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As water nourishes the land and all it gives us, we also acknowledge that the source of the City of Winnipeg's water is from Shoal Lake, the home and shared territory of Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 Independent Nation and Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

In view of such understandings and acknowledgments, Manitoba Opera remains committed to working in partnership with the Indigenous peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

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Message from the Chair, Board of Trustees



On behalf of Manitoba Opera, I am delighted to welcome you to this evening's performance of *Tosca*.

This story of love, jealousy, and betrayal set against the backdrop of political unrest is undoubtedly one of opera's most gripping masterpieces. With its sweeping score and unforgettable arias, *Tosca* is sure to take you to the edge of your seat tonight and reminds us all why opera endures as one of the most powerful forms of storytelling.

Tosca marks an important milestone for the company. It is the first production we are staging under the leadership of Michael Blais, our new executive director. Michael joined the staff team in 2010, which was the last time we produced *Tosca*, and it was his first production as well. With his 25 plus years of experience in the arts, Michael is an excellent choice for the role, and the Board is looking forward to continuing our work with him at the helm.

The Board of Trustees remains deeply committed to strengthening the organization's connection with the community and ensuring that opera is accessible to all Manitobans. Through our Opera Access program, complimentary tickets are provided to individuals who may face financial, social, or systemic barriers to participation in the arts. For *Tosca*, Manitoba Opera has partnered with over 120 community organizations and distributed more than 1,100 tickets, so that we can share the magic of live opera with community members who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend.



I would also like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to our outgoing board members: Dr. David Folk, Elba Haid, Ray Karasevich, Nupur Kumari, and Keith Sinclair for their dedication, leadership, and passion for Manitoba Opera. Your service has helped shape the company's success and continued growth. Judith Chambers also completed her term as chair and will continue to serve as past chair. We are delighted to welcome Dr. Verona Wheatley and Anthony Maros to the Board of Trustees. We look forward to the insight and enthusiasm they will bring as we continue building a vibrant future for opera in Manitoba.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I want to express our deep gratitude to you, our audience, donors, and sponsors. Your continued support ensures that Manitoba Opera remains a place where great art thrives and where everyone can see themselves reflected on stage. We are especially thankful to our Season Presenting Sponsor BMO for their longtime, steadfast partnership and belief in the importance of the arts in our community.

As we experience Puccini's passionate music tonight, may we be reminded of the strength of love and the enduring power of art to move, inspire, and unite us.

With warm regards,

Lori Yorke

Great opera lives here.



Marina Costa-Jackson (*Fosca*)
Photo: D. Ipock - Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2022

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Message from the Executive Director

This season marks a meaningful moment for Manitoba Opera as we continue to grow and embrace change.

Change can be challenging, yet it also presents an opportunity to reflect and imagine what lies ahead.

As I step into the role of executive director, I am inspired not only by the artistry that fills our stage but by the dedication, vision, and resilience of the people who have shaped this company over five decades.

I am deeply grateful for the extraordinary leadership of Larry Desrochers. For more than 25 years, as general director & CEO, Larry guided the company through some uncertain times and created a solid foundation based on creativity, outstanding programming, and community connection. It's a foundation that continues to define who we are today. His commitment to nurturing both the company and the wider cultural landscape leaves a legacy I am proud to build upon.

At its core Manitoba Opera thrives through collaboration. Staff, artists, board members, and supporters work together to create an organization that is not only strong today but poised to embrace the future. It is this collective spirit that will guide us as we embark on one of the most important milestones ahead: the search for a new artistic director. On that front I am pleased to let you know that we have identified a talented and inspiring group of candidates, and we look forward to sharing updates as this process unfolds.



As we navigate this transition, our focus is on continuing to shape a Manitoba Opera that is dynamic, resilient, and responsive to the evolving needs of our community. Every contribution, every act of support, allows us to nurture the company, tell meaningful stories, and ensure that opera continues to thrive as a living, evolving part of Manitoba's cultural fabric.

I want to thank you, our patrons and supporters. Your commitment makes all this possible and your belief in the company allows us to embrace change with confidence and optimism. Together, we step into this new chapter ready to honor the past while building on a future of promise, creativity, and meaningful connection.

With gratitude,

Michael Blais

Bravo to the
Manitoba Opera team
for bringing the magic,
power and joy of opera to
Manitoban audiences!

