vancouveropera

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016–2017



## A NEW PATH

Throughout the 2016–2017 season Vancouver Opera continued to achieve artistic success with imaginative productions for diverse audiences.

An enchanting new production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* launched the season in November. Not seen at Vancouver Opera since 1966, this new production directed by Brenna Corner was performed by artists from the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program. The master artisans of the Old Trout Puppet Workshop created magical, oversized puppets for the stage. In order to fit the orchestra into the Vancouver Playhouse orchestra pit, Vancouver Opera commissioned Russian composer Anatoly Korolyov to create a reduced orchestration for 14 musicians. The production was a great success with the public and reached 97% of capacity over 11 performances.

In January 2017, VO presented a daring South African adaptation of Verdi's *Macbeth* in collaboration with PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and the Italian Cultural Centre. Verdi's score was rewritten by Fabrizio Cassol and adapted for twelve onstage musicians who were conducted by Premil Petrovic. The Vancouver Playhouse theatre was sold out for the five performance run.

## THE INAUGURAL FESTIVAL

The season culminated from 28 April to 13 May 2017 with the 16 day inaugural Vancouver Opera Festival. Three mainstage operas were performed in repertoire, a feat never before attempted by the company. New productions of *Otello* and *Dead Man Walking* ran in the Queen Elizabeth theatre for 4 performances each. Both works were artistically very satisfying, with particular notice to Antonello Palombi, as Otello and Erin Wall as Desdemona as well as J'nai Bridges as Sister Helen Prejean. *Dead Man Walking*, a contemporary American classic, was a moving and complex story about difficult themes such as retribution and redemption. Maestro Jonathan Darlington conducted both of these demanding orchestral scores. The third production was Mozart's ever popular *The Marriage of Figaro*, with costumes designed by fashion designer Sid Neigum. Two casts of young singers delighted audiences in this production directed by Rachel Peake and conducted by Maestro Leslie Dala. Dozens of other events including notably Five Octave Range, a multi-screen video installation created by award-winning interdisciplinary artist Paul Wong, and performances by Ute Lemper and Tanya Tagaq. A rich array of educational programming took place under the festival tent on the Queen Elizabeth Plaza. A pop-up nightclub style Opera Bar saw opera goers of all ages gathering every evening to exchange in a convivial environment.





Above Left: *Dead Man Walking.* Above Right: *The Marriage of Figaro.* Photos by Tim Matheson.

## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

VO's Education programs continue to succeed with strong support from parents and teachers across Metro Vancouver. The Summer Camp program welcomed its first alumni staff member with the creation of a position for a student who had aged out of the program to work alongside camp staff in support of the program. The inaugural year of the Delta Performance Academy was a great success. The students performed an opera, *Canadian Heroes From Coast to Coast*, as part of the Vancouver Opera Festival. The opera was written, composed and staged by the students with the support of VO artistic staff and teaching artists.

The Vancouver Opera Festival also showcased VO's Community Engagement programs with 21 events over the 16 days of the festival. Highlights of the workshops series included a conversation with Sister Helen Prejean and Shelley Joseph (Truth and Reconciliation Canada) that explored reconciliation and restorative justice through the lens of *Dead Man Walking*. The Opera Speaks series delved into the realities of presenting opera in the 21st century while the Backstage series included in-depth discussions with the artists and creative teams behind *The Marriage of Figaro*. The New Works Project brought together emerging composers, librettists and singers with industry professionals for a three week writing intensive. The result was four new scenes that were presented in the tent on the Festival grounds.

## DONOR AND SPONSOR SUPPORT

2016–2017 was a year marked with successes and challenges for Vancouver Opera. After one year of Festival Campaign, we passed the 2 million (50%) mark in pledges of our 4 year $4M goal. The Opera Round Table goal also exceeded the budgeted goal for the fiscal year. The inaugural Festival year proved to be crucial to introduce the General Director and Director of Development to the VO donor base and many new prospects and offered an important opportunity to meaningfully connect with patrons and donors in order to reinforce future fundraising potential.

Once again VO was privileged to have had the support of all 3 levels of government, and partners including Goldcorp, Mission Hill Family Estate, YVR, Blakes, Sun Life, RBC, BMO and TD. Similar acknowledgement must be given to Vancouver Opera Guild, Canada Heritage and the David Spencer Endowment Encouragement Fund. And very special recognition is due to the Vancouver Opera Foundation.

