

2020

The
Florentine
Opera

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

Our 87th season was truly one for the history books.

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YEAR IN REVIEW

With the demise of the “Season of the Ensemble”, we created a hybrid universe: outdoor performances; an international travel/ opera series paired with program-inspired menus; and a live, multimedia Kurt Weill debut with a red vinyl ballgown that inspired an audible gasp from the in-person audience.

Who could have predicted a breakout Mexican tenor and his Irish soprano wife giving us a private performance from a 100-year old grocery store in Tequila, Mexico?! Or needing a drone to film some of our song recitals? Our wonderful audience took this leap with us, and bought tickets to recitals filmed in private homes and with international performers. Over 22,000 households had access to our virtual Bronzeville Bohème school programming – free thanks to generous supporters like Herzfeld Foundation and We Energies. Choruses from multiple high schools virtually met with the Baumgartner Studio Artists.

We were some of the first to perform after COVID hit, and were **the first in the country** to perform an opera in a theater on May 7, 2021 (with our 60-page collective safety plan!). And because even a pandemic can’t stop us from celebrating, we held two safe Pasta & Puccinis this year as well as a virtual gala. Opera never ceases to amaze, when we let it grow and change. It draws us together, and we needed that catharsis more this year than ever.

Speaking of growth and change, the Florentine team astounded me this year. Our “pandemic president” Dr Peter Drescher was a constant and dedicated partner – thank you for your service and expertise! The team’s commitment, nimble creativity, boundless ability to get the impossible done despite exhaustion and worry, and generosity made me even prouder to call this family. You should be wondering if I’m speaking of the board, the staff, the performers or the donors: I mean all of them, and all of you. Thanks to every one of you, we performed, recorded, taught and learned, and returned to the stage last year. We did *not* stop bringing opera and performance experiences to Milwaukee, or employing the incredible people who make our shows possible. As we look forward to the return of grand opera in a new world of vaccines and doubled enthusiasm for live events, we will not lose sight of the Florentine’s agility over the last year.

Thank you all for making it a success.

Maggy Oplinger
General Director & CEO

Brought live performances back in summer 2020, safely and to sold-out audiences, and established a strong foundation for AI Fresco, a new garden series begun thanks to COVID successes.

Sold digital Interlude Season at 103% of goal. Sold in-person events at 87% of goal, including a sold-out La Vie en Rose performance.

OPENED THE NEW UIHLEIN HALL WITH THE FIRST LIVE, IN-THEATER OPERA PERFORMANCE IN THE COUNTRY. SUCCESSFULLY RETURNED TO THE THEATER FOR LA VIE EN ROSE, ERIC FERRING SPOTLIGHT RECITAL AND LITTLE MAHAGONNY, ALL OFFERED DIGITALLY AS WELL.

Produced digital content through the Black Tie and Voyages Series throughout the year, keeping the audience engaged while theaters were closed.

12 new programs highlighted various artistic endeavors and took a virtual tour of music around the world and around town.

RECEIVED PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL GRANTS FOR ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE FROM THE NEA AND KURT WEILL FOUNDATIONS.

SEASON SUCCESS

Established a Day of Reflection, Learning and Action — a paid day to deepen our understanding of our impact and to participate in building diversity, equity and inclusion in our city and our artistic community.

KEPT TEAM TOGETHER, AND ONLY FURLOUGHED 1 TEAM MEMBER. TEAM SUSTAINED 6 MONTHS OF SLIDING SCALE PAY CUTS AND CONTINUED TO DO GREAT WORK.

Added one board member and two staff members with complementary areas of expertise, increasing BIPOC leadership representation.

La Bohème education show was presented in a new digital version. New community partnerships (Discovery World, Milwaukee Moms) helped us offer our video to over 22,000 households.

PUT DESIGNERS, ARTISTS, TECHNICIANS TO WORK SAFELY AFTER 14 MONTHS OF UNEMPLOYMENT. NO COVID OUTBREAKS OCCURRED FOR LIVE PERFORMANCES.

CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS DELIVERED, ACHIEVING 135% AND 112% OF GOALS. (NET OF COVID-RELIEF GRANTS)

Stayed connected with our core constituents virtually including monthly cocktails, weekly Quarantine Opera book club, invites to meet the artists.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: OUR STRATEGIC PLAYBOOK

Thanks to UPAF's support and Spectrum Nonprofit Services, we have a new 5-Year Strategic Playbook. The plan comprehensively and holistically affirms our core values; illustrates our market and brand position; and lays out our strategies for impact:

- 1 PRODUCE GRAND OPERA**
As the only producer of Grand Opera in Milwaukee develop reliably excellent performances that celebrate the more is more nature of opera
- 2 HONE OUR BOUTIQUE APPROACH**
Make service exceptional at every touchpoint
- 3 BUILD COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**
Participate in mutually beneficial relationships that complement our strengths and build stronger audience experiences
- 4 CREATE AUDIENCE ENRICHMENT**
Maximizing opportunities to welcome, inspire, educate and delight audiences
- 5 EXPAND OPERA INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIPS**
Develop the talent pipeline on and offstage, and explore partnerships



