with set design by Vicki Davis, and costumes by Susan Memmott Allred, were provided by



Gregory Dahl (George) and Michael Robert Hendrick (Lennie), *Of Mice and Men*. Photo: R. Tinker.



The Marriage of Figaro. Photo: R. Tinker.

Utah Symphony/Utah Opera, and the lighting design was by Winnipegger Scott Henderson.

Manitoba Opera 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.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

ARTISTIC TEAM AND CAST

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto in Italian by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Based on the French comedy of the same name by Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais

Conductor	Tadeusz Biernacki
Director	Brent Krysa
Production Designer	Cameron Porteus
Costume Designer	Charles Allen Klein (Malabar Ltd.)
Lighting Designer	Bill Williams
Stage Manager	Robert Pel
Assistant Stage Managers	Kathryn Ball Matthew Lagacé
Projected Titles Translation	Brent Krysa

Principal Cast (In order of vocal appearance)

Figaro, the Count's valet	Gordon Binter
Susanna, the Countess' maid, Figaro's fiancée	Andriana Chuchman
Dr. Bartolo	Peter McGillivray
Marcellina, Bartolo's housekeeper	Donnalynn Grills
Cherubino, a page	Alicia Woynarski
Count Almaviva	Daniel Okulitch
Don Basilio, a music teacher	David Menzies
Countess Almaviva	Lara Ciekiewicz
Antonio, a gardener	David Watson
Don Curzio, a lawyer	David Menzies
Barbarina, Antonio's daughter	Anne-Marie MacIntosh
First Bridesmaid	Emily Diehl-Reader
Second Bridesmaid	Susanne Reimer



Andriana Chuchman (Susanna) and Alicia Woynarski (Cherubino), *The Marriage of Figaro*. Photo: R. Tinker.

Manitoba Opera Chorus

<i>Soprano</i>	<i>Mezzo</i>	<i>Tenor</i>	<i>Bass</i>
Emily Diehl-Reader	Linda Feasby	Russ Foster	Chris Caslake
Svetlana Gharagyozyan	Micheline Hay	Michal Kowalik	Richard Gusnoski
Deborah Ginther	Christina Pyrz-Kowall	David LaRue	Don Larsen
Kadri Irwin	Susanne Reimer	George Nytepchuk	Devan Ryner
Kathryn Patrick	Deanna Rempel	Lawrence Pauls	Fred Simpson
Cathy Wach-Dueck	Karla Weir	Ernst Stiglmayr	Jean van der Merwe

Supernumeraries

Children

Lily Dirks
Samantha Gilchrist
Amalia Hickerson
Miracle Wiesensel

Adults

Rachel Landrecht
Connie Sarchuk

Production Personnel

Director of Production
Assistant to the Stage Director
Chorus Master
Répétiteur
Apprentice Stage Manager
Wardrobe Supervisors

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

Projected Titles Cueing

Sheldon Johnson
Sarah Pelzer
Tadeusz Biernacki
Cary Denby
Holly LaJambe
Alena Zharska
Barry Malenko
Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Lori Houston
Jill Buhr
Adriana Oliphant
Christian Hadley
Jean-Marc Lafond
Keri Hamilton
Emily King
Sarah Leighton
Theresa Thomson
Kim Lavilla



Andriana Chuchman (Susanna) and Gordon Bintner (Figaro).



Andriana Chuchman (Susanna), Alicia Woynarski (Cherubino), and Lara Ciekiewicz (Countess Almaviva).



Lara Ciekiewicz (Countess Almaviva).



The Marriage of Figaro. Photos: R. Tinker.

OF MICE AND MEN

ARTISTIC TEAM AND CAST



Michael Robert Hendrick (Lennie) and Gregory Dahl (George)



Of Mice and Men. Photos: R. Tinker.

Music by Carlisle Floyd

Libretto in English by the composer after the novella and play by John Steinbeck

Conductor

Tyrone Paterson

Director

Michael Cavanagh

Set Designer

Vicki Davis

Costume Designer

Susan Memmott Allred

Lighting Designer

Scott Henderson

Stage Manager

Robert Pel

Assistant Stage Manager

Kathryn Ball

Ali Fulmyk

Projected Titles Translation

Sheldon Johnson

Principal Cast (In order of vocal appearance)

Lennie

Michael Robert Hendrick

George

Gregory Dahl

Curley

Joel Sorensen

Candy

Peter Strummer

Curley's Wife

Nikki Einfeld

Slim

David Watson

Carlson

Terence Mierau

Ballad Singer

Peter John (PJ) Buchan

Candy's Dog

Cailean

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Tenor

Bass

Chris Donlevy

John Anderson

Russ Foster

Chris Caslake

Peter Klymkiw

Michal Kowalik

George Nytepchuk

Don Larsen

Lawrence Pauls

Howard Rempel

Jonathan Stitt

Devan Ryner



Michael Robert Hendrick (Lennie) and Gregory Dahl (George), *Of Mice and Men*. Photo: R. Tinker.

Production Personnel

Director of Production
Chorus Master/Répétiteur
Vocal Coach
Chorus Rehearsal Pianist
Apprentice Stage Manager
Wardrobe Supervisors

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

Animal Wrangler
Firearm Safety Co-ordinator
Projected Titles Cueing

Sheldon Johnson
Tadeusz Biernacki
Valdine Anderson
Cary Denby
Holly LaJambe
Barry Malenko
Alena Zharska
Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Lori Houston
Jill Buhr
Christian Hadley
Jean-Marc Lafond
Erin Kiazuk
Stephanie Porrior
Theresa Thomson
Donna Basso
Dave Brown
Cary Denby



Of Mice and Men. Photo: R. Tinker.

“A superb
production.”
- C. Mackie, subscriber

“We are lucky here in Manitoba to have a reliable and entertaining company who presents two major operas a year. But this production *Of Mice and Men*, which on paper may have seemed a risky venture, should be long remembered as an unambiguous artistic triumph.”

- Lara Rae, *CBC Radio*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Top: Larry Desrochers (General Director & CEO) as a part of a panel discussion at the Opera America Conference held in Montreal May 2016.

Middle: Winnipeg Free Press, *Of Mice and Men* photo shoot.

Bottom: Larry Desrochers leads the pre-show chat with composer Carlisle Floyd at Opening Night of *Of Mice and Men*.

Manitoba Opera is more than its performances. Each season the company collaborates with individuals, organizations, and agencies to shape its community engagement activities and initiatives. Community engagement activities provide opportunities for attending performances, reaching out to new communities, and giving context to the operas performed in the season. Recently, MO has invested significant staff and board resources to use the company's productions as catalysts for conversations around topics and issues that have relevance to the community.

From lending a wedding dress to learning how to warm up like an opera singer; to gaining an insight into the media's portrayal of people labelled with intellectual disabilities; to sampling a California wine at a performance, there was a wide array of opportunities for people to learn, enjoy, and engage throughout the 2015/16 season. Close to 5,000 people accessed these activities, almost all of which were free.

OPERA ACCESS PROGRAM

In 2015/16, Manitoba Opera distributed 416 complimentary tickets to performances of both *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Of Mice and Men*.

Through the Theatre & Arts Pass

program, the Winnipeg Public Library distributed 36 tickets to underprivileged areas of the city.

Once again, the company hosted the Winnipeg military community at *Of Mice & Men* and distributed 163 tickets through this program.

Eighty tickets were donated by Manitoba Opera to various fundraising activities around the province and 137 tickets were distributed through social service agencies like the Immigrant Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, SEED Winnipeg, West Broadway Youth Outreach, and Macdonald Youth Services.

OPERA PRIMERS

A 60-minute lecture, with DVD excerpts, on the story and music of the upcoming opera is presented a few weeks prior to each production. Patrons can attend an afternoon or evening presentation. Music expert Don Anderson presented the lecture for *The Marriage of Figaro* and General Director & CEO, Larry Desrochers presented the lecture for *Of Mice and Men*. This year's Opera Primers were held at the Manitoba Museum Auditorium.

