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# Message from the Chair, Board of Trustees

Manitoba Opera's curtain is ready to rise once again at the Centennial Concert Hall, and it is all because of the outpouring of goodwill we have received from you, our incredible community. Over the past eight months, I have been amazed and touched by the level of support demonstrated by our patrons, donors, corporate supporters, and public funders. Such incredible generosity in these unprecedented times speaks volumes about how much our work means to the people of Manitoba, and I am honoured to be part of it.

From *Carmen* ticket donations to Dr. MacEwan's ambitious Walk for the Arts which is on target to raise \$100,000, collectively, for Manitoba Opera, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre - hundreds of gestures, both large and small, have served to inspire us.

In July, Manitoba Opera's Board of Trustees gained four outstanding individuals. I hope you will all join me in welcoming Timothy Burt, Terence Sakohianisaks Douglas, Flavia Fernandez Fabio, and Lana Maidment. Their collective expertise comes at a pivotal moment as we navigate the changes ahead and prepare for our eagerly anticipated 50th anniversary in two seasons' time.

As we extend a warm welcome to Timothy, Terence, Flavia, and Lana, we must also bid a fond farewell to Luisa Matheson and Abbie Grieder. Luisa and Abbie: thank you for your years of dedication. Our organization is stronger because of your tireless efforts.



The arts have been a shining beacon guiding us through these dark times, reminding us that our common experiences unite us even when we are apart. Our artists have kept us company in isolation, raising our spirits and echoing our emotions in a language that goes beyond words. We owe these artists an enormous debt of gratitude, so I hope you will join me this evening in recognizing their contributions with thunderous applause.

The journey that has brought us to this moment is only possible because of your belief in Manitoba Opera, and I extend my sincere thanks to each and every one of you for your role in making this virtual experience a reality. Tonight, we celebrate seven extraordinarily talented Winnipeg women. I invite you to sit back, relax, revel in the wonder of the human voice, and know that together, we are made better through the glory of opera.

Warmest regards,

Elba Haid CHAIR

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# Message from the General Director & CEO

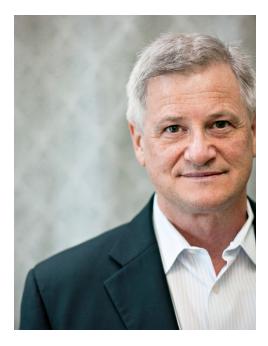
Welcome to The Sopranos of Winnipeg concert. We are delighted to partner with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and to bring to the stage seven wonderful local sopranos. Manitobans are so lucky to have such a wealth of talent in our midst. Indeed, if we had time this evening we could have easily featured 14 sopranos!

It is three weeks shy of a year since we last appeared for you at the Centennial Concert Hall and Lara Ciekiewicz took our breath away with her beautiful portrayal of the title character in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. So much has changed since that time.

As artists, we don't feed the hungry, heal the sick, or house the homeless. It is not that we don't care about these important needs of humanity, it's just that our skills lie in different areas. We are singers, actors, musicians, and painters, but together with doctors, nurses, social workers, and others, we strive to make the world a better place. Where medicine heals the body, in times such as these we help heal the soul.

# To paraphrase some thoughts from the *Havard Men's Health Watch*:

The ancient Greeks put one god, Apollo, in charge of both medicine and music. Doctors tell us that music can enhance the function of neural networks, slow the heart rate, lower blood pressure, and reduce levels of stress hormones. But perhaps these clinical observations do not do full justice to the effect music has on humanity. Fortunately, poets and philosophers can fill in those gaps.



Doctors tell us that social isolation is a cardiac risk factor, and Robert Browning wrote that "He who hears music feels his solitude peopled all at once." Psychologists say that expressing emotions is healthful, and Tolstoy said that "Music is the shorthand of emotion." Clinicians teach that human warmth can blunt many woes, and Shakespeare asserted that "If music be the food of love, play on." And in the days when Apollo reigned, Plato explained that "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything else."

For our part, we hope that the beauty and the wonder of tonight's concert lifts your spirit, warms your heart, and reminds you that indeed, better days are ahead.

# Larry Desrochers GENERAL DIRECTOR & CEO

# Thank you to Manitoba Opera for keeping the music alive during these challenging times!

# GAIL ASPER FAMILY FOUNDATION

# **The Sopranos of Winnipeg**

# SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2020

CONDUCTED BY Tadeusz Biernacki

HOSTED BY Larry Desrochers & Darlene Ronald

FEATURING

# Andriana Chuchman, Lara Ciekiewicz, Tracy Dahl, Monica Huisman, Andrea Lett, Lara Secord-Haid, Lida Szkwarek Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Overture	The Marriage of Figaro	W.A. MOZART	Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra
Les oiseaux dans la charmille (THE DOLL SONG)	Tales of Hoffmann	J. OFFENBACH	Andrea Lett
È stranoAh fors'è lui Sempre libera	La Traviata	G. VERDI	Lara Secord-Haid
There will be a storm tonight (STORM ARIA)	Filumena	J. ESTACIO	Lida Szkwarek
Intermezzo	Cavalleria Rusticana	P. MASCAGNI	Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra
Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém (song to the moon)	Rusalka	A. DVOŘáK	Monica Huisman
The trees on the mountain	Susannah	C. FLOYD	Lara Ciekiewicz
Deh vieni non tardar	The Marriage of Figaro	W.A. MOZART	Andriana Chuchman
Je suis Titania la blonde	Mignon	A. THOMAS	Tracy Dahl
Polonaise	Eugene Onegin	P.I. TCHAIKOVSKY	Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