SUMMER SERIES



Florentine PRESENTS

SHAKESPEARE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY WAYNE AND KRISTINE LUEDERS



LA VIE EN ROSE



LA VIE EN ROSE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY RONALD JACQUART



LIEDERABEND



FLORENTINE PRESENTS AND BLACK-TIE OPTIONAL MADE POSSIBLE BY





CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE

FRANCE



ITALY

VENICE



VOYAGES



TEQUILA

MEXICO



THE VOYAGES SERIES
WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY
THE GARY AND
CYNTHIA VASQUES
FAMILY FOUNDATION



SPOTLIGHT Eric Ferring



SPOTLIGHT ON ERIC FERRING
WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY



LITTLE MAHAGONNY WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY
CLAIRE AND GLEN HACKMANN
WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM
THE KURT WEILL
FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.



Weill's **LITTLE MAHAGONNY**





SCHOOL TOUR: BRONZEVILLE BOHÈME



MAJOR SUPPORT FOR OPERA
IN THE SCHOOLS PROVIDED BY



Herzfeld
Foundation



AND BY THE GENEROSITY OF THE
BAMBERGER AND MAROTI FAMILY
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OF SCHOOL TOUR SPONSORS AT
[WWW.FLORENTINEOPERA.ORG/
OPERAFOVSCHOOLS](http://WWW.FLORENTINEOPERA.ORG/OPERAFOVSCHOOLS)

Community Engagement

BRONZEVILLE BOHÈME TOUR

- Thanks to our generous sponsors, our Virtual tour was 100% free to schools and families.
- 2nd most visited Florentine Webpage (after landing page)
- Tour was a sneak peek/teaser for 2022 mainstage *Bohème*
- Virtual tour was seen by between 10,000-15,000 students and families across Milwaukee and SE Wisconsin
- Virtual Talk Backs and Virtual Class room visits
- 400+ students involved in additional opera enrichment
- New Education Partnerships with MKE with Kids, Milwaukee Mom, Colectivo, and Betty Brinn Children’s Museum helped engage the community with the opera.

ADULT ENRICHMENT

OSHER Lifelong Learning

- 2 courses this season: Opera 101 and Opera Mavericks

Opera “Book” Club (formally Quarantine Book Club)

- Over 50 virtual book club sessions since its inception in June 2020

Versed Little Mahagonny

- 3 part series on Weill’s work that discussed the history, music, and Florentine’s production



2020 DIVA GALA

**Sarah
and Peter
Damsgaard
chaired
our first
ever virtual
Diva Gala**

**with Honorary Chair
Sheri Williams Pannell
in November, 2020.
Guests were inspired
by the making of
our Bronzeville
La Bohème with artist
performances from
the school show.**



Pasta & Puccini celebrated both its 10th Anniversary (August, 2020) and 11th edition (June, 2021), led by Cathy and Mario Costantini. Together, these three events raised \$402,351 for the Florentine's education and community programs, including the Bronzeville La Bohème school tour.



Our Donors

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE A GIFT TO THE 2020-21 ANNUAL FUND—KEEPING OPERA ALIVE FOR MILWAUKEE DURING OUR INTERLUDE SEASON.

\$500,000 AND HIGHER

The United Performing Arts Fund

\$100,000 TO \$499,000

Donald and Donna Baumgartner

Herzfeld Foundation

Wisconsin Department of Administration CARES

\$50,000 TO \$99,000

Anonymous

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation

Nita Soref

We Energies

\$25,000 TO \$49,999

Anonymous

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\$15,000 TO \$24,999

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BURN THE NOTE

In the penultimate year of this initiative, these opera champions have eliminated Florentine debt to strengthen the company's mission.

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2020-21 FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2021	2020
Cash	1,756,161	413,385
Investments & Endowments	3,582,465	2,866,843
Receivables & Prepaid Expenses	554,297	341,219
Property & Equipment, net	27,821	11,768
TOTAL ASSETS	5,920,744	3,633,215

LIABILITIES	2021	2020
Payables & Accrued Expenses	35,306	11,392
Payroll Protection Program Loan	217,000	217,000
Advanced Ticket Sales	169,160	116,415
Other Deferred Revenue	158,500	148,240
TOTAL LIABILITIES	579,966	493,047

NET ASSETS	2021	2020
Unrestricted Reserves & Restricted Funds	5,340,778	3,140,168

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	5,920,744	3,633,215
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES – OPERATING FUND

REVENUE	
Ticket Sales	44,747
Education & Outreach	39,997
Other	2,802
Annual Donations	1,405,660
UPAF Allocation	645,424
Government	24,800
Non Cash Donations	46,208
COVID 19 Relief Grants*	155,462
Payroll Protection Program Loan Forgiveness*	217,000
Families First Coronavirus Response Act Assistance*	290,865
TOTAL REVENUE	2,872,965