PRE-SHOW CHATS

For every production, a 20-minute lecture on the opera is held a half-hour before curtain at each performance.



Soprano Lara Ciekiewicz wows the crowd at one of the Culture Days presentations.

For *The Marriage of Figaro*, Simeon Rusnak, a host on Classic Radio 107 FM, was the guest speaker and for *Of Mice and Men*, local singer, director, and actor, Donna Fletcher presented.

Patrons at Opening Night of *Of Mice and Men* had the special honour of hearing from the composer and librettist, Carlisle Floyd. Mr. Floyd, who is 90, attended the Opening Night performance as a guest of Manitoba Opera and participated in a Q & A discussion with Larry Desrochers. Mr. Floyd spoke of his experience writing the music and libretto for the opera.

SIT IN ON A REHEARSAL/ MEET THE DIRECTOR

For each production, just a few days before Opening Night, donors of \$100 or more have the opportunity to attend a rehearsal after a Q & A with the director.

This season both Q & A's were led by Larry Desrochers, with Brent Krysa, director of

The Marriage of Figaro and *Of Mice and Men*'s director, Michael Cavanagh.

LEARN AT YOUR LEISURE

For those patrons not able to attend audience engagement events, Manitoba Opera provides opportunities to learn about the productions through a variety of channels. Videos featuring rehearsal footage and cast interviews are always popular on the company's YouTube channel and via social media. This season, there were 2,568 views of *The Marriage of Figaro* video series.

The Winnipeg Public Library provided an *Of Mice and Men* reader's guide complete with discussion questions for book clubbers.

Manitoba Opera also loans and sells CDs, DVDs, and books related to the season's productions, as well as suggesting lectures and listening options available on YouTube.

OPEN HOUSE

Manitoba Opera held its bi-annual Open House the afternoon of Sunday, April 24, giving patrons and the general public an opportunity to go backstage and see how an opera is brought to life. Stations included the orchestra pit, costumes, props, wigs, stage management, sound and lighting booths, and the chance to go on stage.

Over 115 patrons attended the backstage tours which were led by volunteers from RBC through their community support initiative.

CULTURE DAYS

Manitoba Opera participated in the nation-wide annual Culture Days on Sunday, September 27.

A series of presentations by soprano Lara Ciekiewicz were held at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet studios and included activities for young and old.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

SEX, POLITICS, PRIVILEGE & THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO LECTURE

University of Manitoba professors, Drs. Roisin Cossar, Erik Thompson, and James Maiello, provided an engaging presentation on 18th century aristocracy's use and misuse of sex, politics, and privilege, relating the aristocracy's sense of entitlement to the story of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The lecture took place on Saturday, October 31, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC

Dr. Dietrich Bartel, Associate Professor of Music at the Canadian Mennonite University's School of Music led an engaging hour-long presentation on Mozart's compositional style and the music of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The lecture was held Wednesday, November 4, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

CLOSING NIGHT DINNER

Taking its cue from the setting of *The Marriage of Figaro*, a Spanish-inspired, four-course

dinner catered by Les Filles Cuisine was held Closing Night. The 60 patrons who attended were treated to a pre-show chat by Simeon Rusnak, Classic 107 Radio host.

SILOAM MISSION COLLECTION DRIVE

Twenty boxes of winter clothes and toiletries were collected at all three performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* and donated to Siloam Mission, which is a humanitarian organization that helps the homeless. Backstage, the cast and crew joined in the collection effort and raised an additional \$500.

WEDDING DRESS DISPLAY

Throughout the run of *The Marriage of Figaro*, 30 wedding dresses belonging to opera patrons, staff, and cast members were displayed throughout the lobby areas of the Centennial Concert Hall. Accompanying each dress was signage featuring an original wedding photo and the dress owner's connection to Manitoba Opera.



Board member Leona Herzog assisting with the wedding dress exhibit for *The Marriage of Figaro*.



Of Mice and Men Excerpts & Reading event.



Opera Primer, *The Marriage of Figaro*.