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Message from the Interim Artistic Director

Puccini's *Tosca*, though set in Rome in June 1800, resonates far beyond its Napoleonic backdrop. At the time, the city had just seen the collapse of the short-lived Roman Republic and the harsh return of papal rule. Political prisoners, like the opera's Angelotti, were hunted down by a repressive police state embodied in the ruthless Baron Scarpia. The Battle of Marengo loomed over the story, its outcome capable of reshaping Italy's destiny overnight. Against this turmoil, Puccini sets a drama where art, love, and faith collide with tyranny.

Puccini's score transforms this political tension into raw emotion. His orchestration paints the city's atmosphere: the tolling of church bells, the menace of Scarpia's theme, the sweeping lyricism of Tosca's prayer. The music fuses intimate realism with cinematic intensity, moving seamlessly from whispered confessions to overwhelming surges of passion and terror. Each character is defined through melody and harmony: Scarpia's dark chords radiate corruption, Cavaradossi's passionate phrases express courage and love, and Tosca's "Vissi d'arte" becomes the heart of the opera – a cry for mercy that transcends politics. Puccini's genius lies in how he makes historical conflict pulse with human feeling.

When *Tosca* premiered in 1900, Italian audiences would have felt its history resonant in their own recent past. Only decades earlier, Italy had fought bitterly for unification, wresting Rome from centuries of papal control. Scarpia's authoritarian



cruelty reminded them of clerical oppression, while Cavaradossi – the artist aligned with liberal ideals – mirrored the intellectuals who had led the unification efforts (known as the Risorgimento). *Tosca* herself seemed to symbolize Italy: deeply Catholic yet striving for modern freedom. The opera was both a thrilling melodrama and a political mirror.

I think for us today, the story still strikes home. Scarpia endures as the face of corrupt, abusive power. Angelotti and Cavaradossi embody the courage of political prisoners and dissidents who are still silenced across the world. *Tosca*'s struggle between devotion and resistance reflects the moral choices individuals must make under oppression. And the larger conflict, liberty against tyranny, remains strikingly current in an age of division, misinformation, and resurgent authoritarianism.

Tosca endures not only because of Puccini's music, but because it reminds us that history's cycles of repression and resistance, of courage and sacrifice, are never truly in our past.

Larry Desrochers



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Perspectives

Melodrama to Tragedy

by Rory Runnells



Melodrama is an oft-scorned word used to denigrate a work that seems “over the top.” However, a true melodrama works close to the edge engrossing its audience with its characters’ full-blown emotions without forgetting their intelligence and complexity. One can argue that opera may do that better than theatre or film and that Puccini came close to going too far but never over the top because he knew how to involve us in a “drama with melody.”

Tosca is about an opera singer involved with political intrigue through her lover, an artist, and personal turmoil with a brutal, though suave villainous chief of police. It is melodrama in bold letters.

What is immediately apparent is that *Tosca* isn’t a character we love, as we come to do with Mimi in *La Bohème*, or Butterfly, or Liu in *Turandot*. Put simply, there’s pathos in those Puccini heroines. Not *Tosca*. We admire, sympathize, understand, and root for her. We’re on her side, but she keeps her distance. Perhaps, as she puts it in her great Act Two aria about living for art and love that admiration, but not tears, is what we should offer *Tosca*.

She is a true diva – another overused word for today’s pop stars – and knows it to

the end. The play by the prolific playwright, Sardou, from which Puccini derived the opera is titled *La Tosca*. The “La” may be gone but its implication remains: there’s only one diva above all others. A melodrama then but with *Tosca*’s great love, the painter Cavaradossi, we also have the poetry as well as the political fervour of the revolutionary.

One definition of melodrama is that the good characters ultimately win out over the bad. Opera aficionados know different, but an argument could be made that the good – *Tosca* and Cavaradossi – in their own way win, while the villain Scarpia loses more than his life. They know, as Scarpia doesn’t, that there’s something beyond death; for Cavaradossi the victory of liberty, for *Tosca* an eternal life. Her final words “Scarpia, before God” is her promise to continue the fight for her life since death means, finally, little. Sardou said the opera was better than his play. Cut to the bone, lithe, dramatic, passionate, never “over the top,” *Tosca* moves beyond melodrama to tragedy.

Rory Runnells was 34 years as the Executive Director of the Manitoba Association of Playwrights.

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THE COMPOSER

Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924)



Considered one of the great operatic composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini (II) began his career at the

age of 14 as an organist at the San Martino Church in Lucca, Italy.

He studied at the Milan Conservatory from 1880 to 1883. During this time, his bohemian existence as a poor student later found expression in *La Bohème*.

Puccini composed eight major operas in his lifetime and some of his now-famous works made disappointing debuts. The response to *La Bohème* was mixed. *Tosca* was ripped apart by critics. At the premiere of *Madama Butterfly*, the audience hissed and laughed, prompting the cancellation of all scheduled performances.

However, Puccini persevered, and with high standards for himself and everyone involved in his operas, he took an active role in their production. He knew that his popular success depended on how well his works were performed.

Because Puccini was so theatrical, critics and academics have tried to deny him his proper place amongst serious composers. The public, however, feels differently, and Puccini remains a favourite of opera goers the world over.

Puccini died in Brussels, Belgium, in 1924 from complications due to treatment for throat cancer. His death was declared an occasion of national mourning in Italy and Mussolini gave the funeral oration.

THE LIBRETTISTS

Luigi Illica (1857 – 1919)



Luigi Illica ran away to sea at an early age, and in 1876, he found himself fighting the Turks. Three years later, he moved to the relatively peaceful enclave of Milan, Italy, and there began his

literary career, writing a collection of prose sketches and plays. He began writing librettos in 1889. His most famous librettos are three of Puccini's operas (*La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*), as well as Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*.

Giuseppe Giacosa (1847 – 1906)



Giuseppe Giacosa began his professional life as a lawyer. After graduating from law at Turin University, he immediately joined his father's firm in Milan. He moved permanently into

the literary world when his one-act verse comedy, *Una partita a scacchi*, became a popular success. From 1888 to 1894 Giacosa held the chair of literature and dramatic art at the Milan Conservatory.

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Synopsis | *Tosca*

FIRST PERFORMANCE: Teatro Constanzi, Rome, January 14, 1900

TIME: June 1800 | **PLACE:** Rome | **LANGUAGE:** Italian

ACT I

Napoleon's French revolutionary army is at war with much of Europe. Rome had briefly been a Republic under French protection but has now fallen to the Allied forces. Cesare Angelotti, a former Republican Consul, escapes from prison and seeks refuge in the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle. His sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, has hidden a key to her husband's private chapel, where Angelotti hides.

The painter, Mario Cavaradossi, returns to work on a portrait of Mary Magdalene. He tells the sacristan that he modeled the face on a woman he's seen praying in the chapel – Angelotti's sister. After the sacristan leaves, Angelotti appears and pleads for help. Suddenly, Cavaradossi's lover, the singer, Floria Tosca, calls from outside. Angelotti hides again. Tosca suspects Cavaradossi of seeing another woman. He reassures her, but when she sees his painting and recognizes the marchesa, she accuses him of being unfaithful. He calms her again, and she leaves.

A cannon shot signals that Angelotti's escape has been discovered. He and Cavaradossi flee to the painter's villa. The sacristan rushes in with news that the Allies have defeated the French at Marengo. A celebration begins. Baron Scarpia, head of the secret police, arrives searching for Angelotti. He finds the marchesa's fan and links it to Cavaradossi's painting. When Tosca returns, Scarpia manipulates her into believing her lover is betraying her. Distraught, she leaves, followed by Scarpia's men – he is sure she'll lead them to the fugitives. As the church fills for the Te Deum, Scarpia vows to bend Tosca to his will.

ACT II

That evening, in his apartments at the Palazzo Farnese, Scarpia awaits news while Tosca performs at a royal gala. His agent Spoletta has failed to find Angelotti but has arrested Cavaradossi and brought him in. Scarpia questions the painter, then summons Tosca. Cavaradossi whispers a warning for her to stay silent before being taken away.

Scarpia questions Tosca. She resists, but when she hears Cavaradossi being tortured, she breaks and reveals Angelotti's hiding place. The wounded painter is brought back in. When Scarpia reveals Tosca's betrayal, Cavaradossi curses her. Then, news arrives – Napoleon has actually won at Marengo. Cavaradossi defiantly celebrates the French victory. Furious, Scarpia orders his execution.

Alone with Tosca, Scarpia offers to spare Cavaradossi if she gives herself to him. She resists, prays for help, but finally agrees. Scarpia arranges a mock execution and writes her a safe-conduct pass. As he approaches her, Tosca grabs a knife from the table and kills him. She lays candles at his body and escapes.