stage manager Kathryn Ball assistant stage manager Zahra Larche

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# **The Artists**



# Tadeusz Biernacki

The 2020/21 season marks Tadeusz Biernacki's 38th with the company as assistant music director, chorus master, and rehearsal pianist.

Winner of the K. Szymanowski Piano Competition (Warsaw, Poland), he has performed internationally as a piano soloist and has conducted major orchestras across Canada, as well as around the world including the Tessaloniki State Orchestra, St. Paul

Chamber Orchestra, Cleveland Opera Orchestra, Kaohsiung City Symphony Orchestra, and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. Mr. Biernacki has also written numerous orchestral arrangements for the TSO, NAC Orchestra, and others.

He was music director of Saskatoon Opera and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and has conducted a number of productions for Manitoba Opera, most recently, *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2015.



# Andriana Chuchman

Andriana Chuchman has graced major operatic stages including The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Washington National Opera.

Major roles have included Adina, Susanna, Musetta, Pamina, Marie, Eurydice, Gretel, and Valencienne, as well as modern operatic roles including Pat Nixon (*Nixon in China*), Kumudha (*Flowering* 

Tree), Mary Hatch (It's a Wonderful Life), and the creation of Boonyi/India (Shalimar the Clown).

This season, she returns to the Dallas Opera for the world premiere of Joby Talbot's *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, and will be in concert with the MCO, alongside Tracy Dahl.

Ms. Chuchman received her Bachelor's Degree in Voice Performance from the School of Music at the University of Manitoba. She is an alumna of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program. Awards include the San Francisco Opera's 2019 Emerging Star of the Year, Opera Theatre of St. Louis' 2017 Mabel Dorn Reeder Award, and prize winner at the Finals of the 2009 Neue Stimmen Competition.



# Lara Ciekiewicz

Recently hailed for her "tour-de-force performance" (*Winnipeg Free Press*) in the title role of Manitoba Opera's *Susannah*, Lara Ciekiewicz has established herself as a dynamic, intelligent, and moving singing-actress. Her facility for fully transforming into a character, regardless of genre, has earned her the reputation of being an artistic chameleon.

Last season also saw Ms. Ciekiewicz as Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) and Suor Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*) for Pacific Opera Victoria's *Il Trittico*; as a soloist for the Victoria Symphony's *Messiah*; and make her Edmonton Opera debut as the Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

Select additional credits include Jenůfa, *Jenůfa* and Amelia, *Simon Boccanegra* (Pacific Opera Victoria); Tatyana, *Eugene Onegin* (Calgary Opera); May, *Ours* and Maria, *The Sound of Music* (Opera on the Avalon); Rosalinde, *Die Fledermaus* (Toronto Operetta Theatre).

Lara Ciekiewicz is a voice instructor with the Desautels Faculty of Music, University of Manitoba. She enjoys gardening, is an avid walker, loves fabulous footwear, and is a self-professed prairie girl forever.

# **The Artists**



Company, and Calgary Opera.

# **Tracy Dahl**

Canada's premiere coloratura soprano Tracy Dahl began her performing career at the RMTC in the rock-musical *Grease*, and soon after performed in school tours for Manitoba Opera. She has appeared in opera houses and on concert stages around the globe including Teatro alla Scala (Milan), Théâtre du Châtelet (Paris), the Metropolitan Opera (NYC), San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, the Canadian Opera

Frequent and favourite roles include Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Marie in *La Fille du Régiment*, Cunegonde in *Candide*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, and Madame Mao in *Nixon in China*.

In 2017, Ms. Dahl was awarded the Order of Canada for her performing career and her work mentoring and teaching the next generation of singers. A voice teacher at the Desautels Faculty of Music, University of Manitoba since 1997, she also conducts master classes and workshops across North America.



# **Monica Huisman**

Dutch Canadian Monica Huisman has been hailed as possessing a soprano voice that "embodies both flawless technique and dramatic impact" (*Opera Canada*). Ms. Huisman has delighted audiences from Amsterdam's Concertgebouw to Guatemala City with the reputation of her "silken voice consistently crafting each note into a work of art" (*Winnipeg Free Press*).

She has delighted Canadian opera houses from coast to coast in productions including *Cunning Little Vixen*, *H.M.S Pinafore*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Falstaff*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Lakme*, and *Transit of Venus*.

