



## MANITOBA OPERA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
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### **MATCHING GIFTS CHALLENGE CATAPULTS 2018/19 SEASON TO UNPRECEDENTED FINANCIAL SUCCESS**

Manitoba Opera (MO) announced this evening at its 2018/19 Annual General Meeting (AGM), held at the McKim Building in Winnipeg, that the 2018/19 season, which ended May 31, 2019, was the company's most financially successful season in its 46 years of operation, resulting in the elimination of a decades' old accumulated debt.

The company posted an operating surplus of \$86,312 on a budget of \$2,585,965. An additional \$374,755 was raised towards the elimination of the debt of \$450,652, accumulated since the 1980s. MO's accumulated debt had reached \$654,000 by year end June 30, 2000.

The debt was retired by a matching gifts challenge issued by a donor who committed \$150,000 to the campaign. In total, more than 190 individuals, corporations, foundations, and governments rose to the challenge with gifts from \$5 to \$150,000.

The operating surplus and the debt reduction campaign combined for total excess revenues of \$461,067, allowing for a transfer of \$10,415 to the company's Reserve Fund.

Gross fundraising from all annual campaigns also reached an historical high of \$1,254,267 in 2018/19. In its inaugural year, The Gala Asper Award Gala Reception raised \$173,978, the highest amount ever raised by an MO special event.

"We are so grateful for the generosity of everyone who supported Manitoba Opera this year: patrons, donors, sponsors, and volunteers," commented Elba Haid, Chair, Manitoba Opera Board of Trustees. "I particularly want to acknowledge the lead donors on our debt elimination campaign. They challenged our board to tackle the debt and contributed \$150,000 to the campaign. I want thank them from the bottom of my heart."

## 2. Manitoba Opera 2018/20 Annual General Meeting Media Release

The company's 46<sup>th</sup> season featured visually inventive and re-imagined versions of two of opera's most popular works: the thought-provoking *Don Giovanni* in November and the light-hearted comedy *The Barber of Seville* in April. Led by two of the country's finest singers, bass-baritone Daniel Okulitch (*Don Giovanni*) and baritone Elliot Madore (*Figaro*), the primarily Canadian casts wowed the audiences with their artistry, characterization, and exceptional singing.

"The 2018/19 season reminds me of something Steve Jobs said: If you really look closely, most overnight successes took a long time," said General Director & CEO Larry Desrochers. "This year's financial success was a long time in the making. But I think it happened because we produce compelling art on the stage, engage the community in important conversations, and most importantly, earned the trust of our many supporters, patrons, funders, and sponsors. I think it's clear that the community cherishes this organization, and equally we cherish the community that we're here to serve."

The 2019/20 Board of Trustees was also announced at the AGM. New trustees elected to the Board are Paul Bruch-Wiens, Charlene Ilas and D. Grant Suderman (see attached for bios). Current trustees are Judith Chambers, Dr. David Folk, Peter George, Abbie Grieder, Elba Haid, Chair, Leona Herzog, Daniela Ignat, Luisa Matheson, Maria Mitousis, Dr. Bill Pope, Alex Robinson, Dustin Schneider, Keith Sinclair, Dr. Jeffrey Sisler, and Lori Yorke.

Retiring from the Board of Trustees after completing four full terms was Sue Jurkovic-Bracken.

### **2018/19 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS**

Each year through its community engagement activities, the company reaches out in a variety of ways to provide context to the operas being performed, discuss issues that are relevant to the community, and provide opportunities for a wide range of people to be touched by the work of the organization. In 2018/19, over 3,000 people attended or participated in these activities, almost all of which are free.

From a new Canadian attending the opera for the first time, courtesy of complimentary tickets received through the Opera Access program, to a presentation backstage, a lecture on architecture, or a night of Spanish cuisine and music, there was a wide array of events, activities, and initiatives to take in throughout the 2018/19 season.

Patrons also generously donated to the Personal Hygiene Products Drive organized by the company in conjunction with *The Barber of Seville*. Hundreds of items including soap, toothpaste, deodorant, and shampoo were collected at performances of *The Barber of Seville* and donated to Siloam Mission, Main Street Project, and Lighthouse Mission.

