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## MANITOBA OPERA CONTINUES TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL STANDING

It was announced today at the organization's Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Winnipeg that strategic decision making enabled Manitoba Opera to improve its financial standing by approximately \$47,000 in the 2008/09 season and achieve a number of milestones including breaking box office records.

Manitoba Opera entered the 2008/09 season carrying an accumulated deficit of \$250,292 (it had reached \$630,000 in 2001). The company finished the year (June 30, 2009) with an operating deficit of \$203,278, on a budget of \$1,808,500, an improvement of approximately \$47,014. And when all the assets are combined, the deficit is further reduced to \$173,810 - the lowest it has been since 1996.

“When faced with a shortfall of public funding at the start of last season, management and the Board of Trustees made the strategic decision to focus our fundraising efforts on eliminating the accumulated deficit, even if it meant incurring a new operating deficit,” said Larry Desrochers, Manitoba Opera General Director and CEO. “We knew that the resources did not exist in the community to tackle both the long-term debt and the projected operating shortfall.”

“By implementing this strategy, private sector gifts were matched by the Province of Manitoba and applied to the accumulated deficit. We maximized contributions of the Province of Manitoba contributed through our debt reduction agreement where private sector donations to debt reduction were matched by the Province on a dollar for dollar basis. As our internal projections indicated, the new operating deficit posted is less than the old accumulated deficit, thus improving our financial position by about \$47,000,” added Board of Trustees Chair, Peter George. “We are tremendously thankful to all of the private and corporate donors who made this achievement possible.”

In terms of record setting, the 2008/09 season (*Il Trovatore*, *Candide* in Concert and *Madama Butterfly*) saw total box office revenue reach \$605,452. This is the first time the organization's ticket revenue has broken the \$600,000 mark. *Madama Butterfly* was one of the highest attended shows in the company's last decade, with 95% attendance and two of the three shows sold out. The 2008/09 season was also the second best subscribed in 13 years, after the 2005/06 season featuring *La Bohème* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

## 2. Manitoba Opera 2008/09 AGM Media Release

In terms of fundraising, Manitoba Opera's Camerata donations (individual donations of \$1000 - \$5,000) hit a new high, exceeding \$100,000, the first time in the company's 37-year history.

The 2008/09 season also boasted a number of artistic accomplishments, starting with the return of Richard Margison to Manitoba Opera after 20 years as Manrico in the season-opening production of *Il Trovatore*. It was also the first time Manitoba Opera presented a complete version of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* which was the mid-season concert offering. With Tracy Dahl in the lead role, the *Winnipeg Free Press* described her as an "undeniable star of a delightful presentation." Manitoba Opera closed the season with a five-star production of *Madama Butterfly* starring Ailan Zhu, making her first appearance with Manitoba Opera.

"In some ways, there was a measure of artistic risk by putting these three operas together in one season because all these operas require excellent singing. I think it is a measure of the artistic maturity of this company that we can program such vocally demanding operas, attract international-calibre artists and present such high quality productions," commented Desrochers.

The 2009/10 Board of Trustees was also announced at the AGM. The trustees are Peter George (Chair), Lawrence Elkow, Elba Haid, Peter Heavysage, Leona Herzog, Tony Iacopino, Chris Mainella, Jennifer Snyder, Cindy Stevens, Brent Twist, and Robert Vineberg. Retiring from the board are Sheila Bayda and Charles Hebert.

### 2009/10 Season

Travel to Seville this season with Manitoba Opera. First stop on this operatic excursion to hot and sunny Spain will be Rossini's ticklish all-time comedy classic *The Barber of Seville* starring the delightful Nikki Einfeld as Rosina. Performances will be held November 21, 24, and 27, 2009. *The Barber of Seville* will be sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Next on the tour is Bizet's fiery fatal attraction, *Carmen*, April 17, 20, and 23, 2010. Kirsten Chavez, considered one of the most riveting artists performing today, will sing the title role. *Carmen* will be sung in French with English translations projected above the stage.

All performances will be held at the Centennial Concert Hall.

Casual tickets will be on sale beginning Monday, October 5 through all Ticketmaster outlets, by calling 253-ARTS (2787) or at [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca). Season subscriptions starting at just \$47 are now available. Call 957-7842 to purchase, for more information and a season brochure, or go to [www.manitobaopera.mb.ca](http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca).