



# MANITOBA OPERA



2020/21  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



MANITOBA OPERA

**OUR MISSION**

TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S  
LIVES THROUGH THE  
GLORY OF OPERA.

MBOPERA.CA





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## LARRY DESROCHERS

The 2021/22 season was one of re-invention, re-programming, and resilience. Early in the pandemic, Manitoba Opera (MO) identified the key attributes of our in-person artistic, education, and community engagement programming. These attributes formed the foundation for our video content creation, ensuring that the high-quality work that we normally present to live audiences would be replicated online. Professionalism, relevance, interaction, and social connection were just some of the attributes that staff considered as programming evolved over the course of the year.

In all, the company produced or presented 43 artistic, educational, engagement, or special projects. Activities were livestreamed, recorded, or presented on Zoom. Manitoba Opera provided work opportunities for more than 200 artists and craftspeople/professionals and connected with local and international audiences.



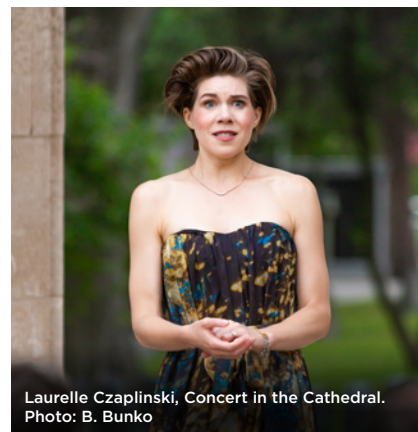
Aaron Hutton and Lisa Rumpel, The Solo Sessions [video].

An outdoor concert at the ruins of St. Boniface Cathedral in late August was the only event of the year attended by a live audience – all 50 invited guests were masked and socially distanced.

With the cancellation of the season opening production of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, we opened our “mainstage” season with The Sopranos of Winnipeg in November. This livestreamed concert with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra featured the talents of seven outstanding sopranos who call our city home: Tracy Dahl, Andriana Chuchman, Lara Ciekiewicz, Monica Huisman, Lida Szkwarek, Andrea Lett, and Lara Secord-Haid. Originally planned for a small in-person audience before a full lockdown was declared a week prior, the concert was viewed nearly 1,000 times by an estimated 2,100 individuals. The concert also featured opening remarks from the company’s season sponsor BMO, presented by Regional Vice President - Personal, Kristen Kennedy.

As the season progressed, changing health regulations, both locally and in other provinces, forced us to replace planned projects with smaller, more manageable ones.

The cancellation of *Tosca* was communicated to patrons in January. A planned concert in February featuring some of



Laurelle Czaplinski, Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko

Canada’s BIPOC artists was cancelled due to the continuing pandemic. We tried to replace that event with a video recital series featuring artists across Canada, but this was also cancelled after filming was prohibited during lockdowns in Toronto and Montreal. A livestream concert that would have featured singers from Western Canada was similarly cancelled after the Western travel bubble was dissolved.

We eventually produced a video project called The Solo Sessions, which launched the last week of May. Directed by award-winning director Deco Dawson, this five-episode cinematic concert series showcased musical genres from opera to folk, musical theatre, pop music, and everything in between. Featured vocalists were tenor and Manitoba Opera favourite James McLennan; Lisa Bell, a singer, actress, and songwriter who recently starred in the movie musical *Stand!*; Aaron



Hutton, an award-winning and sought-after crossover vocalist; Lizzy Hoyt, a mezzo-soprano, fiddler, and award-winning Celtic singer-songwriter; and singer-actor Stephanie Sy.

In April, a video of members of the Manitoba Opera Chorus performing the Easter Hymn from *Cavalleria Rusticana* with solo soprano Lara Ciekiewicz reached more than 30,000 impressions on Facebook.

We also supported Little Opera Company's opera game show video series *All Those Arias* which was released throughout the month of May.

In August 2020, Manitoba Opera launched the Digital Emerging Artists Program (DEAP). This four-week professional development program was created to help young opera singers build careers online. Four outstanding singers were selected from applicants across Canada to participate in this fully paid online learning opportunity, and all four found career success in video opera projects post-graduation. The 2020 DEAP created 40 jobs for artists across the country at a time when stages around the country had gone dark.

Our education programming was also successfully reimagined. A family-friendly video production of *The Barber of Seville as Styled* by Al Simmons was presented for free in March and viewed over 3,300 times. Four episodes of *Opera Storytime*, a web series featuring local personalities reading children's books with an opera theme, have been viewed over 390 times. We also created a six-episode Opera

School online series designed to inspire children to create their own operas by exploring Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Our three-episode Opera in the Garden web series, released in the fall of 2020, showcased local singers in private gardens and was hosted by *Winnipeg Free Press* gardening columnist Colleen Zacharias.

Throughout the season, online community engagement events like Virtual Paint Class, Bravo Book Club, and Pizza, Beer & Craft Night have brought Winnipeggers together to enjoy artistic activities, great food, and operatic treats. In February, more than 500 patrons tuned into a free movie stream of *Bel Canto* hosted by Manitoba Opera.

A new partnership with The Winnipeg Boldness Project, an Indigenous-led organization working to improve outcomes for children in the underserved Point Douglas neighbourhood, was also formed this past season. The Winnipeg Boldness Project connected Manitoba Opera to five families with a total of 16 children who were interested in viewing *The Barber of Seville as Styled* by



Al Simmons. We delivered viewing packages to each family that included themed colouring pages, crayons, snacks, and a study guide.

We took our popular Dinner at De Luca's event online with De Luca's at Home: part cooking show, part opera performance, part virtual dining experience. Its continued popularity resulted in three versions of the dinner being held over the season.

Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen our governance, professional development, and organization building practices so that the company will remain strong through the remainder of the pandemic and beyond.

As we look back on the year, we're thankful for the generous support of public funders, donors, patrons, and sponsors. With that support Manitoba Opera was able to respond, in a time of crisis, with reinvention, reprogramming, and resiliency.

"My tears weren't just because of the beautiful singing (what a city! to have such talent), but also because we just miss our rich cultural life."

**PATRON**  
The Sopranos of Winnipeg

# ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

## MANITOBA OPERA'S 2020/21 SEASON WAS A SEASON UNLIKE ANY THAT PRECEDED IT.

### CONCERT IN THE CATHEDRAL LIVE RECITAL

As the pandemic spread, and event after event was either postponed or cancelled across the city and the province during the spring and summer of 2020, an opportunity presented itself for us to host a small outdoor concert at the end of August.

Following public health protocols in place at the time, we presented a 90-minute recital in the ruins of the St. Boniface Cathedral the evening of Sunday, August 23.



James McLennan, Concert in the Cathedral.  
Photo: B. Bunko

The Winnipeg-based artists featured were sopranos Andriana Chuchman and Lara Ciekiewicz, mezzo-soprano Laurelle Czaplinski, and tenor James McLennan. Tadeusz Biernacki was the collaborative pianist for all four singers.

The performance was attended by a masked and socially distanced audience of approximately 50 people.

### THE SOPRANOS OF WINNIPEG LIVESTREAM CONCERT

In the fall of 2020 it became increasingly apparent that due to the pandemic, and with the safety of the performers, the production staff, and the audience in mind, our season-opening production of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* would not be able to proceed as planned. We were, however, still hopeful that some live

performance opportunities would be possible in the fall. With that in mind, we decided to move forward with a mixed-repertoire concert which would feature the orchestra and a sampling of the wealth of opera talent residing here in Winnipeg. Seven (SEVEN!) sopranos who have graced stages across Canada, throughout North America, and around the world would be featured: (alphabetically) Andriana Chuchman, Lara Ciekiewicz, Tracy Dahl, Monica Huisman, Andrea Lett, Lara Secord-Haid, and Lida Szkwarek. Manitoba Opera Chorus Master and Assistant Music Director, Tadeusz Biernacki, would lead a reduced and physically distanced 40-member Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in a concert of arias and orchestral selections.

In co-operation with the management of the Centennial Concert Hall, as well as our colleagues at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB) and the



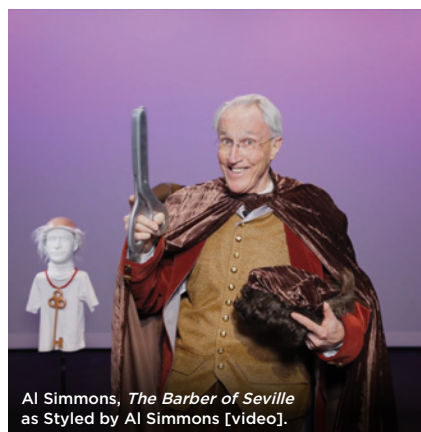
(L-R) Lara Secord-Haid, Andriana Chuchman, Monica Huisman, Lida Szkwarek, Lara Ciekiewicz, Tracy Dahl, Andrea Lett, and Tadeusz Biernacki (front), The Sopranos of Winnipeg. Photo: B. Bunko



Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO), a plan was put into place to allow for reduced-capacity audiences to attend events in the Hall. Our colleagues at the WSO successfully held two concerts on the weekend of October 3, and then the pandemic returned with a fresh wave of new infections. As the Province moved to Code Red in their pandemic response plan, we made the decision to proceed with the concert without an audience being present in the Hall. Instead, the plan was altered to stream the live concert over the internet. With assistance and technical expertise from the staff and crew from AVentPro, we were able to successfully stream the concert to the audience in their homes the evening of Saturday, November 7.

### THE BARBER OF SEVILLE AS STYLED BY AL SIMMONS VIDEO

In late winter, thanks to special funding from the provincial government's Safe at Home Manitoba program, as well as support from Manitoba Hydro, Payworks, and Canada Life, the company was able to produce a video version of Al Simmons' hit show *The Barber of Seville*.



Al Simmons, *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons [video].

Commissioned by Manitoba Opera in 2009 as a 45-minute performance for student groups, this wonderfully witty show has toured several times throughout Manitoba. Al's version of Rossini's famous opera is full of his signature style and charming story-telling, with clever pop culture references and commentary.

The video was filmed over five days at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's (RMTTC) Tom Hendry Warehouse Theatre digital studio facility, in partnership with Moose Toque Productions. The video was released online on March 20 and was available to be viewed for free until March 28. It became an instant hit with audiences of all ages and was so popular with schools that educational viewing was extended until April 18.

Manitoba Hydro also donated three \$200 prize packs which contained a variety of safety, first aid, and emergency supplies and were awarded to three lucky viewers: Shirley Lowe, Beverley Emes-Macklin, and Sandra Komishon.

### "EASTER HYMN" VIDEO

The value of the contributions of time, energy, and talent made by the individual members of the Manitoba Opera Chorus toward the success of our productions cannot be understated. Given that choral singing in any form may be one of the last activities to return once pandemic-related concerns begin to ease, it was important to recognize these valuable members of the community and to give our



Lara Ciekiewicz, *Easter Hymn* [video].

chorus an opportunity in the 2020/21 season to do what they do so well – perform. We decided to invite the chorus to participate in a record-yourself-at-home video of the “Easter Hymn” from the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni.

At the time, similar recording projects were being released regularly by choirs and various singing groups around the world. Rather than produce something resembling those other projects, we wanted to create a video that was unique. We engaged the services of videographer and filmmaker Laina Brown to conceive a visual concept that would speak to the themes of spring: renewal, regrowth, and rebirth. Local soprano, Lara Ciekiewicz, was engaged to sing the soprano solo.

Chorus Master, Tadeusz Biernacki, led the chorus through a series of online rehearsals via Zoom, and once they were prepared, they each made a series of recordings of themselves performing the work. Audio engineer Joe Dudych took each of the individual recordings and combined their audio tracks to produce a single audio track, while Laina Brown used the chorus video footage, as well as footage shot in and

around the ruins of the Trappist monastery in St. Norbert to produce the final product.