ACT III

At dawn, Cavaradossi awaits execution at Castel Sant'Angelo. He bribes a jailer to deliver a farewell letter to Tosca. She arrives and explains Scarpia is dead, and the execution will be fake. They dream of freedom. When the firing squad leaves, Tosca rushes to him – but he is dead. Scarpia has betrayed her. As soldiers arrive to arrest her, Tosca leaps from the battlements, declaring she will face Scarpia before God.

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Trompe L'Oeil Trickery

This evening as you settle in to spend a day in Rome, 1800, pay close attention to the sets. They are actually painted

canvases! This soft scenery set on loan from Seattle Opera is the last example still in use of a trompe l'oeil set (French for visual illusion in art). In use since the days of ancient Rome, trompe l'oeil is used to trick the eye into seeing a painted detail as a three-dimensional object.

Although once the norm in the arts and entertainment world, hand-painted sets are no longer in use as the time and talent required to produce them would be prohibitively expensive.

The *Tosca* set was designed and built in the 1950s in Milan, Italy, by Sormani Cardaropoli Scenography which was founded in 1838 to design and build opera scenery for La Scala and other theatres. Theatres first borrowed this technology from sailing ships,

back when opera was born in the late Renaissance. Soft scenery was the norm in opera up until the 1970s, when “hard scenery” started to become more popular.

Look closely. In the first act, the church location looks much deeper than it actually is thanks to the clever placement of columns and a hemispherical apse at back, which look cavernous, but actually take up no space at all. In Act Two, the ceiling of Scarpia's dining room at the Palazzo Farnese appears to curve out overhead, full of decorated niches. But no – it's just a piece of cloth!

Tosca is a popular opera, and for decades this set has appeared on stages all over North America. Keeping the wear and tear to a minimum is the job of the experienced hands of Seattle Opera's backstage crew, who lovingly repair and maintain the canvases between each rental. Bravo crew!



***Tosca*, Act 1. Interior of the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle. Seattle Opera 2015. Photo: Robert Reynolds.**



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Students at Victory School enjoyed meeting and singing with soprano Keely McPeck, in an I Love to Read Month workshop. Photo: L. Rumak, 2024

Tosca

AN OPERA IN THREE ACTS

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

Based on Victorien Sardou's play *La Tosca*.

Conductor Tyrone Paterson

Director Anna Theodosakis

PRINCIPAL CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

CESARE ANGELOTTI, a political prisoner..... DAVID WATSON
A SACRISTAN PETER MCGILLIVRAY
MARIO CAVARADOSSI, a painter DAVID POMEROY
FLORIA TOSCA, a prima donna MARINA COSTA-JACKSON
BARON SCARPIA, Chief of Police..... GREGORY DAHL
SPOLETTA, a police agent..... JAMES McLENNAN
SCIARRONE, a gendarme DAVID WATSON
A JAILER PETER MCGILLIVRAY

ALSO APPEARING:

A SHEPHERD BOY (offstage voice)..... NATHANIEL MERCER
..... ALEXA CELLAMARE (understudy)
SCENERY DESIGN ERCOLE SORMANI
COSTUME DESIGN ANDREW MARLEY (FOR NEW YORK CITY OPERA)
WITH ADDITIONAL DESIGNS BY HEIDI ZAMORA (FOR SEATTLE OPERA)
LIGHTING DESIGN LARRY ISACOFF
SCENERY, PROPERTIES, AND COSTUMES..... SEATTLE OPERA
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STAGE MANAGER CHRIS PORTER
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PROJECTED TITLES BY SHELDON JOHNSON

There will be two 20-minute intermissions.

The use of cameras, phones, and recording devices during the performance is strictly forbidden. Please turn off phones, alarm watches, and pagers.

Latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate break in the program. Cast subject to change.

Manitoba Opera is a professional company operating within the jurisdiction of Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

The Artists

Listed in Order of Vocal Appearance
* Manitoba Opera debut



Anna Theodosakis Director

Stage director and choreographer Anna Theodosakis is a rising figure on the operatic scene, with critically acclaimed

productions featuring "clean and uncluttered direction" *Opera Canada*.

This season, Anna debuts with Opéra de Montréal for Bizet's *Carmen* and returns to the University of Toronto for Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. She also joins the Canadian Opera Company for Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and returns to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as resident assistant director.

