



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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**MANITOBA OPERA ANNOUNCES \$1.75 MILLION  
IN LEAD GIFTS TO THE POWER OF VOICE  
ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN**

Manitoba Opera announced today at an event held at the Centennial Concert Hall that \$1.75 million has been gifted to the company's The Power of Voice Endowment Campaign including a special \$1 million gift from Ms. Gail Asper. Other community leaders who are investing in The Power of Voice with a gift of \$250,000 each are Mr. and Mrs. Phil and Ilse Ens, Mrs. Tannis M. Richardson, and BMO Financial Group.

These lead gifts bring the campaign's total raised to date to \$3,146,564. The campaign goal is to raise \$10M – a combination of \$5M from donations and \$5M in matching funding through The Winnipeg Foundation and the Canadian Heritage Endowment Incentives Program.

"This is a remarkable day for Manitoba Opera," stated Campaign Co-Chair, Elba Haid. "To receive our first million-dollar gift and have that support echoed by other community leaders, is indeed very gratifying and will ensure a sustainable future for the company."

"Manitobans recognize the essential role that the arts, and in particular, Manitoba Opera, plays in convening community, and we are thrilled that these funds will help to build the next 50 years of opera in our province," added Judith Chambers, Campaign Co-Chair and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

For the past 50 years, Manitoba Opera has been a powerful voice in this province's arts community. Since its first performance in 1972, the company has offered rich operatic experiences on the stage and through education programming and community engagement initiatives which explore important social issues through opera. Resilient, responsive, and innovative, Manitoba Opera is considered a leading regional opera company in North America and has played a pivotal role in the development of Canadian artists.

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“Opera has played an important role in my life, and I am so proud to have a world-class opera company in my hometown,” explained lead contributor Gail Asper. “I want this gift to inspire others to support Manitoba Opera, which is an integral part of the vibrant arts economy of our province.”

Manitoba Opera is in the early stages of The Power of Voice Campaign. Funds raised through the campaign will be held at The Winnipeg Foundation in the A. Kerr Twaddle Robert H. Thorlakson Manitoba Opera Endowment Fund. The fund is named after the company’s two founders and its existence will ensure a dynamic, sustainable future for opera in Manitoba.

“My brother, Dr. Robert Thorlakson, was a founder of Manitoba Opera, and I’m happy that my gift will see his vision continue to flourish,” stated Mrs. Richardson.

“Early exposure to opera and classical music helped shape our son’s life,” shared Phil Ens. “He has enjoyed an international opera career that debuted right here with Manitoba Opera on the Centennial Concert Hall stage. Knowing that someone else could have the same opportunity because of our contribution to the Endowment Campaign is very important to my wife and me.”

The annual income earned from the interest generated from the fund will be used to elevate artistic programming, enhance opera education, and effect positive change in our community for decades to come.

“BMO has been a proud partner of Manitoba Opera for over a decade and has a long history of supporting the arts in Canada,” said Kristen Kennedy, Regional Vice President, BMO Financial Group. “As part of our Purpose to Boldly Grow the Good in business and life, we are excited to help ensure more Manitobans have the opportunity to experience the thrill of Manitoba Opera through the dynamic repertoire they offer each year.”

A \$10M fully capitalized endowment fund will generate approximately \$500,000 annually in revenue to enhance artistic vitality, enrich education programs, and deepen community engagement. It will also provide funding that will assist with the creation of new operas, new productions of existing operas, and provide opportunities for young Canadian talent from a diverse background.

Manitoba Opera is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the 2022/23 season and will be back on the mainstage with two fully staged productions: *La Cenerentola (Cinderella)* November 12, 15, 18 and *Così fan tutte* April 22, 25, 28, as well as an anniversary concert February 25. All performances take place at the Centennial Concert Hall. For tickets/more info: [mbopera.ca](http://mbopera.ca)

## LEAD DONORS

### GAIL ASPER

Gail Asper was born in Winnipeg and currently serves as president of the Asper Foundation which supports and initiates projects in Canada and Israel. Community involvement has always been a priority for Ms. Asper, with active involvement in the arts and Jewish community. She has received numerous awards for her service and continues to enrich our community through her endeavors and passion for the arts.

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#### **PHIL & ILSE ENS**

Phil and Ilse Ens hail from southern Manitoba where Mr. Ens is a co-founder and current chairman of Triple E Recreational Vehicles. The Ens family has taken the lead on many community projects over the last half century and are recognized for their community building and philanthropy throughout Winnipeg and southern Manitoba.

#### **TANNIS M. RICHARDSON**

Born in Winnipeg, Mrs. Richardson is a champion of arts, culture, and health with dedication spanning decades. She has raised millions of dollars through her volunteer leadership and outstanding philanthropy. Many communities have benefitted from Mrs. Richardson's generosity. At 96 years old, Mrs. Richardson is known throughout western Canada for her exemplary community service and volunteerism.

#### **BMO FINANCIAL GROUP**

BMO has a legacy of community leadership and impact. The BMO community giving philosophy is anchored in its history of success, with a focus on collaboration, learning, and innovation. BMO works with community partners to achieve sustainable solutions and shape the future. BMO's sponsorship programs provide significant funding for programs that enrich community life.

#### **About BMO Financial Group**

Serving customers for 200 years and counting, BMO is a highly diversified financial services provider - the 8th largest bank, by assets, in North America. With total assets of \$1.07 trillion as of July 31, 2022, and a team of diverse and highly engaged employees, BMO provides a broad range of personal and commercial banking, wealth management and investment banking products and services to more than 12 million customers, and conducts business through three operating groups: Personal and Commercial Banking, BMO Wealth Management, and BMO Capital Markets.