The video was released online on April 2, 2021 (Good Friday). To date, it has been viewed over 16,000 times on Facebook.

## THE SOLO SESSIONS VIDEO SERIES

We had planned to present Puccini's *Tosca* in the spring of 2021. We decided to cancel the production early in the year when it became apparent that it would not be possible to produce. Performing for a live audience was not an option due to Provincial COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings; another streamed concert with the WSO was not possible as they had reduced their performance roster of musicians into smaller cohorts; and it was not possible to bring artists in from outside the province due to their need to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

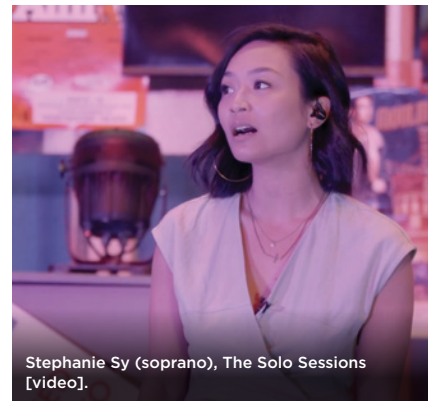
In place of this mainstage production, we decided to make video recordings featuring five local artists and their collaborative pianists in recital – some of whom would not be familiar to Manitoba Opera audiences and featuring some repertoire choices that falls well outside the norm for an opera company. Aaron Hutton (tenor) with Lisa Rumpel (piano) presented a selection of early 20th century English parlour songs. The program from James McLennan (tenor) and Laura Loewen (piano) included a song by Manitoba-born composer, Jocelyn Morlock, and an aria from John Corigliano's opera,

*The Ghosts of Versailles*. Lizzy Hoyt (mezzo-soprano) and Lisa Rumpel (piano) performed a mix of traditional English folksong, Mozart, and French chansons. Stephanie Sy, with Seanne Buenefe (piano), gave us a sampling of contemporary music-theatre selections. Singer/actress Lisa Bell let loose with a set of rhythm and blues and Motown classics with Carlin Lemon (piano), Julian Bradford (bass), and Rob Siwik (drums).

Our film production partners on this project were Linda Nelson and Norm Lussier at YaYo Productions. Award-winning Manitoba film director Deco Dawson was engaged to conceptualize and film each of the performers' selections. We filmed the various performers over five days – one artist and their collaborator(s) per day – on the stage of the Centennial Concert Hall while observing COVID safety protocols as established by the Manitoba film industry. The recordings and footage were mixed and edited, and the final product was released online via Vimeo in early June.

Manitoba Opera remains proud of the relationships it has developed over the years with many of North America's finest artists. The company continues to offer exciting opportunities for both established and emerging artists to develop their craft, and MO's production department strives to create an environment where these artists can do their best work.

We will be honoured to once again welcome these artists to the company. We look forward to the day



Stephanie Sy (soprano), *The Solo Sessions* [video].

we can bring these great stories, told through beautiful music, to life once more.

## AS WE SAY BACKSTAGE, "STAND BY."

## ALL THOSE ARIAS: THE GAME SHOW VIDEO SERIES

We were approached by our friends at the Little Opera Company of Winnipeg (LOC) and given the opportunity to lend financial, technical, and administrative assistance to a project of theirs – a three-part video series entitled *All Those Arias: The Game Show*.

Conceived, written, and directed by Winnipeg-based director Robert Herriot, the project was recorded over a period of five days at the RMTC Tom Hendry Warehouse Digital Studio with an in-house video/audio crew. Among the local performers featured in the series were mezzo-soprano Lizzy Hoyt, and sopranos Dawn Bruch-Wiens, Lara Ciekiewicz, Tracy Dahl, Andrea Lett, and Lara Secord-Haid.

This series was released in early spring, 2021.

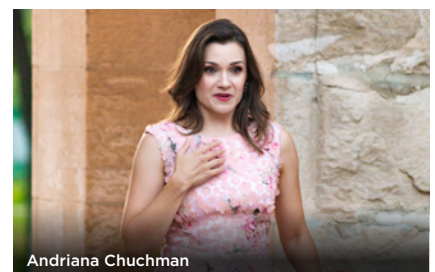
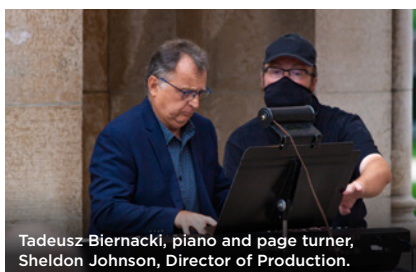


# CONCERT IN THE *Cathedral* LIVE EVENT By Invitation Only

Sunday, August 23, 2020  
St. Boniface Cathedral Ruins

## ARTISTS

<b>Soprano</b>	Andriana Chuchman
<b>Soprano</b>	Lara Ciekiewicz
<b>Mezzo-Soprano</b>	Laurelle Czaplinski
<b>Tenor</b>	James McLennan
<b>Piano</b>	Tadeusz Biernacki
<b>Host</b>	Larry Desrochers





# THE Sopranos OF WINNIPEG

## LIVESTREAM CONCERT

Saturday, November 7, 2020

Centennial Concert Hall

### ARTISTS

Andriana Chuchman

Lara Ciekiewicz

Tracy Dahl

Monica Huisman

Andrea Lett

Lara Secord-Haid

Lida Szkwarek

**Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra**

**Conducted by** Tadeusz Biernacki

**Hosted by**

Larry Desrochers  
Darlene Ronald

### PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

**Stage Manager**

Kathryn Ball

**Assistant Stage Manager**

Zahra Larche

**Centennial Concert Hall**

**Stage Manager**

Dave Martin

**Centennial Concert Hall**

**Light Board Operator**

Brian Mann



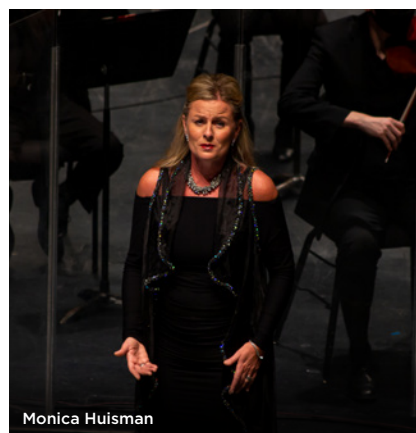
Andrea Lett



Lara Secord-Haid



Lida Szkwarek



Monica Huisman

**Centennial Concert Hall**  
**Sound Board Operator**  
Glen Jonatchick

**Video Production Services**  
**Provided By**  
AventPro





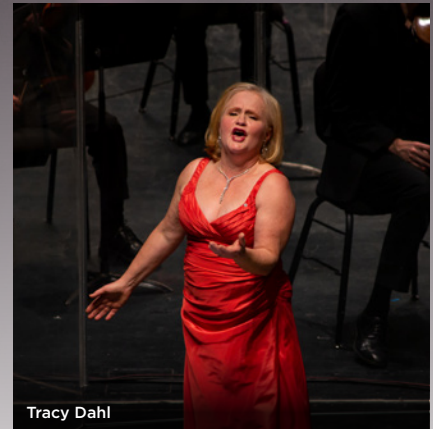
Tracy Dahl, Andriana Chuchman, Lara Ciekiewicz, Monica Huisman, Lida Szkwarek, Lara Secord-Haid, and Andrea Lett



Lara Ciekiewicz



Andriana Chuchman



Tracy Dahl

## WINNIPEG SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2020/21

### FIRST VIOLINS

Gwen Hoebig  
CONCERTMASTER  
Karl Stobbe  
ASSOCIATE  
CONCERTMASTER  
Chris Anstey  
Mona Coarda  
Jeff Dyrda  
Tara Fensom  
Hong Tian Jia  
Mary Lawton  
Sonia Shklarov  
Julie Savard  
Jun Shao

### SECOND VIOLINS

Jeremy Buzash  
PRINCIPAL  
Elation Pauls  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Karen Bauch  
Kristina Bauch  
Elizabeth Dyer  
Bokyung Hwang  
Rodica Jeffrey  
Susan McCallum  
Takayo Noguchi  
Jane Pulford

### VIOLAS

Daniel Scholz  
PRINCIPAL  
Elise Lavallée  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Marie-Elyse Badeau  
Laszlo Baroczi  
Richard Bauch  
Greg Hay  
Michael Scholz  
\*Heather Wilson

### CELLOS

Yuri Hooker  
PRINCIPAL  
Alex Adaman  
Arlene Dahl  
Emma Quackenbush  
Alyssa Ramsay  
Sean Taubner

### BASSES

Meredith Johnson  
PRINCIPAL  
Andrew Goodlett  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Bruce Okrainec  
Daniel Perry  
Eric Timperman

### FLUTES

Jan Kocman  
PRINCIPAL  
Alex Conway

### OBOES

Beverly Wang  
PRINCIPAL  
Robin MacMillan

### ENGLISH HORN

Robin MacMillan  
PRINCIPAL

### CLARINETS

Micah Heilbrunn  
PRINCIPAL  
Taylor Eiffert

### BASSOONS

Kathryn Brooks  
PRINCIPAL

### HORNS

Patricia Evans  
PRINCIPAL  
Ken MacDonald  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
Aiden Kleer  
Caroline Oberheu  
Michiko Singh



Host Darlene Ronald, Director of Marketing

### TRUMPETS

Chris Fensom  
PRINCIPAL  
Paul Jeffrey  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
Isaac Pulford

### TROMBONES

Steven Dyer  
PRINCIPAL  
Keith Dyrda

### BASS TROMBONE

Tamas Markovics  
PRINCIPAL

### TUBA

Jarrett McCourt  
PRINCIPAL

### TIMPANI

Mike Kemp  
PRINCIPAL

### PERCUSSION

Andrew Johnson  
PRINCIPAL

### HARP

Richard Turner  
PRINCIPAL

**Orchestra  
Personnel Manager**

Greg Hay

**Principal Librarian**

Greg Hamilton

# THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

as styled by Al Simmons

LIMITED VIDEO RELEASE

March 2021

## CAST

AL SIMMONS  
AS EVERYONE!

**Project Manager**  
Sheldon Johnson

## MOOSE TOQUE PRODUCTIONS

**Director** Alex White  
**Producer** James Hiebert

**Camera Operator**  
Dave Swiecicki

**Production Assistant**  
Ben Weismann



IMAGES CAPTURED FROM VIDEO



# Easter Hymn

From *Cavalleria Rusticana* (P. Mascagni)

## VIDEO

Released April 2, 2021

### Music Director

Tadeusz Biernacki

### Soloist

Lara Ciekiewicz, soprano



Lara Ciekiewicz

## PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

### Director

Laina Brown

### Audio Mixing & Editing

Joe Dudych

### Co-Director

Taylor Brown

### Camera Operators

Laina Brown  
Taylor Brown

### Animation

Brandon Letkeman

### Video Editing

Laina Brown  
Taylor Brown

### Soprano

Carolyn Boyes  
Janine Brémault-Bamford  
Linda Feasby  
Deborah Ginther  
Kadri Irwin  
Joanne Kilfoyle  
Katherine Mayba  
Ana Toumine  
Cathy Wach-Dueck

### Alto

Ember Benson  
Donnalynn Grills  
Micheline Hay  
Celoris Miller  
Jane Petroff  
Christina Pyrz-Kowall  
Karla Weir

### Tenor

Peter John (PJ) Buchan  
Matthew Baron  
Russ Foster  
Peter Klymkiw  
Michal Kowalik  
David LaRue  
George Nytepchuk  
J. Craig Oliphant  
Lawrence Pauls  
Raymond Sokalski

### Bass

David Boyes  
Chris Caslake  
James Dutton  
Alex Hryndzio  
Don Larsen  
Dan Szymanski  
Jonathan Talbot  
Jean van der Merwe  
Ted Wiens

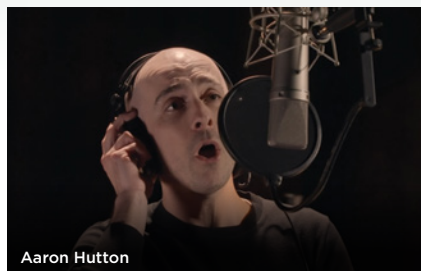
## MANITOBA OPERA CHORUS



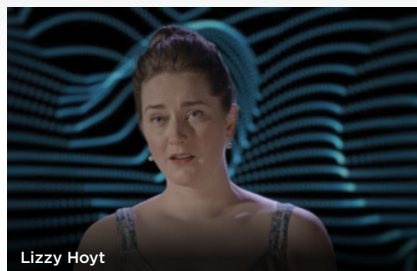
# THE Solo SESSIONS

VIDEO SERIES  
Released on Vimeo on Demand

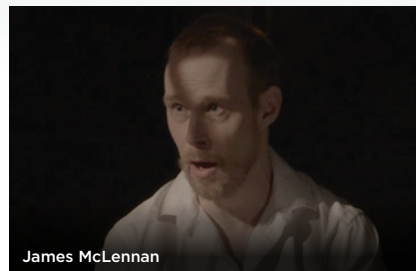
June 2021



Aaron Hutton



Lizzy Hoyt



James McLennan

## EPISODE 1

**Vocals** Aaron Hutton

**Piano** Lisa Rumpel

**"Love Is My Reason"**  
Written by Ivor Novello

**"We'll Gather Lilacs"**  
Written by Ivor Novello

**"I'll Follow My Secret Heart"**  
(From *Conversation Piece*)  
Written by Noël Coward  
Under license from WB Music Corp. o/b/o  
Chappell Music Ltd.

**"Let My Song Fill Your Heart"**  
Written by Ernest Charles  
Under license from Peermusic Canada  
Inc c/o Copyright G. Schirmer Inc.

## EPISODE 2

**Vocals/Guitar** Lizzy Hoyt

**Piano** Lisa Rumpel

**"Beau soir"**  
Written by Claude Debussy

**"Mandoline"**  
(From *Cinq Mélodies de Venise* -  
*Op. 58*)  
Written by Gabriel Fauré

**"Laudamus te"**  
(From *Mass in C Minor* - KV 427)  
Written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

**"The Snows They Melt  
the Soonest"**  
Trad. (British)

## EPISODE 3

**Vocals** James McLennan

**Piano** Laura Loewen

**"Train"**  
Written by Jocelyn Morlock  
Under license from the composer

**Banalités: No. 2 "Hôtel"**  
Written by Francis Poulenc

**Banalités: No. 4 "Voyage à Paris"**  
Written by Francis Poulenc

**"Aria of the Worm"**  
(From *The Ghosts of Versailles*)  
Written by John Corigliano  
Under license from Peermusic Canada  
Inc. c/o Copyright G. Schirmer Inc.

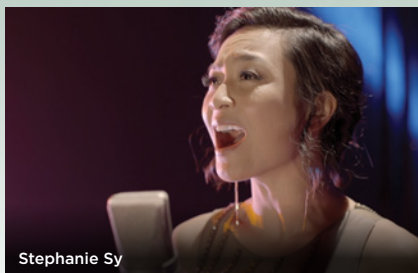




Aaron Hutton



Rob Siwik (drums), Lisa Bell (vocals), Julian Bradford (guitar), and Carlin Lemon (piano)



Stephanie Sy



Lisa Bell

## EPISODE 4

**Vocals** Stephanie Sy  
**Piano** Seanne Buenafe

### "What Baking Can Do"

(From *Waitress*)  
 Written by Sara Bareilles  
 Under license from Sony/ATV Tunes LLC and  
 Tiny Bear Music c/o Sony/ATV Tunes LLC

### "No One Else"

(From *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*)  
 Written by Dave Malloy  
 Under license from United Talent c/o Blue  
 Wizard Music

### "When It All Falls Down"

(From *Chaplin - The Musical*)  
 Written by Christopher Curtis  
 Under license from Christopher Patrick  
 Curtis Music

### "Little Voice"

(From *Little Voice - Apple TV*)  
 Written by Sara Bareilles  
 Under license from Tiny Bear Music  
 c/o Sony/ATV Tunes LLC

## EPISODE 5

**Vocals** Lisa Bell  
**Piano** Carlin Lemon  
**Bass** Julian Bradford  
**Drums** Rob Siwik

### "At Last"

Written by Mac Gordon  
 and Harry Warren  
 Under license from EMI Feist Catalog Inc.

### "What's Going On"

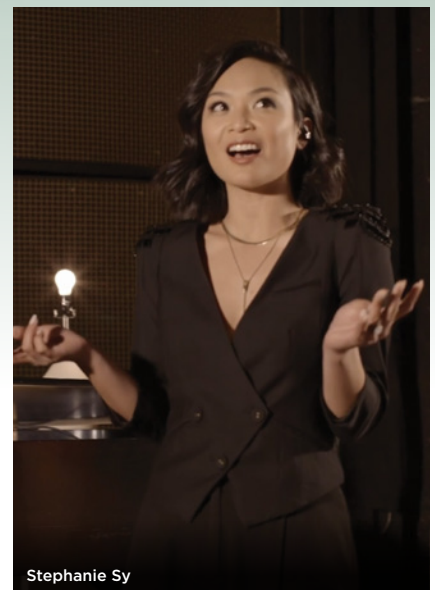
Written by Al Cleveland, Renaldo  
 Benson, and Marvin Gaye  
 Under license from Mjiii Mistic, Nmg Music,  
 Feg Music, Stone Agate Music Corp., and  
 Jobete Music Co. Inc.

### "Stand"

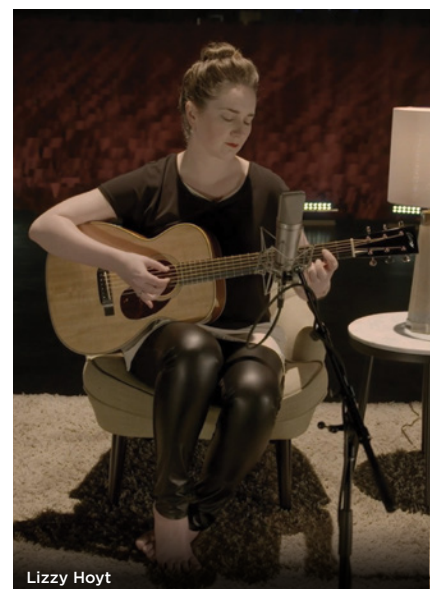
Written by Danny Schur  
 Arrangement by Carlin Lemon  
 (From *Strike!/Stand*)  
 Under license from the composer

### "I Will Survive"

Written by Freddie Perren and Dino  
 Fekaris  
 Under license from Universal -  
 Polygram International Pub Inc.



Stephanie Sy



Lizzy Hoyt

## THE SOLO SESSIONS PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

**Director/Editor/Colourist**  
Deco Dawson

**Executive Producer**  
Larry Desrochers

**Producers**  
Linda Nelson  
Norm Lussier

**Production Supervisor**  
Sheldon Johnson

### FILM CREW

**Gaffer**  
João Luiz Holowka

**1st Camera Operator/JIB Operator**  
Claude Savard

**2nd Camera Operator/Drone Pilot**  
Tanner Grywinski

**3rd Camera Operator**  
Laina Brown

**1st Camera Assistant**  
Ryan Hanson

**2nd Camera Assistant**  
Adam Yarish

**Audio Recording Engineer**  
Lloyd Peterson

**Audio Mix Engineer/Editor**  
Norm Lussier

**Grip**  
Julian Saray

**Dit**  
Natalie Lussier

**Loader**  
Steve Nelson

### CENTENNIAL CONCERT HALL PERSONNEL

**General Manager**  
Martin Kull

**Stage Manager**  
Dave Martin

**Head Of Sound**  
Glen Jonatchick

**Head Of Electrics**  
Brian Mann

### STAGE CREW

**Head Carpenter**  
Douglas Kiddell  
Head Flyman  
John Shopka

**Head Wardrobe**  
Nancy Puttaert

**Gaffer Assistant**  
Lloyd Fox Jr.

**Camera Assistants**  
John Gallagher  
Craig Hollens  
Bernie Rondeau  
Craig Strong

**Audio Assistants**  
Neil Cameron  
Kevin Davis

**Stagehands**  
Robert Burdey  
Shane Gowler  
Terry Mueller  
Robert J. Smith

**Make-Up**  
Christian Hadley

**1st & 2nd Assistant Directors**  
Kathryn Ball  
Heather Lee Brereton

**Covid Safety Supervisor**  
Nathan Costa

**Nurse**  
Meghan Stewart

**Stand-In**  
Andrew Sanger

## COMPANY SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL PILOT PROGRAM TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF OPERA

In February, Manitoba Opera was selected as one of six Canadian opera companies to participate in the pilot program for the Association for Opera in Canada's Opera Impact Platform.

The Opera Impact Platform is a data collection tool designed by Sametrica (software firm) with Good Roots Consulting (strategy and evaluation firm dedicated to helping nonprofits), that will help standardize the way that opera companies collect and

report data, primarily through surveys. This will help to better understand the civic impact and resilience of Canadian opera companies, both locally in their home communities and in the national landscape.

Manitoba Opera is no stranger to utilizing this tool as the company has collected data through anonymous surveying of patrons for our main stage, education, community engagement, and special events/fundraising programming for years.

As participants in the pilot program, MO staff were able to help guide the design of

survey tools for measuring the impact of programs in those areas. Those tools will be ready for use by the six companies in the Opera Impact Platform pilot in the fall with the aim of then releasing the survey tools to the wider opera community.

The goal of this pilot project is to make it easier for opera companies to quantify the impact that their programming has for their many constituent groups, and to report on that impact to funders, sponsors, and other stakeholders using consistent language and questions.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In response to the cancellation of live performances and their related community engagement activities, Manitoba Opera created a series of virtual experiences to maintain connections to the community.

## OPERA IN THE GARDEN

The first community engagement offering combined two of life's beautiful things: gardens and opera into a three-part video series of show-stopping gardens topped off with vocal performances at each site.

Launched in October, the approximately 20-minute videos featured a virtual walk around each property with the owner and plant enthusiast Colleen Zacharias, the *Winnipeg Free Press* gardening columnist and Certified Prairie Horticulturalist/Certified Master Gardener.

Plans and inspiration for the gardens, challenges



Host Colleen Zacharias chats about the garden with home owner Melva Whiddicombe.

and successes, along with gardening advice were shared. This was interwoven with a selection of opera favourites and contemporary works sung by sopranos Lara Ciekiewicz and Jessica Kos-Whicher, and tenor James McLennan.

### EPISODE 1: ARMSTRONG'S POINT

Featuring soprano Lara Ciekiewicz, accompanied by Tadeusz Biernacki

Nestled in the historic Armstrong's Point neighborhood, this lush smaller garden packs in a variety of colourful annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees and has had to adapt to a changing environment with the removal of beloved Elm trees in recent years.

### EPISODE 2: ASSINIBOINE LANDING

Featuring tenor James McLennan, accompanied by Tadeusz Biernacki

Overlooking the Assiniboine River just west of Winnipeg, this contemporary residence's garden focal point is a pond complete with a bridge. With numerous seating areas to relax in sun or shade, there's always a chance of spotting visiting wildlife. The property fronts in this neighborhood also feature a wide variety of naturalized prairie plants' boulevard.

### EPISODE 3: MCCREARY ROAD

Featuring soprano Jessica Kos-Whicher, accompanied by Lisa Rumpel

An English garden with fountains, contemporary swimming pool, and country property combine to provide a restful retreat just minutes from city shopping and the Fort Whyte Centre. The gardens feature a riot of colourful perennials and annuals, and an impressive banana tree that overwinters in the basement.