OF MICE AND MEN

ADVISORY PANEL

The following individuals provided their time and expertise to help shape initiatives related to people labelled with intellectual disabilities for the production of *Of Mice and Men*:

- Amanda Campbell, Senior Manager, St. Amant Centre
- Shelley Fletcher, Executive Director, People First of Canada
- Janet Forbes, Executive Director, Community Living Winnipeg
- Karen Menkis, Board Member, Community Living Winnipeg
- Tara Mullen, Instructor, Disability and Community Support, Red River College

“WE ALL HAVE DREAMS” VIDEO SERIES

It is the human condition to dream. It is the dream of owning a piece of land that drives George and Lennie, the main characters in *Of Mice and Men*. Manitoba Opera, working with videographers James Hiebert and Thomas Asselin, produced the “We All Have Dreams” video series.

Some wonderful people in our community shared their dreams,

hopes, and aspirations through this collection of 11 two-minute interviews. Featured individuals were Brian, Dawn, Heather, Jeff, Mike, Ryan, Samantha, Tabitha, Nicholas, Ruth, and Roy.

The series was made possible with the assistance of DASCH Inc., New Directions, People First of Canada, and Red River College, Academic and Essential Skills Program.

Distributed via social media and posted on MO’s Youtube channel, the videos received more than 2,100 views.

PLAIN LANGUAGE SYNOPSIS

MO’s program included a synopsis written in plain language which takes into account the word count, average grade level accessibility, and average reading ease. The plain language synopsis appeared alongside the regular synopsis to provide patrons with an opportunity to better understand this accommodation right for many people with disabilities. People First of Canada, the national organization representing people labelled with an intellectual disability prepared the synopsis.



Panel discussion regarding People Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities in the Media for *Of Mice and Men*

“Thank you so much for this opportunity! It will be our first time at the opera together, my husband and me, very special!” - Recipient of Opera Access tickets from the Immigrant Centre



Brian showing his artwork during a “We All Have Dreams” video shoot



Of Mice and Men. Photo: R. Tinker.

FILM SCREENING: ARGYLE SOX PRODUCTIONS OF *OF MICE AND MEN*

The award-winning Winnipeg high school Argyle Alternative's adaptation of *Of Mice and Men* was screened at Cinematheque on Saturday, April 2.

The feature-length film transports the story to present day, and Lennie and George are re-imagined as Aboriginal youth who moved to a rooming house in Winnipeg with the hopes of following their dream of owning their own land up north.

Instructors John Barrett and Dave Berg introduced the film, and explained how the project was developed and created.

"I just wanted to let you know how much I've enjoyed your WAHD videos...Thanks for doing this great series."

- Hedio Epp, volunteer and longtime patron

PANEL DISCUSSION: STEREOTYPES OF INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AS PORTRAYED IN THE ARTS, OUR CULTURE & THE MEDIA

On Sunday, April 3, a discussion on the representation of people labelled with intellectual disabilities in the arts, media, and our culture was held at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The panelists were Kory Earle, President, People First of Canada; Dr. Nancy Hansen, Director of the Interdisciplinary

Master's Program in Disability Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Gene Walz, Professor of Film Studies, University of Manitoba; and Sue Proctor, performer and arts educator. Larry Desrochers led the discussion.

STEINBECK LECTURE & BOOK CLUB

The University of Manitoba's English professor, Dr. Lucas Tromly, led an intimate book-club style discussion on John Steinbeck as a writer and his classic novella *Of Mice and Men* on Thursday, April 7. Held in the Green Room of the Centennial

Concert Hall, the event gave the small, but appreciative group the unique opportunity to be backstage.

MUSIC EXCERPTS, READINGS & LECTURE

Scenes from the opera were presented by singers performing to piano accompanied by Tadeusz Biernacki. Then actors performed the same scenes from the play. The presentation created a unique opportunity for the audience to hear how the composer, Carlisle Floyd, interpreted John Steinbeck's play, which was one

of his sources for the opera. The scenes were interspersed with commentary by Dr. Colette Simonot of Brandon University's School of Music.