Education programming is also a core component of the company's work. This season, through the Student Night at the Opera program, over 950 students from grade 6 and up, attended the dress rehearsals of both productions for just \$13 a ticket. In addition, nearly 100 students from White City, Saskatchewan, attend Closing Night of *The Barber of Seville*.

### 3. Manitoba Opera 2018/19 Annual General Meeting Media Release

Opera in a Trunk, a self-contained education resource for teachers, reached over 1,200 students at 15 schools in Manitoba (Winnipeg, Gimli, and St. Anne). There were 18 Opera Class workshops led by professionally trained singers throughout the season. Approximately 550 students in grades K to 6 in Winnipeg, Elie, Tyndall, and Gimli experienced this popular and engaging hands-on 45-minute workshop. Manitoba Opera also participated in I Love to Read month and presented 10 summer workshops for over 600 grade 1 to 8 students through the Seven Oaks School Division's BEEP program.

### **2019/20 SEASON**

Manitoba Opera will present an iconic opera and a company premiere in its 47<sup>th</sup> season. ***Susannah***, American composer Carlisle Floyd's third and most well-known opera, opens the season **November 23, 26, 29, 2019**. This opera will be paired with the most popular of all operas, Bizet's ***Carmen***, **March 28, 31, April 3, 2020**. Both productions will be staged at the Centennial Concert Hall.

*Susannah* is a gripping drama and the most-performed American opera after *Porgy and Bess*. This "powerfully emotional piece is among the finest achievements in American opera." (*Nashville Music Scene* 2015). It tells the story of a young Tennessee woman unjustly accused of indecency and bullied by her small rural community. A travelling preacher tries to convince Susannah to repent, but he has designs on more than just her soul. Acclaimed Winnipeg soprano **Lara Ciekiewicz** will have her role debut as Susannah.

*Carmen* features some of opera's most beloved arias and is unrivaled in its procession of hit melodies. Over 140 years after its premiere in Paris, this sexy thriller continues to bewitch the audience with every note. Carmen can have any man she wants and when she seduces the young soldier Don José only to cast him aside for the handsome bullfighter, she seals her tragic fate. French-Canadian mezzo **Nora Sourouzian** makes her company debut singing the role of Carmen, a character she has played a number of times.

Subscriptions are now on sale and single tickets for both productions go on sale Monday, August 26. To order tickets, call 204-957-7842 or go to [www.mbopera.ca](http://www.mbopera.ca)

**MANITOBA OPERA**  
**2019/20 SEASON BOARD OF TRUSTEES: NEW BOARD MEMBER BIOS**



**PAUL BRUCH-WIENS**

Paul Bruch-Wiens is a private wealth manager with Quadrant Private Wealth. He has been working in the financial services industry for over a decade, with previous experience in foreign exchange risk management and commercial banking, in addition to wealth management. Bruch-Wiens is also a MacKay CEO Forum Executive Chair, helping C-suite executives in a peer-to-peer setting to grow as leaders.

He has served on multiple charitable and not-for-profit boards. Bruch-Wiens currently is the treasurer for Flipside Opera and is co-founder and treasurer of Polycoro Inc. He is also a trained opera singer and has performed numerous times with Manitoba Opera, Little Opera Company, the WSO, and other local companies.



**CHARLENE ILAS**

Charlene Ilas is currently a marketing specialist at Stantec Consulting Ltd. Prior to joining Stantec in late 2018, Ilas was a marketing manager at a Winnipeg-based mutual fund company. She graduated from the University of Manitoba in 2015 with a B.Comm (Hons.) with a double major in marketing and finance.

Ilas volunteered for the Winnipeg Art Gallery for a number of years, serving on the Gallery Ball committee for two years and was co-chair of Art and Soul in 2017.



**D. GRANT SUDERMAN**

D. Grant Suderman is currently the Vice-President, Sales & Marketing for the Winnipeg Free Press, a position he has held since 2016. Previous to that, he was Director of Sales, Western Canada for OfficeMax Grand & Toy for six years.

Suderman has extensive business experience in senior leadership roles in the areas of media, pharmaceutical, BWB, and professional consultative services.

He is a graduate of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Administrative Studies and holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours). Suderman has been involved in a variety of community work over the years including sitting on the boards of the Manitoba Lung Association, Canadian Intensive Care Foundation, and the Alberta Institute of Health, and is currently providing his service as a business strategy coach at the Asper School of Business.