Episodes were \$10 to view; \$25 for all three, plus GST.

## BRAVO BOOK CLUB

This season Manitoba Opera hosted its first-ever book club. The Bravo Book Club, a club for opera lovers to discuss books about or relating to opera, met on Wednesday, February 3. The club gathered on Zoom to discuss the celebrated novel *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett.

The hour-long discussion was moderated by Winnipeg-based journalist and educator Alison Gillmor and was attended by 14 patrons. Special guest soprano Lara Ciekiewicz was able to add a singer's perspective to the discussion.

“Great idea - loved the film. Thanks for giving us at least some opera for those of us who are opera-deprived currently.”

**ANONYMOUS**  
Bravo Book Club  
Participant

### VIRTUAL FILM SCREENING: *BEL CANTO*

On Saturday, February 6, Manitoba Opera hosted a free virtual screening of the 2018 film adaptation of the novel *Bel Canto*. Over 508 People logged on from home on their computers, tablets, internet TVs, and even cell phones to view the film.

Patrons were invited to participate in a discussion about the film later that day, hosted by Alison Gillmor. There were 28 patrons who convened via Zoom to share their thoughts and feedback on the movie.



### VIRTUAL PAINT CLASS

Opera lovers know that opera isn't just about the beautiful music – it also captures audiences with stunning visuals imprinted upon the imagination. As a new way to engage our patrons, we hosted a virtual paint class on Sunday, February 21. Participants received all the necessary supplies delivered directly to their home.

The two-hour Zoom session, led by Kristen Treusch, an art historian who regularly holds in-person paint classes, was attended by 34 adventurous artists. Many were brand new to acrylic painting; others had some experience.

The artists were tasked with creating an Impressionist-inspired version of a scene from Manitoba Opera's 2019 production of *La Traviata* and with Kristen's instruction, the aspiring Monets met the challenge!

### THE WINNIPEG BOLDNESS PROJECT

The 2020/21 season marked the beginning of a new relationship with Indigenous-led social innovation organization The Winnipeg Boldness Project. The Winnipeg Boldness Project's "bold goal" is to have children and families in the Point Douglas Neighbourhood of Winnipeg experience dramatically improved well-being in all aspects of community and self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Following a discussion with the project's director, Diane Roussin,

staff created a viewing experience around a screening of the MO video presentation of *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons that was tailored for members of The Winnipeg Boldness Project's Parent Guide Group. The Parent Guide Group includes five families with 16 children total who reside in Point Douglas. Manitoba Opera created snack packs and themed activities for these families that were delivered to their doorsteps to enhance their viewing experience. Following positive feedback from Boldness, we followed up with links to our Opera Storytime and Opera School videos. We hope to continue growing this partnership in future seasons.



“Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this inspiring workshop.”

**K. SCHWARZ**  
Virtual Paint Class  
Participant



# OPERA in the Garden

## VIDEO SERIES

Released October 2020

### EPISODE 1: ARMSTRONG'S POINT

**Soprano** Lara Ciekiewicz  
**Piano** Tadeusz Biernacki

### EPISODE 2: ASSINIBOINE LANDING

**Tenor** James McLennan  
**Piano** Tadeusz Biernacki

### EPISODE 3: McCREARY ROAD

**Soprano** Jessica Kos-Whicher  
**Piano** Lisa Rumpel

**Series Hosted by** Colleen Zacharias,  
*Winnipeg Free Press*  
Gardening Columnist

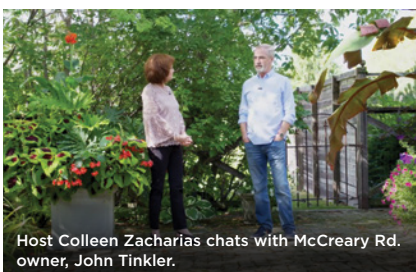
VIDEO PRODUCTION TEAM  
Moose Toque Productions



The Assiniboine Landing shoot. Owner June Bennett and host Colleen Zacharias.



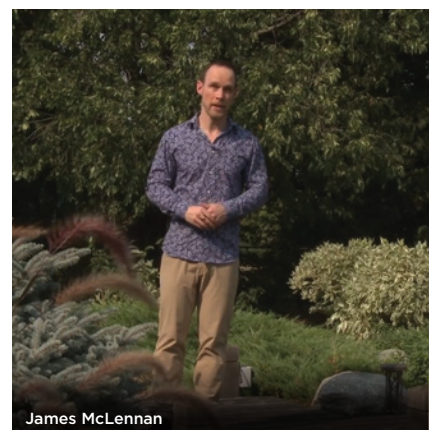
Jessica Kos-Whicher



Host Colleen Zacharias chats with McCreary Rd. owner, John Tinkler.



Lara Ciekiewicz and Tadeusz Biernacki



James McLennan



# STUDENT PROGRAMMING

## INSPIRING THE CHILDREN OF TODAY

TO CREATE THE AUDIENCES OF TOMORROW

The COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to engage with students in their classrooms or have them attend a dress rehearsal this season, but Manitoba Opera took that negative and adapted it to a positive.

The company's creation of digital programming extended the reach of education programs to include students from across Manitoba and beyond the borders of our province.



Al Simmons sports his *William Tell* hat in *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons [video].

As we could not bring singers into schools to participate in I Love to Read Month, we created Opera Storytime so students could listen to opera-related stories in a classroom, a day care, or at home.

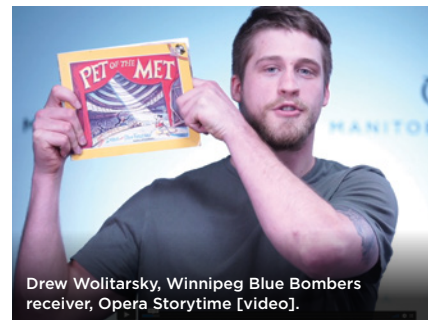
With Opera Class workshops on hold this season, we created Opera School so students could discover how their talents and interests have a home in opera.

And who can forget Al Simmons' inventive and hilarious reimaging of his one-person school presentation of *The Barber of Seville*? The video version was enjoyed by thousands of kids of all ages when it was released for a limited engagement in March/April.

Thank you to Manitoba Opera's leading Education & Community Engagement Sponsor, Canada Life, for helping to bring these programs to Manitoba students.

### OPERA SCHOOL VIDEO SERIES

In recent years, our Opera Class workshops have been in high demand for students in grades 3 to 6. Even though we were unable to bring artists physically into schools this season to present this program, we remained committed to our mission to engage these students in discovering the magic of opera and the ways that their interests and talents can contribute to this powerful storytelling art form.



Drew Wolitarsky, Winnipeg Blue Bombers receiver, Opera Storytime [video].



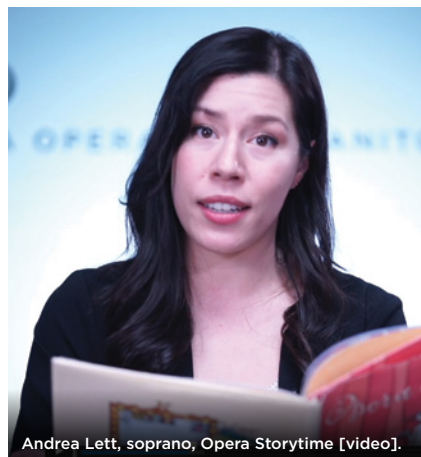
Nolan Kehler (Tamino/Lady 1) and Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck (Papageno/Lady 2) play two roles at once, with Lizzy Hoyt (Lady 3) in this scene from Opera School [video].



Opera School was one such project. This series of six short videos explore how an opera is made. In this series, students follow four young opera artists on their journey to learn about opera as they create their own version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Opera School was filmed in February, directed by Rob Herriot and features soprano Jessica Kos-Whicher, mezzo-soprano Lizzy Hoyt, tenor Nolan Kehler, and baritone Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck. Jessica Kos-Whicher and Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck have both been Opera Class presenters in past seasons.

### OPERA STORYTIME VIDEOS

Opera Storytime is a great introduction to opera for kindergarten to grade 4. This collection of four fun and engaging read-aloud videos features stories about animals who love opera – a cat and dog who both sing opera and a mouse who works at the world-renowned Metropolitan Opera House. The stories were brought to life by talented artists in our community including opera singers and a professional football player!



Andrea Lett, soprano, Opera Storytime [video].

The project was developed in response to the need for at-home arts and literacy engagement for young children during the pandemic. The videos were available for educational viewing from March 5 through September 30, 2021.

### DIDO AND AENEAS VIDEO

In the fall of 2020, the University of Manitoba (U of M) Desautels Faculty of Music Opera Theatre and Symphony Orchestra collaborated, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, to create a one-of-a-kind production of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The production featured an all-female cast. It was filmed with masked and physically distanced singers, as per the provincial guidelines for live performance at that time. Minimal costuming was used, and no set was employed – the action is driven

solely by Purcell's music and through the motion and gesture of the student performers.

Manitoba Opera created an online study guide that featured video segments recorded by U of M performers. In these segments, the cast and musicians speak directly to students about the elements that make up the opera and share their own experiences from the production. This created a unique opportunity for the performers to engage with their audience outside of a traditional performance setting, and for students to explore and digest the opera at their own pace.



*Dido and Aeneas* [video], U of M Opera Theatre and Symphony Orchestra.



Al Simmons, *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons [video].



Nolan Kehler, Lizzy Hoyt, Jessica Kos-Whicher, and Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck on stage, but physically distanced, to film Opera School.

# OPERA Storytime

## VIDEOS

For Schools, Home Schools, and Daycares

Released March 2021



### OPERA CAT

Written by Tess Weaver

Illustrated by

Andréa Wesson

*This reading was presented with permission of the author.*

Guest Reader

Andrea Lett, soprano



### ENCORE, OPERA CAT

Written by Tess Weaver

Illustrated by

Andréa Wesson

*This reading was presented with permission of the author.*

Guest Reader

Stephanie Sy,  
artist/producer



### THE GREAT POOCHINI

Written and

illustrated by Gary Clement

*This reading was presented with permission of Groundwood Books.*

Guest Reader

Spencer Duncanson,  
artist/educator



### PET OF THE MET

Written and illustrated by  
Lydia and Don Freeman

*This reading was presented with permission of Penguin Random House.*

Guest Reader

Drew Wolitarsky, Winnipeg  
Blue Bombers receiver/artist

## VIDEO PRODUCTION TEAM

**Moose Toque Productions**

Alex White  
James Hiebert

**Camera Operator**

Dave Swieckicki

## SOUND

**Private Ear Recording**

Jon Plett



# OPERA SCHOOL

## ONLINE EDUCATION SERIES

For Schools, Home Schools, and Daycares

Released March 2021

### ARTISTS

<b>Soprano</b>	Jessica Kos-Whicher
<b>Mezzo-Soprano</b>	Lizzy Hoyt
<b>Tenor</b>	Nolan Kehler
<b>Baritone</b>	Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck
<b>Piano</b>	Tadeusz Biernacki



Jessica Kos-Whicher (Pamina)



Nolan Kehler (Tamino)

### PRODUCTION TEAM

**Writer/Director**  
Rob Herriot

**Stage Manager**  
Kathryn Ball

**Video and Light**  
Jacqueline Robertson

**Audio Engineer**  
Chris Brett



Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck (Papageno)



Lizzy Hoyt (The Queen of the Night)



Lizzy Hoyt reads aloud from *The Magic Flute*.



Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck (Sarastro), Jessica Kos-Whicher (Pamina), and Nolan Kehler (Tamino)

# DIGITAL EMERGING ARTISTS PROGRAM (DEAP)

## MANITOBA OPERA LAUNCHES VITAL NEW DIGITAL PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

In the summer of 2020, Manitoba Opera embarked upon an ambitious goal: to launch a new program designed to help young opera artists step into the next stage of their careers, at a time when traditional learning and performing opportunities were unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through its Digital Emerging Artists Program (DEAP), Manitoba Opera sought to connect emerging artists with leading professionals from across Canada. Participants were provided with the highest level of vocal instruction and artistic coaching, as well as instruction in creating digital media. Over the span of two months, through conversations with artists, teachers, and administrators of young artist programs for other arts organizations, the arc of

the program came into focus.

The Digital Emerging Artists Program would be a four-week training intensive for young opera artists. The need for social distancing turned out to create a unique opportunity – since all lessons, classes, workshops, and collaboration would occur online, there was no need for participants to travel for the program. This allowed Manitoba Opera to bring together artists, instructors, and presenters from all over Canada. The program involved participants from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and Newfoundland. In all, over 40 artists and arts professionals found earning opportunities through this program that would not otherwise have existed. The core faculty consisted of sopranos Tracy Dahl and Monica Huisman, mezzo-soprano Marion Newman, and tenor John Tessier.

The program resonated with young Canadian artists eager

“My time with DEAP was invaluable...the chance to learn so many new digital skills has opened doors to new opportunities.”

**NICHOLAS BORG, BARITONE**  
Participant

to explore the possibilities of learning and collaborating over digital platforms. There were 48 singers who applied for the 2020 session. Of those, four outstanding artists were selected by the core faculty, one from each voice type. The successful applicants were soprano Sydney Baedke, mezzo-soprano Lizzy Hoyt, tenor Kaden Forsberg, and baritone Nicholas Borg.

From August 4-28, these artists participated in opera training and technology workshops, and enjoyed professional and personal development across a variety of topics including financial advice, brand development, life coaching, and conversations with some



Soprano Monica Huisman teaches a voice lesson remotely from her home office.

“...sets a precedent for how digital programs can successfully support emerging artists as they launch their careers.”

**SYDNEY BAEDKE, SOPRANO**  
Participant



Lisa Rumpel (piano) and Lizzy Hoyt (mezzo-soprano) test out their microphone and video setup.





of Canada's leading opera performers. They experimented with digital media and collaborated on creative projects, finding new ways to connect their unique artistic perspectives. At the end of the four-week program, each of the emerging artists had prepared and recorded an audition video.

These artists went on to embrace new challenges and find new success in the subsequent season.

Nicholas Borg applied the skills he developed through the DEAP to take on video editing projects as a faculty member with Pacific Opera Victoria's Civic Engagement Quartet, and to lead digital production and fundraising initiatives as the Operations

Manager for the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto.

Lizzy Hoyt consolidated her brand, uniting her operatic career and her nationally acclaimed folk music career under one artistic umbrella. This season she was featured in a number of video productions including Manitoba Opera's Opera School series and the Little Opera Company's productions of *Bon Appétit!* and *All Those Arias: The Game Show*.

Kaden Forsberg participated in Pacific Opera Victoria's

Civic Engagement Quartet, and his trio Volare Tenors reached audiences digitally all across Canada, developing live streamed and video productions for Opera NUOVA, the Grindstone Theatre, Edmonton Opera, and the University of Alberta's opera workshop program.

Sydney Baedke was named a winner of the North Carolina Metropolitan Opera National Council District Auditions in their first ever digitally formatted competition and advanced to the Regional Competition in March 2021. She was an apprentice with Santa Fe Opera in the summer of 2021 understudying Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*.

**"Digitizing an acoustic experience like opera isn't easy and this program took that challenge seriously...[DEAP] equipped me to be even more creative and competitive..."**

**KADEN FORSBERG, TENOR**  
Participant

## FACULTY, COACHES, AND GUEST PRESENTERS

### Core Voice Faculty

Tracy Dahl  
Monica Huisman  
Marion Newman  
John Tessier

### Collaborative Piano

Tadeusz Biernacki

### Content Creation Coach

Ann Hodges

### Life Coach

Rebecca Hass

### Diction Coach

Michael McMahon

### Acting Coach

Katherine Twaddle

### Guest Presenters

Stephen Bell - Media and Technology  
Chris Enns - Personal Finance  
Rob Herriot - Acting for Camera  
Tyrone Paterson - Rehearsal Technique  
Teiya Kasahara - Amplified Opera  
Asitha Tennekoon - Amplified Opera  
Aria Umezawa - Amplified Opera

**"...having the skills to create digital content is vital... Having the chance to explore some of those possibilities through this program was very valuable."**

**LIZZY HOYT, MEZZO-SOPRANO**  
Participant



**THE 2020 DIGITAL EMERGING ARTISTS PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM RBC FOUNDATION AND THE GAIL ASPER FAMILY FOUNDATION.**

# SPECIAL EVENTS

## VIRTUAL OPENING NIGHT DINNER

On Saturday, November 7, Manitoba Opera hosted its first-ever Virtual Opening Night Dinner to celebrate the launch of the 2020/21 season. This much-loved tradition, normally held on the Centennial Concert Hall Piano Nobile prior to the Opening Night performance, was reimagined with food and wine delivered right to the doorsteps of more than 80 guests.

The three-course menu from Bergmann's on Lombard was paired with wines expertly selected by Dinner Wine Sponsor, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. Guests were treated to exclusive interviews, hosted by Classic Radio 107 announcer Ashley Rees, with the seven sopranos who performed in the evening's live-streamed concert The Sopranos of Winnipeg: Lara Ciekiewicz, Andriana Chuchman, Tracy Dahl, Monica Huisman, Andrea Lett, Lara Secord-Haid, and Lida Szkwarek.

The event was hosted by Director of Development Tania Douglas, with opening remarks from General Director & CEO Larry Desrochers. After the dinner ended, guests moved from the Zoom room to the main event.

## 50/50 RAFFLE

Opening Night was made all the more exciting by Manitoba Opera's Opening Night 50/50 Raffle. Lucky winner Carmen Koepke walked away with half of the \$9,440 pot. Proceeds from the raffle supported Manitoba Opera's education and community engagement programs.

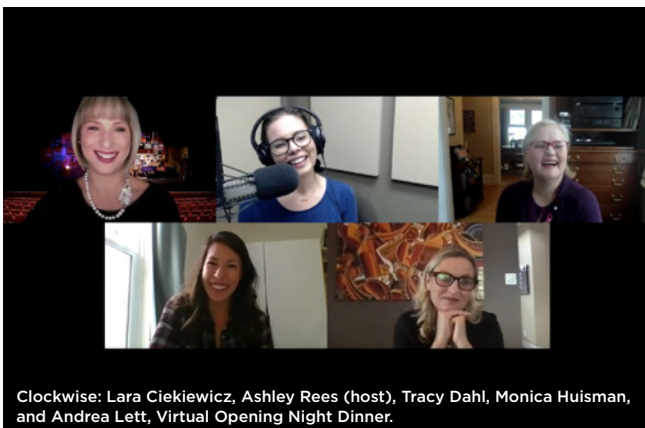
## PIZZA & BEER CRAFT NIGHT

On Thursday, January 21, Manitoba Opera partnered with Tommy's Pizzeria and Arts Junktion to host Pizza & Beer

Craft Night. This fundraising event also served to build community partnerships and give the opera community a chance to connect with a fun virtual activity. Guests received a DIY pizza kit to make at home which was paired with beer from Trans Canada Brewing Co., as well as an elegant flowering wreath craft kit. The evening began with a pizza tutorial,



The finished craft (wreath) with the beer and pizza components for Pizza & Beer Craft Night.



Clockwise: Lara Ciekiewicz, Ashley Rees (host), Tracy Dahl, Monica Huisman, and Andrea Lett, Virtual Opening Night Dinner.



Clockwise: Lara Secord-Haid, Ashley Rees (host), Andriana Chuchman, and Lida Szkwarek, Virtual Opening Night Dinner.



followed by a make-along craft tutorial. Guests split into smaller groups to work on their craft project and to socialize.

The evening closed with a screening of soprano Sydney Baedke singing the “Embroidery Aria” from Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes*. The video was recorded by Sydney as a part of Manitoba Opera’s first Digital Emerging Artists Program.



A little guest helps to assemble pizza at Pizza & Beer Craft Night [Zoom].



De Luca's at Home wine and dessert course.

### AN EVENING OF ITALIAN ARIAS PRESENTED BY THE WEST END CULTURAL CENTRE

On Saturday, March 27, the West End Cultural Centre (WECC), together with Frontera Wines and the Sons & Daughters of Italy, held a third-party fundraising event in support of Manitoba Opera.

The concert was streamed live from the WECC and featured soprano Jayne Hammond and tenor Justin Odwak, both accompanied by pianist Lisa Rumpel.

Along with the heartfelt performances, a three-course Italian dinner was available for delivery by X-Cues Café and Lounge with wine pairings provided by Frontera Wines.



Tenor Justin Odwak and pianist Lisa Rumpel perform at An Evening of Italian Arias.



Soprano Jayne Hammond performs at An Evening of Italian Arias.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

## DE LUCA'S AT HOME

This season included not one, but three De Luca's at Home Dinners. Turns out the ever-popular annual Dinner at De Luca's is also successful as a virtual event.

Part cooking show, part opera performance, and part dining experience, the virtual dinners each featured performances, a cook along with Chef Mike, and time for guests to visit with each other at virtual tables. Dinner and wine were delivered to guests' doorsteps with the help of our wonderful volunteers. De Luca's crafted enticing pre-packaged dinners to cook and enjoy during the evening. Door prizes and at one dinner, a raffle, added to the evenings' activities.

De Luca's at Home provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with those who have previously attended this dinner

and to introduce this event to new guests. A highlight from the final event was an impromptu singing of "Happy Birthday" for one of the guests - Winnipeg director Rob Herriot - that was led by Gail Asper.

## JUNE 18, 2020

65+ guests in attendance

## ARTISTS

Ana Toumine, soprano  
Renate Rossol, piano

## DOOR PRIZE WINNER

Greg Doyle and Carol Bellringer were the lucky winners of wine and branded items from Manitoba Opera and Escalade Wines & Spirits, courtesy of Manitoba Opera, Escalade Wines & Spirits, and Ma Vie en Vin.

## OCTOBER 1, 2020

75+ guests in attendance

## ARTISTS

Lizzy Hoyt, mezzo-soprano  
Lisa Rumpel, piano

## RAFFLE WINE BASKET WINNER

Donna and Chris Woods were the lucky winners of a wine basket, courtesy of Concha y Toro and Ma Vie en Vin.

## MAY 27, 2021

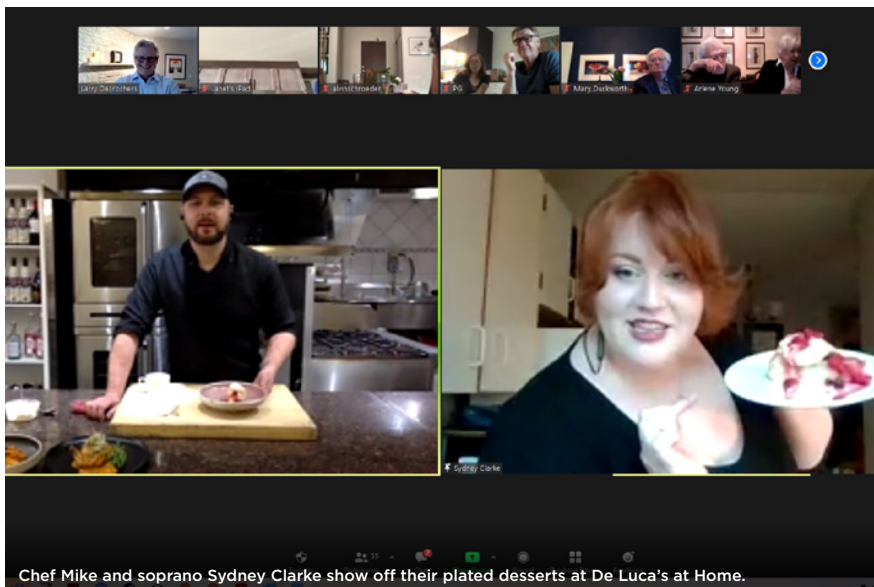
90+ guests in attendance

## ARTISTS

Sydney Clarke, soprano  
Megan Dufrat, piano

## DOOR PRIZE WINNER

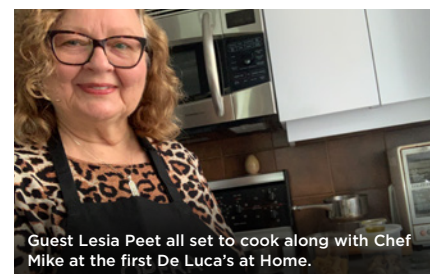
Leona and Art DeFehr were the lucky winners of the gift basket of treats, courtesy of Ma Vie en Vin and Dante Alighieri Cultural Society.