EXPENSES	
Production	926,696
Education & Engagement	290,760
Administration	256,953
Development	236,068
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,710,477

NET OPERATING INCOME	1,162,488
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NET OPERATING INCOME WITHOUT COVID 19 RELATED INCOME	499,161
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Florentine Opera Company

Proposed Slate of Board Officers and New or Renewing Directors 2021-22

PRESIDENT
Cathy Costantini

PAST PRESIDENT
Peter Drescher

PRESIDENT-ELECT
David Paris

SECRETARY
Wayne Lueders

V.P. DEVELOPMENT
Claire Hackmann

V.P. HUMAN RESOURCES
Wendy Burke

V.P. FINANCE AND INVESTMENTS
Mary Shiely

V.P. MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT
Raechell Thuot

V.P. EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Julie Steinhafel

V.P. GOVERNANCE
Mark Berry

CO-CHAIR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
Mark Cameli

CO-CHAIR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
LaShonda Hill

V.P. ARTISTIC ADVISORY
Rich Grunke

V.P. ARTISTIC ADVISORY
Jan Wade

THE FLORENTINE WELCOMES NEW BOARD DIRECTOR
LaShonda Hill, for a term through 2024

WE PROUDLY RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING FOR APPROVAL TO LIFE DIRECTOR
Kathleen A. Wilson

Board Member Terms Renewing

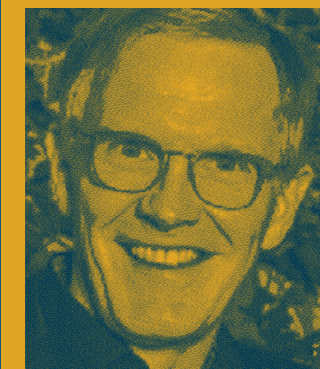
TERMS RENEWING 2021

Mark Berry, Wendy Burke, Cathy Costantini, Sarah Damsgaard, Peter Drescher, Wayne Lueders, Rae Thuot, Jan Wade

WE REMEMBER FONDLY LIFE DIRECTORS WE LOST THIS YEAR:
Laurence C. Hammond, Jr.

THANK YOU!

Dr. Peter Drescher,
Outgoing Board President



Dr. Drescher was the perfect person to have led the Florentine through this unexpected moment in history.

As a medical professional, he brought insight, clarity, and objective thinking to moving the organization forward during Covid-19. He kept the opera delivering on mission, and guided us successfully through the financial challenges. Thanks to his leadership, the stage is set for the Florentine's grand opera return.

FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020-21

FLORENTINE OPERA BOARD – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

	COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
Dr. Peter Drescher PRESIDENT	Medical College of Wisconsin
Kathleen A. Wilson PAST PRESIDENT	Community Volunteer
Wayne Lueders SECRETARY	Foley & Lardner
Mark Berry VP GOVERNANCE	Community Volunteer
Wendy Burke VP HUMAN RESOURCES	Burke Properties
Catherine Costantini VP EDUCATION / PRESIDENT ELECT	La Lune Collection
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Claire Hackmann VP DEVELOPMENT	Community Volunteer
Mary Shiely VP FINANCE AND TREASURER	WE Energies
Raechell Thuot VP MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT	Thyme Collective
Jan Wade VP ARTISTIC ADVISORY	WISN 12 News

FLORENTINE OPERA BOARD – DIRECTORS

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Dr. Megan Sheffer-Czuta	Northwestern Mutual
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FLORENTINE OPERA BOARD – LIFE DIRECTORS

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Jane S. O'Connell
Richard R. Pieper
Karen Plunkett
Mary B. Read
Michael J. Schmitz
Nita Soref

Igniter Award



THIS YEAR'S
IGNITER AWARD
IS PRESENTED
WITH GREAT
AFFECTION AND
APPRECIATION
TO NITA SOREF.

An inspiring supporter of the arts in Milwaukee, Nita joined the Florentine Board of Directors in 2007 and became a Life Director in 2019. She has been sponsoring Florentine Opera productions and individual lead performing artists, every season, since joining the Board of Directors. Her support of great talent now touches nearly 50 artists from around the world, including Swedish soprano Erica Sunnegårdh (*Salome* in *Salome*, 2008), soprano Jennifer Aylmer (*Semele* in *Semele*, 2009), baritone Keith Phares (*Elmer Gantry* in *Elmer Gantry*, 2010), soprano Elizabeth Caballero (*Violetta* in *La Traviata*, 2013), bass-baritone Wayne Tigges (*The Dutchman* in *The Flying Dutchman*, 2014), and Laurel Semerdjian (*Carmen* in *The Tragedy of Carmen*, 2020). During this Interlude Season, Nita directed her support to keeping artists singing in all our digital and live performances.

Thank you, Nita!

MAJOR INTERLUDE SEASON SUPPORT
WAS PROVIDED BY



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Foundation

NITA SOREF



CAMPAC
Milwaukee County Arts Fund

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