Featured cast members were Michael Robert Hendrick (Lennie), Gregory Dahl (George), Nikki Einfeld (Curley's Wife), and Peter Strummer (Candy), along with Winnipeg actors Jeff Strome (Lennie), Dean Harding (George), and Alicia Johnston (Curley's Wife). General Director & CEO, Larry Desrochers acted as the emcee and read the role of Candy. More than 75

patrons attended the event at the Canadian Mennonite University on Sunday, April 10.

FILM SCREENING: BLACK & WHITE CLASSIC OF MICE AND MEN

Nominated for four Academy Awards, the classic Hal Roach 1939 version of *Of Mice and Men* starring Burgess Meredith and Lon Chaney, Jr., was screened on Saturday, April 16, at Cinematheque.



The lobby at *Of Mice and Men*.



Sophie Waldman, Interim Education and Outreach Coordinator, in the box office at Student Night at the Opera.



California Olive oil tasting courtesy of Frescolio Fine Oil + Vinegar Tasting Bar.



Volunteer Susan Kell, shop at the Boutique.



“We enjoyed very much our experience to the show...The whole opera story plays with our senses, bringing joy and sadness at the same time...We had a great time.”

- Recipient of Opera Access tickets from the Immigrant Centre

Dr. Gene Walz, film historian and University of Manitoba professor introduced the film.

DOROTHEA LANGE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

Manitoba Opera secured the rights from the Oakland Museum of California to have 21 photographs from the distinguished Depression-era photographer, Dorothea Lange, on display throughout April and May on the Piano Nobile of the Centennial Concert Hall. The images depict what life was like for migrant workers in California at the time *Of Mice and Men* was set.

From June 3 to early July, a selection of these images was also on display in the Exchange District through the Viewfinder's Gallery.

Funding for this initiative was provided by the U.S. Consulate – Winnipeg.

CALIFORNIA WINE & OLIVE OIL TASTING

Wine distributor Long Barn and Frescolio Fine Oil + Vinegar Tasting Bar offered patrons a taste of California with free wine and olive oil samples at the performances.

VOLUNTEER USHERS

Working with the Centennial Concert Hall staff, Manitoba Opera extended an invitation to agencies to provide volunteer usher opportunities at all performances of *Of Mice and Men*. The volunteers distributed programs to patrons, alongside the regular ushers, and stayed to watch the performance.

MENTORING YOUNG PRODUCERS

In the past few seasons, Manitoba Opera has actively supported the work of young singers and producers who have established companies in the community. This includes Flipside Opera, Three Little Birds, and Manitoba Underground Opera.

MO meets with the artists throughout the year to provide advice on various aspects of running a company. The

organization also provides marketing and social media support for their performances and events.

Brendan McKeen, General Manager of Manitoba Underground Opera, spent the season interning and working for Manitoba Opera. He had the opportunity to attend rehearsals and to see first-hand what goes into the operation of an arts

organization. He also worked closely with the marketing and development departments.

“Being an intern... has been an invaluable experience for me...I can assuredly say that the well-rounded, hands-on experience will help me in my future artistic endeavors and has enlightened me about Winnipeg’s great arts scene.”



Almost **5,000 people** interacted with Manitoba Opera beyond attending the mainstage performances.



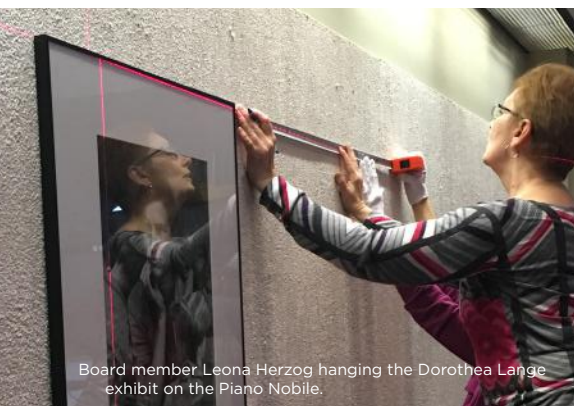
Nicolas Borkowsky being interviewed for the "We All Have Dreams" video series.

25 free community engagement events were held in Manitoba Opera's 2015/16 season.