Chef Mike and soprano Sydney Clarke show off their plated desserts at De Luca's at Home.



A dinner box packed and ready to be delivered to a patron, De Luca's at Home.



Guest Lesia Peet all set to cook along with Chef Mike at the first De Luca's at Home.



## SPECIAL EVENTS

## A WALK FOR THE ARTS

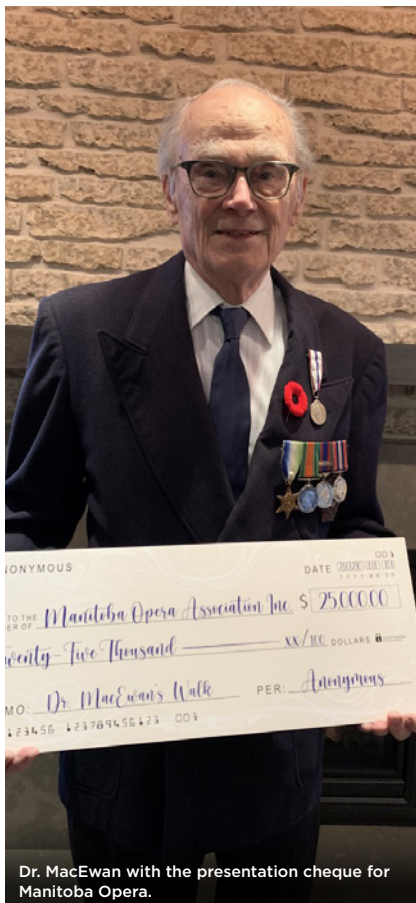
In celebration of his 96th birthday, Winnipeg arts advocate Dr. Douglas W. MacEwan undertook an inspirational challenge – to walk one kilometre every day for 96 days in support of four Winnipeg arts organizations: Manitoba Opera, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. An anonymous sponsor donated \$500 for every kilometre Dr. MacEwan walked, plus an additional \$500 for each day he had someone walking with him.

On November 11, 2020, his birthday, Dr. MacEwan completed and surpassed his goal, walking a total of 109 km. Donations raised include \$100,000 from the anonymous sponsor of this challenge, and \$26,323.96 from individual donors who were inspired by Dr. MacEwan's story. The donations were split between the four arts organizations.

"I am very happy to have reached my goal and to have inspired others to donate to the campaign," said Dr. MacEwan. "And to have been joined on my daily walks by so many artists and other hard-working members of our artistic community was such a treat!"



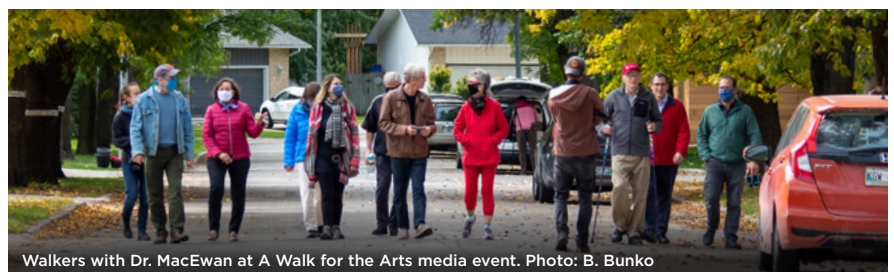
Dr. MacEwan. Photo: B. Bunko



Dr. MacEwan with the presentation cheque for Manitoba Opera.



At the media event for A Walk for the Arts, (l to r): Julian Pellicano, Associate Conductor, WSO; Dr. MacEwan; Larry Desrochers, MO General Director & CEO; Kelly Thornton, Artistic Director, RMTTC; and Andre Lewis, Artistic Director & CEO, RWB. Photo: B. Bunko



Walkers with Dr. MacEwan at A Walk for the Arts media event. Photo: B. Bunko



# ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

The Board of Trustees and the staff work together to fulfill the company mission of changing people's lives through the glory of opera. We are always in search of new ways of connecting with and serving our community through the ongoing development of our practices, procedures, policy, and programming.

Through investments in our people, advancements in our technology, and the exploration of inclusive practices, the board and staff work to create an invigorated opera company for the 21st century that resonates with its community.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In September 2020, staff welcomed new trustees of Manitoba Opera at the annual Board Orientation session. Flavia Fernandez Fabio, Timothy E. Burt, and Terence Sakohianisaks Douglas attended the one-day, staff-led information session that equips board members with a thorough understanding of company operations and insights into the values and priorities that guide Manitoba Opera.

As the fall progressed, and in response to the pandemic, the board moved all its operations into a virtual format and conducted all business remotely for the 2020/21 season. The

primary focus of the board was centered on strong financial management during the pandemic and establishing firm ground for the organization to re-emerge post-pandemic.

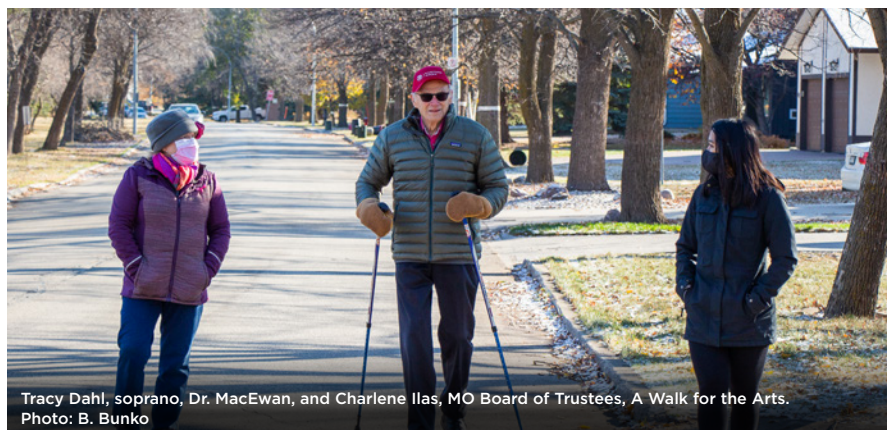
The 2020/21 season marked Elba Haid's final year as chair of Manitoba Opera. Elba was a remarkable chair and spear-headed major accomplishments for the company. Amongst her achievements: the elimination of a decades-old debt; the establishment of the Gail Asper Award to honour visionary leaders in our community; and laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Manitoba Opera Endowment Fund Campaign – the company's most ambitious fundraising campaign in its 48-year history. The board and staff look forward to Elba's continued guidance and leadership as she assumes the role of past chair.

After completing four full terms, Dr. Jeffrey Sisler retired

from the board. As an ardent advocate of Manitoba Opera, Dr. Sisler recruited many new supporters and subscribers to the organization. Under the trying circumstances of the pandemic, Dr. Sisler provided his guidance when he served on the Pandemic Protocol Working Group and developed the safety protocols and procedures for Manitoba Opera's Concert in the Cathedral Ruins.



Lauren Malkin and Dr. David Folk, MO Board of Trustees, Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko



Tracy Dahl, soprano, Dr. MacEwan, and Charlene Ilas, MO Board of Trustees, A Walk for the Arts. Photo: B. Bunko



At the 2020/21 Annual General Meeting on September 28, 2021, members of the organization re-elected Paul Bruch-Wiens, Charlene Ilas, Grant Suderman, Daniela Ignat, Maria Mitousis, Lori Yorke, Leona Herzog, and Bill Pope. Returning trustees in mid-terms are Terence Sakohianisaks Douglas, Flavia Fernandez Fabio, Lana Maidment, Judith Chambers, David Folk, Keith Sinclair, Peter George, and Alex Robinson. Elba Haid will serve one final year as past chair.

The staff look forward to another successful season under the trustees' exemplary leadership.

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#### **STAFF:** PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development represents an opportunity for both personal and professional enrichment for the staff. Manitoba Opera is grateful for the ongoing work that staff undertook this season to learn new skills and forge new pathways to bring the company successfully through the pandemic and to ensure Manitoba Opera was able to continue serving the community. These efforts included participating in and attending online sessions of close to 100 hours on everything from a bootcamp for the arts to cultivating civic engagement and social change, to how your brain uses bias.

Staff learning was not limited to mitigating the effects of the pandemic, however. In November, Annual Giving Manager Liz Miller and Grants & Corporate Giving Manager Jayne Hammond attended the



Patrons at the Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko

Association of Fundraising Professional's (AFP) NOT Congress. This Toronto-based fundraising conference was held entirely online for the first time and offered opportunities to learn from the sector's top leaders and network with non-profit professionals from across the country.

Through the fall, Tania Douglas, Director of Development, participated in the inaugural eight-week ArtsBoost Digital Marketing & Fundraising course. The 16-member cohort was made up of experienced arts marketers and fundraisers, chosen from a cross-section of performing arts organizations across Canada.

Jayne Hammond completed AFP's Fundamentals of Fundraising e-course in January 2021 after receiving a full scholarship from AFP's National Scholarship Program. The course provided an overview of skills and techniques for individuals at the beginning of their fundraising career. Jayne was paired with Heather Laser, Director of Development for the Manitoba Museum, for AFP Manitoba's Mentorship Program. Jayne also participated in online sessions: the Association for Fundraising Professional's workshop on Islam

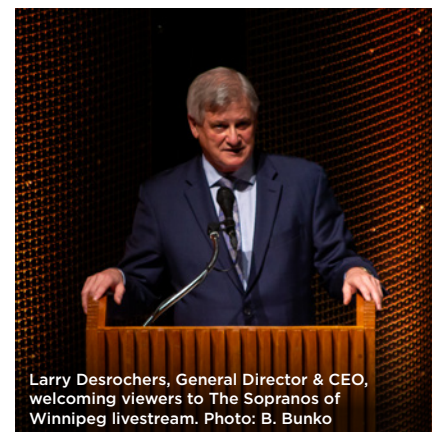
and Philanthropy and a panel discussion on anti-black racism in opera hosted by LA Opera.

In addition to his participation in the Opera America Education forums, Dr. Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement Coordinator, participated in several online sessions that explored a variety of subjects including de-escalating conflict in the rehearsal space, opera as a tool for social justice, Latinx voices in opera, and the issues surrounding inherited repertoire.

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#### **STAFF:** BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Larry Desrochers completed an extended term of seven years as a member of the Board of Directors for Opera America,



Larry Desrochers, General Director & CEO, welcoming viewers to The Sopranos of Winnipeg livestream. Photo: B. Bunko

serving on the Membership, Artistic, Governance and Civic Action Committees.

Grants & Corporate Giving Manager Jayne Hammond joined the board of Flipside Opera & Art Song Collective as Vice-President. She is also a member of the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy - Canada National Scholarship Program Review Committee. As a Manitoba Mentor with Opera InReach, Jayne is also working with artists across Canada to expand the civic impact of opera through education. The collective aims to uplift and nourish artistry through its core values of equity, diversity, inclusivity, justice, and accessibility.

Director of Development Tania Douglas is a member of the Manitoba Philanthropy Awards Selection Committee for the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Manitoba Chapter.