In recent seasons, Anna has directed *Don Giovanni* (Calgary Opera), *Così fan tutte* (University of Toronto), the Grand Finale (Merola Opera Program), *Carmen* (Saskatoon Opera), and *The Magic Flute* (Canadian Opera Company).

She made her Manitoba Opera debut last season with Puccini's *La Bohème*.



Tyrone Paterson Conductor

Canadian conductor Tyrone Paterson served as Manitoba Opera's (MO) music advisor and principal conductor for over 20 years. He made his

professional conducting debut in 1988 with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. He previously served as principal conductor/artistic director for Opera Lyra Ottawa for 16 years, as resident conductor for Calgary Opera over several seasons, and was the main conductor for Opera Saskatchewan (Regina), having conducted with them for 10 seasons. He has led approximately 140 different productions throughout Europe, the US, Asia, and for most of Canada's leading professional opera companies. Maestro conducted over 90 performances at the National Arts Centre of Canada (NAC) and produced over 32 operas on the NAC stage.

Highlights include *Otello* (Germany); *Rigoletto* (Montreal); *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* (Edmonton); *Don Giovanni* (Hawaii); *Medea* (Il Teatro Greco, Italy); *Fidelio* (MO); *Manon* (Calgary); *Salome* (MO), *Turandot* (Vancouver); *Eugene Onegin* (Ottawa); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Carolina); *Aida* (Nashville); *Prince Igor* (National Theater of Moravia-Silesia); *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* (Romania); *Tosca* (Austria); *Jenufa* (Hukvaldy Festival); *Blue Beard's Castle* (Czech Republic); *The Magic Flute* (Beijing); *Susannah* (MO); and concerts in San Remo (Italy) and Opera Cracow (Poland).



David Watson Angelotti/Sciarrone

Bass-baritone David Watson, a veteran of operatic and concert stages across Canada, continues to earn praise for the exceptional richness and

power of his voice. During his 18 years of service with the Royal Canadian Air Force, David appeared in 16 Manitoba Opera productions, including the role of Elder McLean in *Susannah* (2019), which marked his 50th production with the company.

Recent Manitoba Opera appearances include the role of Pierre La Grande in the world premiere of *Li Keur: Riel's Heart of the North* (2023), and the roles of Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Bohème* (2025).

David has also performed with the Canadian Opera Company, Pacific Opera Victoria, Vancouver Opera, Calgary Opera, Edmonton Opera, and Rainbow Stage.

This spring David will perform the role of Antonio in Manitoba Opera's production of *The Marriage of Figaro*.



Peter McGillivray Sacristan/Jailer

Baritone Peter McGillivray has been celebrated as "a gifted comic actor," with a "rich, flexible and strong voice."

In recent seasons he has

been seen on opera and concert stages from coast to coast, specializing in comic roles such as Dr. Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Sir Joseph Porter in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Stubb in *Moby Dick*. He also excels in interpreting more dramatic fare such as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio*, and Bassett in *Rocking Horse Winner*.

Recent highlights include appearances in Manitoba Opera's 2024 production of *The Elixir of Love*, Vancouver Opera's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a return to Pacific Opera Victoria as Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro*, which he looks forward to reprising this season in Manitoba Opera's spring production.

The Artists



David Pomeroy Cavaradossi

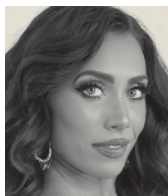
Newfoundland tenor David Pomeroy has enjoyed a career that places him on the world's great stages. He performed Faust, Hoffmann and Romeo at

the Met in New York and receives star billing across North America, Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

David's 2024/25 season was Beethoven's 9th with the Newfoundland Symphony and Don José (*Carmen*) with Manitoba Opera, followed by Tannhäuser at Bayerische Staatsoper. He then returned to the National Theatre Toyko as Prince in Zemlinsky's *Eine Florentinische Tragödie*.

Previous highlights include Bacchus and Don José at Oper Stuttgart, Bacchus at the Liceu Barcelona, Don José, Hoffmann, Faust, Rodolfo, and Pinkerton at the Canadian Opera Company, Henri in *I Vespri Siciliani* at Royal Danish, Radames in São Paulo and Seattle, Calaf in São Paulo, Calgary, Edmonton, New Orleans and Tokyo, Paul in *Die Tote Stadt* in Limoges, Calgary, Dresden, and Florestan, and Tannhäuser at the Cologne Opera.

