

2019
2020

The
Florentine
Opera

ANNUAL REPORT

MARRIAGE
OF FIGARO
THE TRAGEDY
OF CARMEN
MACBETH

A Year in Review

2019/2020 BEGAN AS A SEASON OF GROWTH AND MOMENTUM

By Maggey Oplinger
General Director & CEO

The 2019-2020 season held many firsts for our audience and community. It began as a season of growth and momentum, bringing Florentine operatic debuts (Brook's *Tragedy of Carmen*, Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*), new creative team and talent to wow our audience, and a fresh way for you to see and experience us through our refreshed branding and website.

We spent the fall learning how all of these new components work together, and just as we hit our stride in spring with a sold-out opening night for *Tragedy of Carmen*, we got stopped in our tracks due to COVID-19.

Creating a beautiful opera production and having it shut down on the eve of a full house was heartbreaking, but our drive for success didn't allow us to give up. Finding a way to go digital in 24 hours, partnering with local small businesses to do it to the quality our audience and performers deserve, was exhilarating and nerve-racking. The performers rose to the occasion and then some, even though recording live on opening night is not the norm for an opera singer. And as the pandemic drove us off the stage, we buckled down

to take that momentum and creativity and use it to sensitively envision a digital and intimate rebirth that is certainly lasting longer than we'd hoped. (We joke that our Friday the 13th opening night and *Macbeth* as our final program summoned the bad juju!)

We doubled down on our video investment, recording our school program just before emptying the building. That teamwork built a show that kids and families across the country are still enjoying. That inspired spin-off online content developed in collaboration with Minnesota Opera. Constraint is a friend to innovation, and while change at this speed and with these challenges can be painful, we're heartened to see what these successes may mean going forward.

You - our audience, supporters, fans and family - made all of this possible. Your comforting messages and heroic gifts allowed us to surpass our Herzfeld Spring Challenge goal, and end the year in the black and in good spirits. As we enter our 87th season, this old dame will sweep into a new normal with grace and good humor. After all, she keeps great company.

SEASON SUCCESS

In spite of this season's unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19, and thanks to so many in our community, we ended the year with a balanced budget!

- More than 500 households and organizations contributed \$2,195,963 and we added \$194,023 to the Florentine Endowment Fund. From donating tickets to increasing philanthropic support, our contributing households grew by nearly 10%.
- Our first season with new Chorusmaster, Benjamin Rivera.
- Our first-ever digitally produced operas, *The Tragedy of Carmen* and *Cinderella* reached more than 5,000 households with the help of Studio Gear and Kickball Media.
- The new Spotlight Series brought **exciting new artists and repertoire** to Milwaukee, including Laura Wilde and Milwaukee-native Emily Fons, who performed works by Jake Heggie, Carrie Jacob-Bonds, and more. The concerts were greeted with such enthusiasm that the series is fully sponsored for the coming season. Look for more rising stars on our stage in coming seasons, curating their own shows.
- Our Baumgartner Studio Artist Alumni continue to shine. Ariana Douglas and Tom Leighton returned for our production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Leroy Davis joined the Ryan Young Artist Program at Chicago Lyric. Briana Moynihan and Nathaniel Hill appeared with Des Moines Opera this summer, and Nicole Heinen performed virtually with Chautauqua Opera. They do the Florentine proud.
- We began Quarantine Opera, a blog dedicated to exploring opera at any level, with drink pairings and a playful tone. Paired with our Quarantine Opera Book Club, co-hosted by the Milwaukee Rotary, we kept the 'in person' feel of our community. Attendees joined from Pennsylvania and Ohio!



THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Relationships are messy! Figaro and Susanna thwart the lascivious tendencies of the count, and Mozart lays bare the struggles between the classes. Tuneful and rollicking, this is that rare comedy that shows us our humanity even as it entertains us.

**MAJOR
SUPPORT
FROM**

Nancy & Terry Anderson
Nita Soref

We added a mini opera. Our Baumgartner Studio Artist Showcase opened with Leonard Bernstein's 45-minute *Trouble in Tahiti* — a Jazzy, “Mad Men” era dramady. The second half of the Baumgartner Studio Artist Showcase featured our young artists performing the songs that make them shine!

**MAJOR
SUPPORT
FROM**

Claire & Glen Hackmann

Studio Artist Showcase with **TROUBLE IN TAHITI**





TRAGEDY OF CARMEN



Oh Curses! As we prepared to open our sold-out performance of Peter Brook's acclaimed chamber adaptation, COVID-19 appeared on our doorstep. The show must go on – so we brought the performance to you. Within 24 hours, we created a digital performance for our patrons.

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM

Robert Sobczak

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Macbeth hasn't appeared at the Florentine Opera since 2006-7, and we were excited to bring Verdian singing and choruses, and the ever remarkable persona of Lady Macbeth, back to our stage. Our gracious sponsors applied their gifts to the already completed work done by our production and artistic partners. We hope to see this great piece grace our stage again in the future, and thank everyone for their generosity in donating tickets and making gifts to support us as we went dark. Your participation makes our return and recovery possible.

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM

Donna & Donald
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MACBETH



Community Engagement

Cinderella

In person: 41 performances (71 scheduled) performed for 7,949 students and 625 Adults
Digital: Over 2200 views

Colectivo

Florentine Opera continued its 15 year partnership with Colectivo Coffee and enjoyed performing to large audiences at their Lakefront Cafe, Humboldt Cafe, and Prospect Cafe.

Spark!

The Florentine celebrated 10 years of performances at the Milwaukee Public Museum's SPARK! program. This program is specifically designed for people in early to mid-stages of memory loss and dementia.

Florentine Opera Camp

Florentine welcomed 14 high school aged singers for a week-long intensive camp at the end of July 2019. The singers worked on the many aspects of becoming a well rounded singer taking movement classes, private voice lessons and coaching, as well as studied vocal pedagogy and careers in opera.

Estabrook Beer Garden

(Summer 2019)

Milwaukee Film Festival

(Pavarotti Movie, Summer 2019)

Steinway Piano Gallery

Quarantine Opera Book Club

Shifted Community Engagement online

Pivoting to PPE

Florentine Production Staff partnered with Northwestern Mutual Foundation in an opportunity both to serve our community and to give temporary employment for members of the Florentine staff who would otherwise have been without work in May and June.

We provided 1,200 cloth face masks and 1,207 disposable isolation gowns to Children's Hospital, and an additional 420 cloth face masks to Amani United and the Dominican Center for distribution to youth and adults doing community restoration and building work in the Amani neighborhood.



Diva Gala & Spotlights

Chaired by the indomitable Kate and Don Wilson, and Faye and Rick Wetzel, with honorary chair Donna Ricco, the Diva Gala raised a record \$282,641 for Florentine education programs



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Financial

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2020	2019
Cash _____	\$413,385	\$62,449
Investments & Endowments _____	\$2,866,843	\$2,655,678
Receivables & Prepaid Expenses _____	\$341,219	\$339,222
Property & Equipment, net _____	\$11,768	\$21,464
TOTAL ASSETS _____	\$3,633,215	\$ 3,078,813

LIABILITIES	2020	2019
Payables & Accrued Expenses _____	\$11,392	\$88,780
Line of Credit _____	\$0	\$297,000
Payroll Protection Program Loan _____	\$217,000	\$0
Advanced Ticket Sales _____	\$116,415	\$104,718
Other Deferred Revenue _____	\$148,240	\$109,500
TOTAL LIABILITIES _____	\$493,047	\$599,998

NET ASSETS	2020	2019
Unrestricted Reserves & Restricted Funds _____	\$ 3,140,168	\$2,478,815

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS _____ **\$ 3,633,215** _____ **\$ 3,078,813**

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES OPERATING FUND

REVENUE	
Ticket Sales _____	\$178,709
Education & Outreach _____	\$61,435
Other _____	\$7,875
Annual Donations _____	\$1,453,747
UPAF Allocation _____	\$726,954
Government _____	\$33,001
Non Cash Donations _____	\$20,202
TOTAL REVENUE _____	\$ 2,481,923

EXPENSES	
Production _____	\$1,479,463
Education & Engagement _____	\$321,376
Administration _____	\$290,794
Development _____	\$225,077
Fixed Asset Impairment _____	----
TOTAL EXPENSES _____	\$ 2,316,710

NET OPERATING INCOME _____ **\$ 165,213**

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The Florentine Opera

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