Manitoba Opera collected **20 boxes of winter clothes and toiletries** to donate to Siloam Mission.



Dropping off donations at Siloam Mission: Lara Ciekiewicz, soprano; Sophie Waldman, interim Education and Outreach Coordinator; Darlene Ronald, Director of Marketing with Siloam Mission Staff person.



Board member Leona Herzog hanging the Dorothea Lange exhibit on the Piano Nobile.

Behind the Scenes of *The Marriage of Figaro* and "We All Have Dreams" videos had **over 4,000 views on YouTube.**



Students from St. Norbert Collegiate at *The Marriage of Figaro* Student Night at the Opera.

STUDENT PROGRAMMING

STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA

This season, 2,065 students attended the dress rehearsals of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Of Mice and Men* through the Student Night at the Opera program.

Open to students from public and private schools, home schools, music conservatories, and through private music educators, tickets for Student Night at the Opera are priced at just \$12 each.

Twenty-nine rural groups traveled a total of 4,526 kilometres to attend Student Night at the Opera performances this season.

OPERA IN A TRUNK

In its sixth season, Opera in a Trunk continues to bring opera directly into classrooms in Winnipeg and southern Manitoba.

Trunks themed around the following operas – *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen* and *The Daughter of the Regiment* – are available for loan free of charge.

The trunks are filled with props, costumes, books, CDs, DVDs, and musical instruments related to each opera. The trunks also include study guides with suggestions for hands-on activities to engage the students.

Twenty-nine rural groups traveled a total of **4,526 kilometres** to attend Student Night at the Opera performances this season.

Opera trunks were sent out to elementary schools in Winnipeg, Brandon, and Souris, **reaching over 1,250 students.**

Across all education initiatives this season, **over 6,500 students were exposed to opera.**

This season, trunks were distributed to elementary schools in Winnipeg, Brandon, and Souris, reaching over 1,250 students.

The tour reached more than 2,500 students at 13 schools across southern Manitoba including Winnipeg, Vita, Teulon, and Portage la Prairie during the month of May.

“[Student Night at the Opera] allows them to have these experiences they may not have otherwise and sometimes plants a love of the arts in them for years to come.” - Kateri Phillips, Wanipigow School

SCHOOL TOUR SPONSORSHIP

Manitoba Opera sponsored this year's University of Manitoba's Desautels Faculty of Music Opera Theatre school tour of Canadian composer Dean Burry's *Angela and Her Sisters*.

MO's collaboration with the Desautels Faculty of Music provides an opportunity for young audiences to enjoy age-appropriate opera in their schools. The collaboration also gives Desautels Faculty of Music students the opportunity to perform for an audience.

DISCOVER OPERA

Manitoba Opera presented a variety of workshops to schools this season. Offered to schools at no cost, these workshops introduce opera as a form of storytelling. Local teaching artist, Lara Ciekiewicz led the majority of the workshops.

The workshops reached more than 700 students across Winnipeg through the following programs:

- B.E.E.P. (Balanced Experiential Education Program) offered through Seven Oaks School Division
- I Love to Read Month offered through Winnipeg School Division
- Sistema Winnipeg, an after-school orchestra program, offered through the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra



Soprano Lara Ciekiewicz at Rockwood School for I Love to Read Month.



The University of Manitoba Opera Theatre cast in rehearsal for their school tour of *Angela and Her Sisters*.

“I have been teaching for 29 years, and in those 29 years [Lara Ciekiewicz] was the best ‘I Love to Read’ guest speaker I have ever seen!” - Leslee Munroe, Rockwood School

SPECIAL EVENTS

DINNER AT DE LUCA'S

The annual fundraiser, Dinner at De Luca's, took place on October 24 at the De Luca's Cooking Studio. The packed room enjoyed a night of good company, wine, interactive cooking demonstrations, and Italian cuisine. The evening was highlighted by a performance of opera arias by Winnipeg tenor Justin Odwak, accompanied by Renate Rossol. Two lucky raffle winners went home with prizes: a deluxe gift basket of De Luca's products along with fine wines; and a private wine tasting for eight in the winner's home.