David also enjoys his time teaching voice and opera at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.



Marina Costa-Jackson* Tosca

Italian-American soprano Marina Costa-Jackson is thrilling audiences throughout the US, Europe, and Asia.

Engagements this season include Mimi in *La Bohème* in Tokyo, and *Suor Angelica* with Opera Carolina.

Future engagements include her role debut as Aida at New National Theatre in Tokyo and Juliette in *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Teatro Colón. Last season included her Royal Opera House Covent Garden debut as Juliette in *Hoffmann*, and Micaëla in *Carmen* with Florida Grand Opera.

Other recent engagements include the title role in *Suor Angelica* and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* with San Diego Opera, Minnie in Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* and the title role in *Manon Lescaut* for North Carolina Opera, Musetta in *La Bohème* with Utah Opera, and her debut as *Tosca* with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City.



Gregory Dahl Scarpia

Winnipeg-born Gregory Dahl is one of Canada's leading baritones, praised for his "commanding presence" and "warm, powerful voice"

(*Winnipeg Free Press*). Known for signature roles including the Dutchman (*Die fliegende Holländer*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Iago (*Otello*), and Don Pasquale, he has performed across Canada and internationally with English National Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Teatro Real.

This season, besides singing Scarpia for Manitoba Opera, he will also be appearing as Monterone in *Rigoletto* with the Canadian Opera Company, Marcello in *La Bohème* at Vancouver Opera, and sings the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* with Opera 5. In concert, he makes a return to the Orchestre symphonique de Gatineau for Mozart's *Requiem*.

Passionate about educating the next generation, Greg also serves on the voice faculty at the University of Toronto.



James McLennan Spoletta

With a career spanning more than two decades, James McLennan has been featured on opera and concert stages across Canada in

a wide range of leading and supporting roles. This upcoming season sees repeat engagements with Manitoba Opera, as Spoletta in Puccini's *Tosca*, and both Don Basilio and Don Curzio in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Additional recent highlights include return engagements at Manitoba Opera (*Li Keur: Riel's Heart of the North, Susannah*); with Pacific Opera Victoria (Don Basilio/Don Curzio in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*); the title role in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédicte* with Manitoba Underground Opera; and the role of Gastone in *La traviata* with both Pacific Opera Victoria and Edmonton Opera.

The Artists



Nathaniel Mercer* **A Shepherd Boy**

Nathaniel has been a member of Manitoba Opera Children's Chorus for *Carmen* (2024) and *La Bohème* (2025), and is thrilled to be in *Tosca*

as a soloist and chorister. Nathaniel was also in the Manitoba premiere of the musical *Merrily We Roll Along* by Dry Cold Productions (2024). In 2025, Nathaniel received a Rainbow Stage Youth Award for the most outstanding musical theatre performance by a 12 or 14 Years & Under performer at the Winnipeg Music Festival.

In 2024 and 2025, Nathaniel was a national finalist in the CFMTA Student Composer Competition. Nathaniel enjoyed celebrating the centennial season of the Winnipeg Boys' Choir as a member.



Tadeusz Biernacki **Chorus Director/ Répétiteur**

The 2025/26 season marks Tadeusz Biernacki's 43rd 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.

Tad 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 Sopranos* of Winnipeg concert in 2020.



Carolyn Boyes **Children's Chorus Director**

Carolyn Boyes teaches choral music at Sisler High School and is the artistic director of the Winnipeg Boys' Choir

(WBC). During her tenure with the WBC, the choir has performed with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, and with many of Winnipeg's finest choral ensembles. In 2022, the WBC was invited to perform at Podium, Canada's National Choral Conductor's Conference (Toronto).

In 2009 and 2020, Carolyn was awarded the Winnipeg Music Festival's Michael Proudfoot Trophy "in recognition of a conductor exemplifying a passion for excellence in choral work." She has been recognized by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Manitoba Opera, and the University of Manitoba for her contributions to music education and Winnipeg's music community. Carolyn earned a Master of Music (Choral Conducting) from the University of Manitoba.



Jacqueline Loewen **Fight Director**

Jacqueline has worked in many aspects of physical theatre, which all interlink, as an actor, mime, sketch comedy writer, theatre creator,

and fight choreographer.