Equally at home in concert repertoire, Ms. Huisman has thrilled audiences with the NACO, TSO, Guatemala Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic, VSO, WSO, RSO, SSO, Concertgebouw Orkest, Radio-Symphony Orkest, and Orchestra London in such works as Strauss' *Four Last Songs*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Vaughn Williams' *Sea Symphony*.

Recent engagements include Don Giovanni with MO and Mozart's Requiem with the WSO.



# Andrea Lett

Praised for her "clear voice soaring to stratospheric heights" (*Opera Canada*), Andrea Lett recently sang the roles of Zerlina in Manitoba Opera's 2018 production of *Don Giovanni* and Berta in 2019's *The Barber of Seville*. She has also sung Musetta (*La Bohème*) for Saskatoon Opera and both Queen of the Night and Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for Manitoba Underground Opera.

Ms. Lett has covered the roles of Gilda (*Rigoletto*) for Edmonton

Opera, 2019; Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) Santa Fe Opera, 2017 (apprentice singer); and was principal cover for Ah Sing (*Girls of the Golden West*) for San Francisco Opera.

Awards include the CBC Young Artist's Development Prize, Audience Choice Award in the 2018 COC Center Stage Gala, and first prize in the 2018 Women's Musical Club McLellan Competition.

Andrea Lett is a graduate of the Opera School at the University of Toronto (M. Mus Opera) and holds a B. Mus Perf from the University of Manitoba.



# Lara Secord-Haid

Ms. Secord-Haid is enjoying a diverse and dynamic international career. Recent performances include Governess, *Turn of the Screw* (Nashville Opera); Sophie, *Werther* (Manitoba Opera); concerts in the Jeonju International Sori Festival in Korea and Opera Helikon in Moscow; a 15-city operatic concert tour throughout China; Cendrillon, *Cendrillon* (New York Lyric Opera); a solo concert with Opera San Miguel (San Miguel, Mexico); Marsinah, *Kismet* (Little Opera Winnipeg); Marzelline, *Fidelio* (Manitoba Opera); and 3

Settings of Celan by Harrison Birtwistle with the AXIOM Ensemble at Lincoln Center.

Described as "possessing a rich and expressive overall quality" (*Attencion San Miguel*) and praised for her "flinty acuity" by the *New York Times*, Lara Secord-Haid is the 2017 winner of the prestigious George London Award and was first place winner of the Upper Midwest Regional Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

She holds a Master of Music from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music from The New England Conservatory of Music.



# Lida Szkwarek

Lida Szkwarek is thrilled to be debuting with Manitoba Opera in The Sopranos of Winnipeg concert. Establishing herself as a prominent young artist on the Canadian opera scene, Ms. Szkwarek most recently sang Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* with Edmonton Opera. In 2017, she had the honour of remounting the title role in Estacio's *Filumena* for which she received great critical acclaim.

Other past performances include Micaëla (*Carmen*) Edmonton Opera; Erste Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*) Calgary Opera; Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) Saskatoon Opera; and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) The Banff Centre. Ms. Szkwarek has also performed with several of Canada's finest symphonies including the Guelph Symphony Orchestra and Niagara Symphony Orchestra.

A graduate of the Calgary Emerging Artist Program, Ms. Szkwarek had the opportunity to sing on the Met stage as a semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions.



# Kathryn Ball stage manager

Kathryn is thrilled to be working on this project, not only because she is surrounded by such incredibly talented sopranos, but also because she feels blessed to be working in the arts during this crazy time in which we are living.

Ms. Ball has been working on productions with Manitoba Opera since 2007 and is delighted to be stage managing her first production with the company. Her most recent productions with

MO are Susannah and The Barber of Seville.

She also works with other arts organizations in Winnipeg and across Canada. Some of her favourite productions include *Matilda* (RMTC), *Once* (Citadel), *Nutcracker* (RWB), *Mary Poppins* (Globe Theatre), and *The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble* (PTE).

She hopes you are staying safe and finding ways to enjoy the arts however you can.

# Angel Blue (Violetta) and Adam Luther (Alfredo), La Traviata, Manitoba Opera, 2018. Photo: C. Corneau

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# **The Artists**



# Zahra Larche Assistant stage MANAGER

Originally from Gatineau, QC, Zahra Larche is a 2017 graduate of the National Theatre School's production program.

Recent/select credits include as Stage Manager: *The Drawer Boy* (Hudson Village Theatre); *Miss Julie, The Dumbwaiter* (NTSC); Resident for the 2017/2018 seasons of the Gros Morne Theatre Festival; *Shape of a Girl* (Cart Before the Horse). As Assistant SM: *Bang Bang* (RMTC, The Belfry Theatre). As Apprentice SM:

The Barber of Seville (Manitoba Opera); Buying the Farm, Vietgone, Matilda the Musical, The Humans (RMTC); The Halloween Tree (Geordie); Pericles Prince of Tyre (A Company of Fools).

A very special thanks to my parents, my family, and friends from Gatineau to Tasmania, Ilana Modulevsky, Patrick Michalishyn, and my graduating class at NTS.

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Soprano Tracy Dahl joins Dr. MacEwan on a walk.

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# 2020/21

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