OPENING NIGHT DINNER

Close to 70 patrons attended the annual Opening Night Dinner, held on the Piano Nobile prior to *The Marriage of Figaro*. Guests enjoyed a catered dinner by Bergmans on Lombard. Following the performance, guests, donors, and sponsors were invited to the post-show reception where they had an opportunity to meet the cast.

BRAVO GALA

On Saturday, March 5, Manitoba Opera hosted its 8th annual Bravo Gala at the Delta Winnipeg. Inspired by 1930s Hollywood glamour, the gala raises funds for season productions and community programs. Tenor Christopher Enns, accompanied by Tadeusz Biernacki on piano, showcased three moving selections.

Guests enthusiastically participated in the Marquee Raffle, as well as live and silent auctions that featured an impressive array of prizes courtesy of many generous donors and sponsors. Guests also enjoyed music provided by The Danny Kramer Band.



Top: John & Bonnie Bulher and Edna & Gil Rossong at Dinner at De Luca's.

Middle: Elba Haid, Jennifer Snyder, Fiona Webster Mourant at *The Marriage of Figaro's* Opening Night dinner.

Bottom: Raffle Sellers: Sophie Waldman, Elliot Lazar, Susan Watkins, Brendan McKeen at the Bravo Gala.



Leah Sullivan, Tim Sidock, Valorie Block, Abbie Grieder, Amanda Huminicki and Pamela Mann at Bravo Gala.



Christopher Enns performs at Bravo Gala.



Joel Deeley, Kathryn Patrick, Dawn Bruch and Paul Wiens at Bravo Gala.



Robert Vineberg, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Lena Horne at Bravo Gala.

2016 BRAVO GALA SPONSORS



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FINANCE

For 2015/16, Manitoba Opera posted a deficit of \$35,363, representing 2% of its operating budget of \$2,167,168.

The accumulated debt is now \$300,164, down from \$654,000 in 2000.

GRANTS

Funding from the Winnipeg Arts Council increased by \$25,000 to \$135,000.

The Manitoba Arts Council grant of \$220,000 was augmented with a special grant of \$175,000.

Funding from the Canada Council for the Arts remained at \$134,900.

BOX OFFICE

Subscriptions decreased from 2,917 in 2014/15 to 2,690 in 2015/16. However, this number of subscribers is higher than the previous 15-year average number of subscribers (2,660). At \$311,749, revenues from subscriptions reached 97% of budget goal.

Single tickets decreased from 2,737 in 2014/15 to 2,469 in 2015/16.

Total box office revenues decreased by 9% from \$595,098 in 2014/15 to \$511,565 in 2015/16.

Subscription prices for the 2015/16 season averaged \$57.94 per ticket; single tickets averaged \$71.30 per seat.

FUNDRAISING

Overall, fundraising of \$754,416 declined by 10% from a record year of 2015 where the company raised \$835,426 from the private sector.

Corporate/foundation giving decreased from 2014/15 mainly due to special gifts made to *Fidelio* in the 2014/15 season which were not renewable for 2015/16. However, gifts from individuals increased over 2014/15.

Gifts from foundations were \$95,000 for community engagement activities and specific projects.

Net proceeds from special events were \$48,930.



“Nothing gives me more hope for the future of good music than seeing so many kids and teens in the audience loving it.”
– B. Tulloch, *UMFM Radio*



Top: Students at *The Marriage of Figaro* Student Night at the Opera.

Bottom: *Of Mice and Men* composer and librettist Carlisle Floyd and Larry Desrochers at a reception for Mr. Floyd.



Cailean along with Hair/Wig Designer Lori Houston and trainer Donna Basso backstage at *Of Mice and Men*.



Volunteer Valerie Wolbert handing out programs at *Of Mice and Men*.

EXPENSES

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

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 2015/16, the fund grew by \$105,340 including matching contributions of \$51,758 from Canadian Heritage through the Endowment Incentives program and \$8,864 from The Winnipeg Foundation. As of May 31st, the Manitoba Opera Fund has a balance of \$203,868.

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.