As a fight choreographer, she has worked on every stage in Manitoba, as well as some in Toronto, Vancouver, and Kansas. In Winnipeg, she has built operatic-sized conflicts for the Manitoba Opera productions of *Li Keur: Riel's Heart of the North*, *Susannah*, *Otello*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, and *Don Giovanni*.

Jacqueline also works with singers as a performance coach, both privately and at the University of Manitoba's Desautels Faculty of Music, creating with the singer a sense of embodied action in their characters.

The Artists



Larry Isacoff **Lighting Designer**

Larry is very excited to be working with Manitoba Opera. His lighting credits include *The Comeback*, *The Sound of Music*, *Burning Mom*,

The Post Mistress, *Di and Viv and Rose*, *23.5 Hours*, *Armstrong's War*, *The Secret Annex*, *Harvey*, *Other People's Money*, *August: Osage County*, *The Fighting Days*, *The Shunning*, *Looking Back - West*, *Rope's End*, *The Retreat from Moscow*, *Fully Committed*, *Mating Dance of the Werewolf*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Cloud Nine*, *How I Got That Story*, *The Affections of May*, *Mrs. Klein*, and *The Gin Game* - all for Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre.

Other theatre credits include Cercle Molière, Globe Theatre, 25th Street Theatre, Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers, PTE, MTYP, and Persephone Theatre.

Larry was awarded the Evie Award for Outstanding Lighting Design in 2020. He divides his time between engaging theatre projects and teaching yoga.



Chris Porter **Stage Manager**

Chris is excited to return to Manitoba Opera after working on *Carmen* in 2024. His opera stage management career began at Manitoba Opera in

1991 with *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1992.

Chris has also collaborated with Edmonton Opera, Pacific Opera Victoria, Opera Lyra, Mississauga Opera, and extensively with the Canadian Opera Company. Notable productions include *Louis Riel*, *Hadrian*, *Missing*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

Chris was production stage manager for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in Toronto, along with numerous Broadway musicals for Mirvish Productions. He has also worked with Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Canadian Stage, Ross Petty Productions, Soulpepper, Studio 180, Young People's Theatre, Charlottetown Festival, Stratford Festival, Disney Cruise Line, and Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas.



Kathryn Ball **Assistant Stage Manager**

This is Kathryn's 31st production with Manitoba Opera. Her most recent productions were last year's *The Elixir of Love* and *La Bohème*.

Kathryn is also the production manager at Rainbow Stage. Prior to that she stage managed many shows in Winnipeg at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Prairie Theatre Exchange, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Rainbow Stage.

Nationally, she has worked at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre and the Globe Theatre in Regina and has had the privilege of touring many shows across the country and throughout Manitoba.

"Enjoy the show!"



Heather Lee Brereton **Assistant Stage Manager**

Heather has worked in various capacities in the Winnipeg theatre/arts community

for over 15 years. She has assumed many roles (stage management, designer, props builder, wardrobe co-ordinator, technician) for regional and independent theatre productions. After apprenticing with Manitoba Opera over a decade ago, she re-joined the stage management team in 2019. She has been wrangling props and backstage left for nearly all of MO's productions since then.

When not stage managing, she creates custom garments, performance costumes, and accessories for private clients (*Heather Lee Bea*) including vintage clothing enthusiasts, circus performers, drag artists, and a Marilyn Monroe impersonator. Outside of gigs, Heather loves concocting classic cocktails, creating themed ensembles for events (that she also sometimes organizes - #everybodylovesatheme), and a good dance party.

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Loralie Friesen	Micheline Hay	Michal Kowalik	Chris Caslake
Deborah Ginther	Christina Pyrz-Kowall	George Nytepchuk	Steve Denby
Ana Gomez	Mavis Ritchie	Laurence Pauls	James Dutton
Kadri Irwin	Stephanie Schmid	Ronald Mervin Sison	Jayden Fraser
Joanne Kilfoyle	Isla Shea	Adam von Lau	Don Larsen
Katherine Mayba	Alison Stenekes Loewen		Ted Wiens

Children’s Chorus

Amy Bouchard	Nicolino Giancola	Sage Kanhai	Nathaniel Mercer
Faye Campbell	Jeremy Grela	Ava Kilfoyle	Michael Wang
Alexa Cellamare	Ilanthe Groumoutis	Julia Kowalik	Emiliya Vasyliyeva
Dylan Eskin	Daphne Groumoutis	Karina Kowalik	Grace Lynn Williams