Conference participation, professional development, and participation in special initiatives and programs demonstrates Manitoba Opera's ongoing commitment to investing in the talent, leadership, and skills of its board and staff.



Lizzy Hoyt, The Solo Sessions [video].



Larry Desrochers, General Director & CEO, with mezz-soprano Laurelle Czaplinski before her performance at the Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko

## GOVERNANCE

The Governance Committee continued its regular review of governing documents and creation of new policy. Areas of focus this season included meeting frequency and the development of a board candidate assessment tool.

The Governance Committee dedicated much of the season to the exploration on the themes of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, and how MO should embrace these concepts to further its service to the community. The work culminated in the formation of an organizational statement on diversity and guiding principles for the organization: *We recognize and affirm the importance, value, and complexity of all human experience, and that to respectfully embrace such human experience, we consider diversity to be a core value of our organization and operations.*

Our guiding principles recognize the responsibility to reflect the diversity of our community, the value of divergent opinion, and the obligation to continually educate our people and challenge our thinking.

We seek to discover, measure, assess, and expand our diversity and diversify our programming through the stories we tell, where we tell them, to whom we tell them, and those we invite to tell their stories.

## BUILDING BRIDGES

This season marked the second year of Manitoba Opera's Building Bridges program - a multi-year project with the goal of beginning to develop relationships with Indigenous communities in Manitoba. This program is supported in part by a two-year grant from Opera's America's Innovation Program.

The project was designed with guidance from our Community Consultant Jessica Dumas. Jessica is a member of the Anishinaabe community from Keeseekowenin First Nation in Manitoba and is president of Jessica Dumas Coaching and Training. Jessica has experience in conflict resolution, social justice advocacy, public speaking, and Indigenous history awareness.

Following the tragic discoveries of unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools in Canada this year,



Jessica made the understandable decision, for personal reasons, to remove herself from the profession of Indigenous education and facilitation. Jessica was instrumental in the early stages of Building Bridges, and Manitoba Opera was fortunate to have worked with her. With gratitude, Manitoba Opera wishes Jessica the best for her future endeavours.

With the pandemic greatly affecting communities in Manitoba, our ability to connect with people continues to be limited and the program was put on hiatus for the season. During this time, Manitoba Opera has continued to place an emphasis on continuing Indigenous education. Activities included participation in online sessions on land acknowledgements, a roundtable on Indigenous musical sovereignty, and the impacts of colonialism and historical trauma. Dr. Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement Coordinator, participated in BMO's e-course Nisitohtamowin: An Introduction to Indigenous Perspectives in Canada.

During the 2020/21 season, Tania Douglas, Director of Development, also provided mentorship in fundraising and sponsorship to a young Indigenous student, as well as participated in pow wows and collaborated with the Aboriginal School of Dance on cross-cultural dance projects. Tania also participated in workshops hosted by The Circle on Indigenous Philanthropy and Reciprocity.

Other staff educational initiatives included reading *21 Things You Didn't Know About The Indian Act and Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips & Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality*



Communications Coordinator Bethany Bunko supporting Orange Shirt Day.

by Bob Joseph and the 94 Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Larry Desrochers, General Director & CEO also participated in the University of Alberta's online course Indigenous Canada – a 12-week course offered by the Faculty of Native Studies that explores Indigenous histories and contemporary issues in Canada.

Organizational advancement ensures Manitoba Opera continues to be a leader in the field locally, nationally, and internationally. Efforts to move the company forward solidify our future, reach new audiences, expand our programming, and increase our impact on the community.

## ADVANCING DIGITAL & VIRTUAL CONTENT

The 2020/21 season marked Manitoba Opera's first foray into digital production, with the company presenting a collection of options including the live-streamed The Sopranos of Winnipeg concert, Opera in the Garden, Opera Storytime, and The Solo Sessions series.

MO has placed an increased emphasis on the development of digital content and virtual experiences going forward. To achieve this, the company made a commitment to developing the technical capacity and training of staff in order to enable staff to produce some of the digital programming in-house. Starting with an acquisition of high-quality

video and audio recording gear, the work will continue next season with the development of staff skills, by investing in training on cinematography, editing, and livestreaming.

By expanding the platforms we use to showcase opera, Manitoba Opera will be able to reach new audiences and a wider community.

# FINANCE

## FINANCE

Manitoba Opera posted an operating surplus of \$5,000 following a transfer of \$439,674 to its board-designated Operating Reserve Fund. Manitoba Opera's budget for FY2021 was \$1,907,385. Management anticipates a significant draw down of the Operating Reserve Fund to support activities for FY2022.

## GRANTS

Operational funding from the Manitoba Arts Council, Province of Manitoba, and Winnipeg Arts Council remained the same at \$220,000, \$150,000, and \$121,500, respectively, with the amount received from the Canada Council for the Arts at \$255,000.

Throughout the course of the year, Manitoba Opera accessed various government programs in response to the COVID-19

pandemic. Most notably was \$309,290 from the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy; \$63,800 from the Canada Council for the Arts; and \$50,000 from the Winnipeg Foundation Stabilization Grant. Manitoba Opera also accessed a combined \$60,047 from the Province of Manitoba's Back to Work, Safe at Home Manitoba, and the Manitoba Bridge Grant programs, and the Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy.

## BOX OFFICE

Due to COVID-19, the 2020/21 season was modified to continue operating under provincial public health orders. Subscribers who had purchased tickets for *Sweeney Todd* and *Tosca* were given the opportunity to have their account credited, get a refund, or receive a tax receipt. The Sopranos of Winnipeg, a livestream concert held in November, generated \$21,673 in box office revenues.



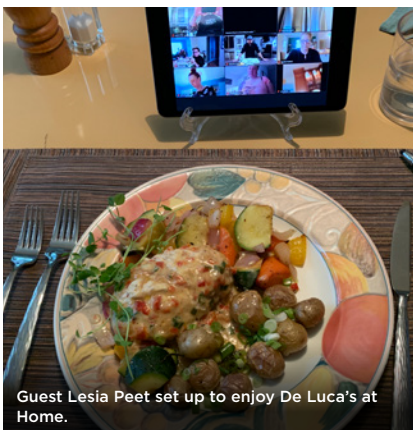
James McLennan, Concert in the Cathedral.  
Photo: B. Bunko

## FUNDRAISING

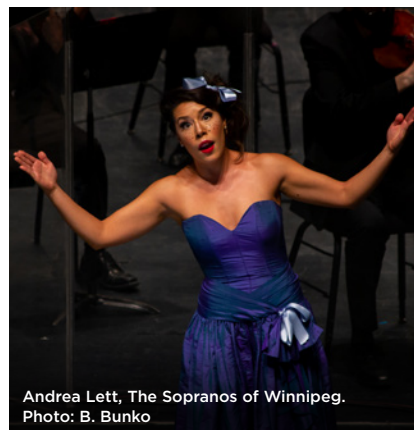
As with the previous year, fundraising events were either postponed or held virtually. Dinner at De Luca's, rescheduled from the prior season, was held as a stay-at-home event in June of 2020. The Gail Asper Award, honoring Mrs. Tannis M. Richardson, was moved to the fall of 2021.

Through the generosity of patrons, \$90,745 was donated back in gift-in-kind ticket donations and special event admissions.

Total fundraising from all operating campaigns for 2020/21 totalled \$649,495. Gifts from individuals including Camerata and Friends were \$279,667. Corporate sponsorships and donations totalled \$152,500. Gifts from foundations totalled \$155,000. Funds raised from special events totalled \$27,091.

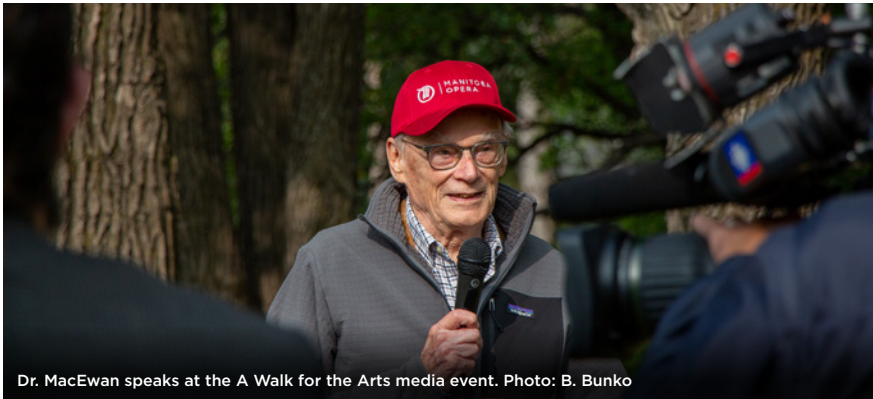


Guest Lesia Peet set up to enjoy De Luca's at Home.



Andrea Lett, The Sopranos of Winnipeg.  
Photo: B. Bunko





Dr. MacEwan speaks at the A Walk for the Arts media event. Photo: B. Bunko

Manitoba Opera also benefitted from two other fundraisers: a 50/50 lottery with net proceeds of \$3,304 and Dr. MacEwan's Walk for the Arts which raised \$31,933 for the company.

### IN-KIND SPONSORSHIPS & COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS

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 exchanged. This season that amounted to \$0 due to the continuance of COVID-19 and the public health order restrictions that prohibited the company's ability to hold live performances.

### EXPENSES

Overall, savings were achieved in all departmental budgets. Administration did see an increase in expenses due to the work being done on the endowment campaign, as well as an increase in fundraising. These were offset by the deduction in expenditures in marketing.

### 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 the company continue to serve the community with meaningful and inspiring programming.

During the fiscal period ending May 31, 2021, the fund grew to \$765,196 from \$450,303 at the end of the FY2020.



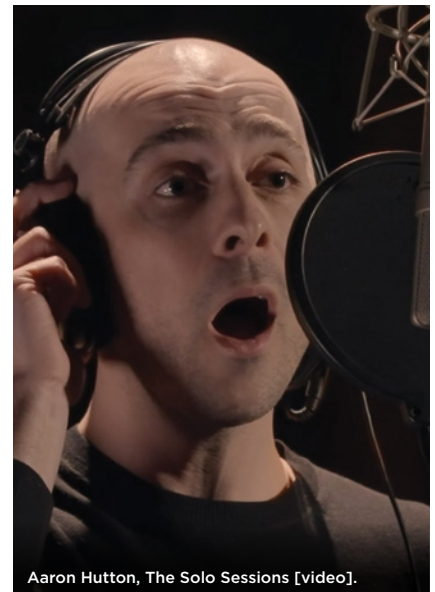
Lara Ciekiewicz, Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko



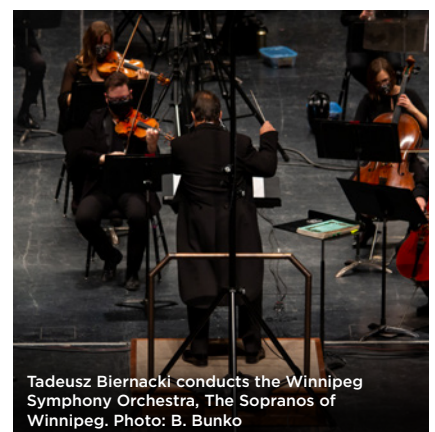
Opera Hymn [video].



As the clever barber Figaro, Al Simmons sings about how nothing inspires him more than a bit of gold! *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons [video].



Aaron Hutton, The Solo Sessions [video].



Tadeusz Biernacki conducts the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, The Sopranos of Winnipeg. Photo: B. Bunko

# VOLUNTEERS

Manitoba Opera is grateful for the service of our dedicated volunteers. This season, volunteers, including members of the Board of Trustees and committee members, provided over 150 hours of service to Manitoba Opera.