Similarly, Manitoba Opera receives in-kind contributions related to donated advertising, marketing and consulting services. These services are recorded at their fair value in the statement of operations.

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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 2015/16 Annual General Meeting marked the completion of Robert Vineberg's term as Chair of the Board of Trustees. During his term, Robert Vineberg strengthened board accountability practices and guided the organization as it deepens its relationship with the community through special projects developed around the mainstage operas. Mr. Vineberg will continue to serve as Past Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees elected Elba Haid as Chair of Manitoba Opera. Elba has served as a trustee for Manitoba Opera for 10 years. She has chaired the Camerata and Bravo Gala Committees and has served as a member on the Executive and Corporate Support Committees.

Two former trustees were elected to the board: Alex Robinson (trustee from 1998-2006) and Peter George (trustee from 2001-2011, Chair 2004-2011).

Current trustees re-elected were Dr. Anthony Iacopino, Dr. Hermann Lee, and Sue Jurkovic-Bracken.

Returning members in mid-term are Wayne Benson, Brent Bottomley, Abbie Grieder, Dr. Amanda Huminicki, Luisa Matheson, David White, Dr. Bill Pope, and Leona Herzog.

Retiring from the Board of Trustees were Dr. Rob Biscontri, Dr. Henri Marcoux, Kimberley Puhach, and Heather Sarna.

In recognition for her service as Chair from 2011-2014, the Board of Trustees conferred the title of Director Emeritus on Jennifer Snyder.

The Governance Committee develops and/or updates policies and practices of the Board of Trustees. This season, the committee condensed three board policies into one document – The Manitoba Opera Trustees Responsibilities and Expectations – clarifying the expectations the organization has of trustees, individually and collectively. The committee also amended The Board Hosting Policy - simplifying the program used by trustees to host guests at productions.

Manitoba Opera continues to play an important role in strengthening the field of

opera, through board and staff participation at conferences and by serving on committees.

In August, Larry Desrochers and Elba Haid attended the Banff Opera Colloquium convened by Opera.ca. In February, Elba Haid also attended the Opera America National Trustees Forum in New York. In May, trustees Robert Vineberg and Elba Haid, General Director & CEO Larry Desrochers, and staff members Michael Blais, Sheldon Johnson, Darlene Ronald and Monica Wood attended the Opera America Conference in Montréal.

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. Larry Desrochers served as a panellist on the topic of community engagement at both the Banff Colloquium and the Opera America Conference.

Conference participation and committee work 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.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are essential to the success of Manitoba Opera; whether they are helping in our office or at performances, we are so grateful for their hard work. This season, our incredible volunteers donated over 400 hours of their time.

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Volunteers
have donated
over 400 hours
of time in the
2015/16 Season



Top Left: Ruth Joseph (volunteer) assisting in handing out programs for *Of Mice and Men*.

Top Right: Shannon Burns and Renald Paul helping out at the Siloam Mission Drive Drop-Off table on Closing Night of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Bottom: Volunteers helping at the subscription renewals table before Opening Night of *Of Mice and Men*.

PARTNERS IN OPERA

Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and financial support given by many individuals, foundations, businesses and corporations in 2015/16, allowing it to bring live opera to Manitobans. Listings include donations made between June 1, 2015 and May 21, 2016.

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Of Mice and Men. Photo: R. Tinker.

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“La musique a un pouvoir d’exprimer les émotions et les sentiments beaucoup plus grand que les seuls mots et le jeu des acteurs. Rien ne surpasse l’opéra en intensité lorsque musique, paroles, jeu des acteurs et décors sont conjugués à la perfection comme dans cette production [de *Of Mice and Men*].”

Translation:
Music possesses the power to express emotions and feelings to a far greater extent than mere words and actions. Nothing can compare to opera when the music, words, acting and sets are blended to perfection as in this production [of *Of Mice and Men*].

- P. Meunier, *La Liberté*

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The Marriage of Figaro. Photo: R. Tinker.

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Gregory Dahl (George) and Michael Robert Hendrick (Lennie),
Of Mice and Men. Photo: R. Tinker