Supernumeraries

Tim Beaudry	David Fraser	Peter Klymkiw	Paul Sullivan
Mark Brubacher	Reynaldo Gomez	Brent Letain	Tim Webster
Zachary Caslake			



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Director/Répétiteur

Tadeusz Biernacki

Children’s Chorus

Director

Carolyn Boyes

Adult Chorus

Rehearsal Pianist

Cary Denby

Children’s Chorus

Rehearsal Pianist

Celoris Miller

Firearms Safety

Supervisor

Dave Brown

Apprentice

Stage Manager

Devon Helm

Director’s Assistant

Tayte Mitchell
(Opera on the Avalon)

Hair/Wig Designer

Jill Buhr

Hair/Wig Assistant

Laura Warren

Hair Crew

Abel Martinez
Nancy Lecoco
Jeffrey Raposo
Leslie Rodgers

Make-Up Designer

Theresa Thomson

Make-Up Assistant

Sarah Leighton
Danielle Frenz

Make-Up Crew

Emily King
Chelsea Rankin

Projected Titles Cueing

Cary Denby

Rehearsal piano provided by St John’s Music.

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Pre-Show Chat

Saturday, November 22 | 7 pm | Orchestra Right

Wednesday, November 26 | 6:30 pm | Piano Nobile

Friday, November 28 | 7 pm | Piano Nobile

A 20-minute presentation held a half-hour before curtain at each performance.

GUEST PRESENTER: Soprano Lara Ciekiewicz



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Suzanne Taffot (Mimi) and Zachary Rioux (Rodolfo), *La Bohème*, 2025. Photo: R. Tinker

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Mona Coarda

Tara Fensom

Gwen Hoebig*

Hong Tian Jia

Mary Lawton

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Julie Savard

Jun Shao

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Each season, Manitoba Opera donates tickets to social service agencies for clients who might not otherwise be able to attend a performance. By removing the economic barrier to attend opera, we hope to foster a sense of belonging for all members of our community.

Last season, through Opera Access (OA), over 3,700 tickets were distributed through over 90 community organizations including 1Just City, Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, House of Peace, Independent Living Resource Centre, Main Street Project, Ka Ni Kanichihk, Clan Mothers Healing Village and Knowledge Centre, Onashowewin Justice Circle (Restorative Justice Program), Rainbow Resource Centre, and United Way.

The OA program coordinator works with all the organizations to ensure they have what they need so that the opera-going experience for clients is an enjoyable and comfortable one.

For example, to help prepare first-time opera goers, a "What to Expect at the Opera" guide was developed.

The impact of the Opera Access Program is felt deeply across the community. Numerous participants and organizational partners have shared heartfelt messages of gratitude and wonder following their experiences.

"I was inundated with pictures and messages all weekend about how much fun they had and how much they enjoyed the opera...I don't know if the Manitoba Opera can properly understand, or if I can properly convey, what a once-in-a-lifetime, mind-blowing, therapeutic, life-giving evening this was for these girls."

**– Rosalinda Amato, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
HOUSE OF PEACE**



**Opera Access ticket holders from House of Peace
at a performance of *The Elixir of Love*, 2024**

“I’m in Awe”

“This was my first experience at the opera and I’m in awe. From the moment I walked into the Concert Hall, I saw all types of people dressed up, smiling, excited for the evening. The performers, the set, the orchestra... La Bohème was the perfect introduction. I’m now officially an opera fan.”

– **Alana Hing**, TICKET RECIPIENT
THROUGH OUT THERE WINNIPEG



**Opera Access ticket holders from
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“We went as a family and had so much fun. It was my daughter’s birthday – her first in Canada – and this made it extra special. During this difficult time, we really rested our souls.”

– **Valeriia Solntseva**, TICKET RECIPIENT
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**Opera Access ticket holders from the
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a performance of *The Elixir of Love*, 2024**

By addressing financial, informational, and cultural barriers, the Opera Access Program continues to play a vital role in connecting new audiences to opera. Manitoba Opera remains committed to strengthening these

community relationships and expanding access, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to experience the power and beauty of live opera.

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Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and financial support of our community of donors that allows us to create opera of the highest calibre. It is because of this generosity that the power and beauty of professional opera can be experienced right here in Manitoba.

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Nikki Einfeld (Adele), *Die Fledermaus*, 2006. Photo: R. Tinker

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