Most years, our volunteers assist with tasks including mailings, stuffing inserts into

the program book, and providing a wide range of services on performance nights. With no live performances to assist at this season, volunteers were instrumental to the success of many of our digital initiatives. Volunteers delivered meals (and wine!) to patrons for our three De Luca's at Home dinner events. They helped us test and troubleshoot access to

The Solo Sessions videos. One intrepid volunteer even gave up time on a Sunday morning to make a last-minute delivery to ensure that a patron was able to participate in our Virtual Paint Class that afternoon!

## 2019/20 SEASON VOLUNTEERS

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Mira Hummerston	



Charlene Ilas, MO Board of Trustees, helps out with deliveries for De Luca's at Home.



Volunteer Mira Hummerston prepares to make home deliveries for De Luca's at Home.



Volunteers give a hand at De Luca's at Home.

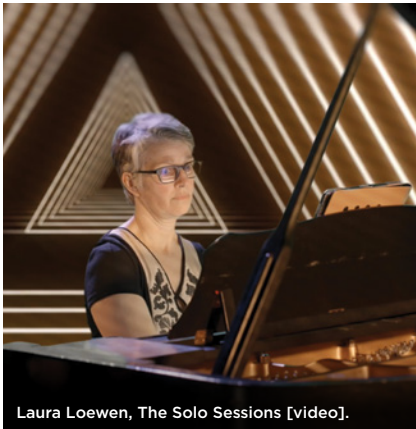




The crew and cast get ready for a day of filming on the set of Opera School. Photo: S. Miller



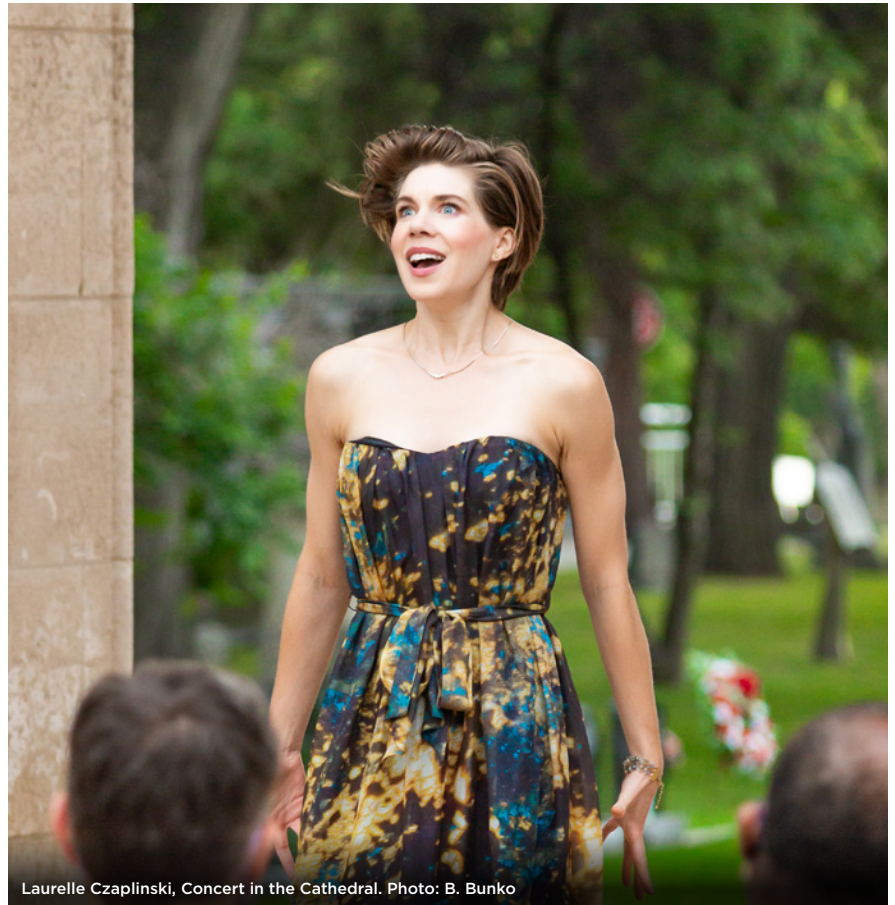
Al Simmons, *The Barber of Seville* as Styled by Al Simmons [video].



Laura Loewen, *The Solo Sessions* [video].



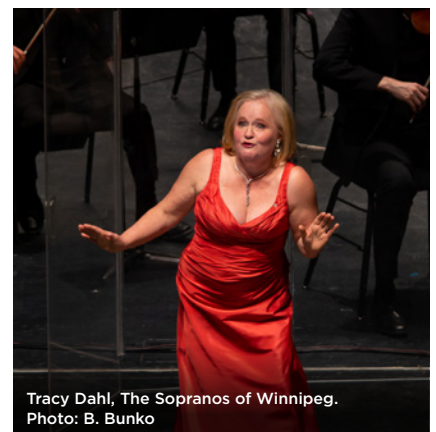
Chef Mike gives live cooking instructions during De Luca's at Home. Photo: B. Bunko



Laurelle Czaplinski, *Concert in the Cathedral*. Photo: B. Bunko



Lisa Rumpel and Jessica Kos-Whicher, *Opera in the Garden* [video].



Tracy Dahl, *The Sopranos of Winnipeg*. Photo: B. Bunko

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES & COMMITTEES

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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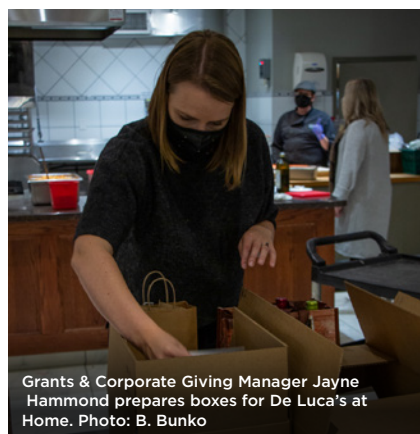
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Larry Desrochers, General Director & CEO, speaks at the A Walk for the Arts media event. Photo: B. Bunko



Liz Miller, Annual Giving Manager, plays oboe and English horn with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for The Sopranos of Winnipeg. Photo: B. Bunko.



Grants & Corporate Giving Manager Jayne Hammond prepares boxes for De Luca's at Home. Photo: B. Bunko



Michael Blais, Director of Administration and Tania Douglas, Director of Development, Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko

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Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges the support of our 2020/21 season sponsors. The generosity of our corporate partners allowed Manitoba Opera to create a library of unique video projects throughout the season, generating more than 150 work opportunities for local opera professionals.

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With the generous support of the Manitoba Arts Council.





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Thanks to every one of our donors, Manitoba Opera was able to thrive despite the challenging circumstances of the 2020/21 Season. Your donations helped us provide new and innovative programming to our opera-loving community. (Listings include donations made between June 1, 2020 and May 31, 2021.)



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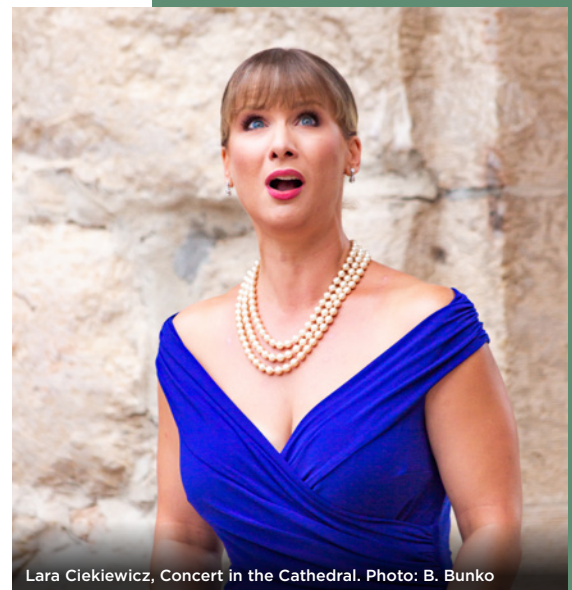
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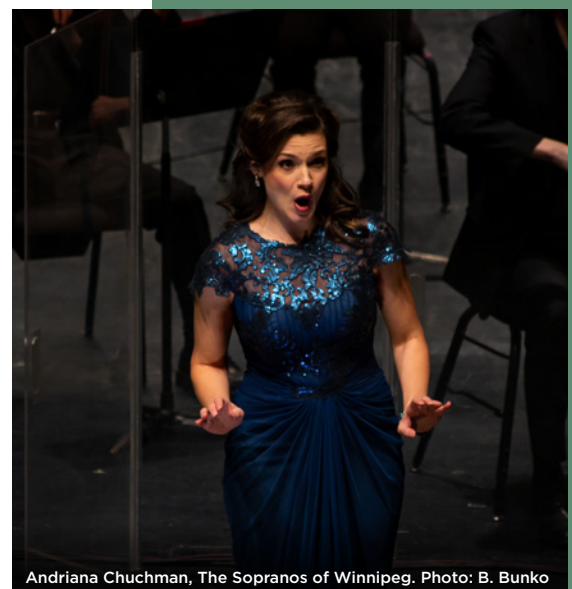
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Lisa Bell, The Solo Sessions [video].



Lara Ciekiewicz, Concert in the Cathedral. Photo: B. Bunko



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Elba Haid, Chair, MO Board of Trustees and patrons at the Concert in the Cathedral.  
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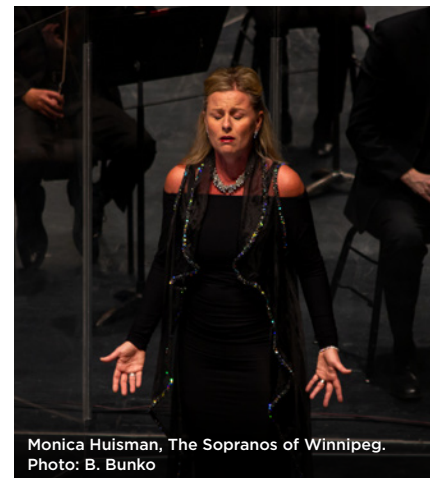
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Monica Huisman, *The Sopranos* of Winnipeg.  
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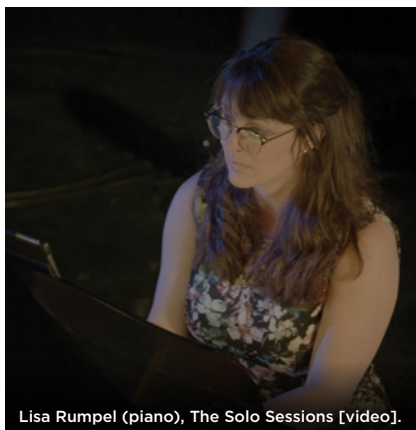
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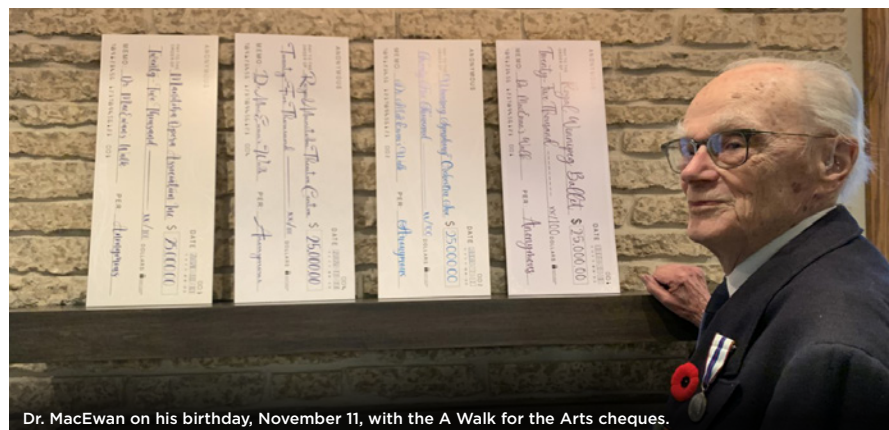
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