



MANITOBA OPERA

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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MANITOBA OPERA 2015/16 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Hundreds of New Patrons Experience The Marriage of Figaro and Of Mice and Men

Manitoba Opera (MO) announced this evening at its 2015/16 Annual General Meeting (AGM), held at the Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg, that hundreds of new patrons attended the company's mainstage productions this season – *The Marriage of Figaro* in November and *Of Mice and Men* in April. Fifty-three percent of the single ticket buyers for the company premiere of the American literary classic, *Of Mice and Men*, were new attendees to Manitoba Opera. As well, 450 or 17% of the 2,690 season subscribers were new to the company.

Although Manitoba Opera had the third highest year of fundraising in its history (\$754,416), the company posted a small loss of \$35,363 or two percent of its operating budget of \$2,167,168. Manitoba Opera's accumulated debt at year end (May 31, 2016) was \$300,164, down from \$654,000 in 2000.

Community engagement plays an increasingly important role in connecting the company's work to the community. With the help of advisory committees and by partnering with like-minded organizations, once again in 2015/16, productions were used to address themes, ideas, and issues relevant to Manitoban audiences. With *Of Mice and Men* for example, MO created a wide-ranging community conversation around intellectual disability. This included a panel discussion, the "We All Have Dreams" video series, film screenings, and the inclusion of a plain language synopsis in the program.

MO also expanded the education program this year to offer more opportunities for young people to experience opera in schools, in the community, and at the dress rehearsal of both productions. Across all education initiatives this season, 6,500 students were exposed to opera through Student Night at the Opera, Opera in a Trunk, Discover Opera (in-school presentations by soprano Lara Ciekiewicz), and the school tour of *Angela and Her Sisters* by Desautels Faculty of Music Opera Theatre students for which Manitoba Opera provided sponsorship and administrative assistance.

"The cultural sector throughout North America is changing rapidly," commented Larry Desrochers, General Director & CEO. "There is increasingly more competition for the patron's time, attention, and money. Manitoba Opera, like its sister organizations, locally and throughout North America, must continue to innovate. It must continue to create meaningful experiences for its audiences and become indispensable to its communities."

2. Manitoba Opera 2015/16 Annual General Meeting Media Release

Through the Opera Access program, in 2015/16, Manitoba Opera distributed 416 complimentary tickets to performances of both *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Of Mice and Men* to Winnipeg-based members of the Canadian Forces; through the Winnipeg Public Library initiative for underprivileged areas in the city, as well as social services agencies for clients of organizations including the Immigrant Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, and Macdonald Youth Services; and for local fundraisers.

“Producing opera is a high-wire act that balances constant diligence with considered risk-taking,” commented Robert Vineberg, Outgoing Chair of the Manitoba Opera Board of Trustees. “Opera in this community is made possible by the governance, ambassadorship and fundraising of the Board of Trustees; the tireless efforts of staff; the support of private individuals and corporations; funding from the public sector; and thousands of hours of volunteer time. Manitoba Opera is appreciative of the support and effort of all these stakeholders.”

The 2016/17 Board of Trustees was also announced at the AGM. Returning trustees are Elba Haid (Chair) Robert Vineberg (Past Chair), Wayne Benson, Dr. Anthony Iacopino, Brent Bottomley, Sue Jurkovic-Bracken, Abbie Grieder, Leona Herzog, Dr. Amanda Huminicki, Dr. Hermann Lee, Luisa Matheson, Dr. Bill Pope, Dr. Jeffrey Sisler, and David White.

New trustees elected to the Board are Peter George and Alex Robinson (bios attached). Retiring from the Board of Trustees are Dr. Robert Biscontri, Dr. Henri Marcoux, Kimberley Puhach, and Heather Sarna. Jennifer Snyder was conferred with the title of Director Emeritus in recognition for her service as Chair from 2011 to 2014.

2016/17 Season

Two Manitoba Opera premieres, both in the grand opera tradition, will be showcased in the company's 44th season. ***Falstaff***, Giuseppe Verdi's crowning achievement and his final opera, opens November 19, with additional performances November 22 and 25. This must-see opera is indisputably one of the operatic world's greatest comedies. The romantic tragedy, ***Werther*** (pronounced Vare-tare) by French composer, Jules Massenet, is scheduled for April 29, May 2, and 5. Both productions will be presented at the Centennial Concert Hall.

Subscriptions are now on sale and single tickets for both productions will be available in September. To order tickets, call 204-957-7842 or go to www.manitobaopera.mb.ca

**MANITOBA OPERA BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2016/17 SEASON
NEW TRUSTEES**

ALEX ROBINSON

Alex Robinson returns to the Board after first being a trustee from 1998 to 2006.

He is currently the Business Development Manager at Graham Construction and Engineering. He has over 25 years of diverse government and private sector senior project management experience gained through positions as the Vice President of Planning and Development at the Winnipeg Airport Authority and Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Robinson has degrees in Engineering and City Planning from the University of Manitoba and is also an alumnus of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His political experience ranges from being the senior political advisor to the Mayor of Winnipeg to volunteering on numerous local, provincial, and federal election campaigns.

PETER GEORGE

Peter George returns to the Board for his second term. He was a trustee from 2001 to 2011 and the Chair from 2004 to 2011.

His first involvement with the company was as a chorus member in *Turandot* in 1980. Mr. George performed in the chorus of approximately 10 operas over the next several years and performed in Manitoba Opera school tours.

In 1989, he began his career in advertising as a graphic designer. Today, he is President and CEO of McKim Communications Group, Manitoba's leading full-service marketing communications firm, with offices in Winnipeg and Regina, Saskatchewan. Peter George is a respected business leader in Manitoba and holds an Executive MBA.

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