And finally, we express our sincerest gratitude to Martha Lou Henley, C.M., Moh Faris and family, Alan & Gwendoline Pyatt as well as the many, many generous donors who have made significant gifts to the Opera Round Table and Vancouver Opera Festival Campaigns. A special salute to members of the VO Board of Directors for their extraordinary contributions that have helped contribute to the financial health of the company.





Front cover: *Otello*. Back cover: *Macbeth* and *Hansel and Gretel*. Photos by Tim Matheson.


VANCOUVER OPERA

General Director
Kim Gaynor

Music Director
Jonathan Darlington

2016-2017
Board of Directors

Chair
Pascal Spothelfer

Vice-Chair
Jill Bodkin

Treasurer
Mary Jordan

Secretary
Susan Van der Flier

Directors

Amrita Ahuja
Roberta Lando Beiser
Nika Collison
Mo Dhaliwal
Reema Faris
Divyesh Gadhia
Deborah Graystone
Judy Halbert
Sherry Killam
Julia Kim
Bill Levine
Jessica Yan Macintosh
Bill Maclagan
Marilyn Loewen Mauritz
Paul McEwen
Mary McNeil
Lisa Payne
Janice Podmore
Michael Stevenson
Gwyneth Westwick
Jeffrey Wilhoit

Gwyneth Westwick
President,
Vancouver Opera Guild

Lis Welch
Chair,
Vancouver Opera Foundation

Distinguished
Honorary Patron
Martha Lou Henley, C.M.


# VO THANKS

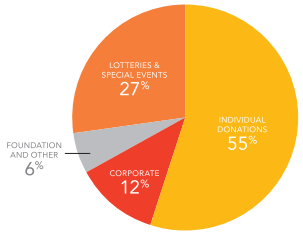
**SEASON SPONSOR**
Goldcorp

**PARTNERS & SPONSORS**
Mission Hill Family Estate
YVR
Vancouver Sun
Thomas Hobbs
BMO
Blakes
Sun Life Financial
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
TD
The Georgia Straight
RBC
Goethe Institut
Vancouver Opera Guild
Air Canada
Easy Park
Telus

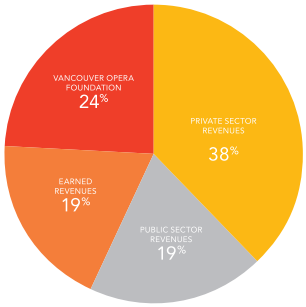
**GOVERNMENT & INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**
Canada Council for the Arts
Canadian Heritage
British Columbia Arts Counci
City of Surrey
City of Vancouver
Metro Vancouver

**FESTIVAL FOUNDERS***
Martha Lou Henley, C.M.
Alan & Gwendoline Pyatt
Jill Bodkin
Anthem Properties
Divyesh and Charu Gadhia
Julia and Demas Kim
Bill & Risa Levine
George & Jessica Macintosh
Jana and Bill Maclagan
Mary and Rod McNeil
John and Dana Montalbano
Ms. Bev Park & Mr. Jim Logan
SpencerCreo Foundation
Pascal & Isabelle Spothelfer
Roberta Lando Beiser
Moh Faris & family
Ms. Mary Jordan
Paul McEwen and Gwynneth Jones

*Major festival pledges and gifts of more than $25,000 to the Vancouver Opera Festival campaign




**Total Private Sector Revenues**
**2016 – 2017**
**$3,532,937**




**Total Revenues**
**2016 – 2017**
**$9,211,081**

# A NEW BUSINESS MODEL

With the introduction of the Vancouver Opera Festival and the concentration of most of the company's performing activity over a 16 day period, Vancouver Opera underwent an unprecedented shift in its core business model which had repercussions on all sectors of the company. The 16–17 fiscal year ended with total revenues 7% lower than the previous year. Public sector contributions were stable (a small year on year decline was due to a non-recurring special grant received in 15–16). Private sector revenues declined slightly as a percentage of total revenue, but individual donations increased significantly as result of the special festival fundraising campaign. Extraordinary gifts were sought and received from festival founders as part of a five year campaign to underpin the new festival initiative. Earned revenues (box office) significantly declined, reflecting historically low subscription renewal rates, combined with lower than projected single ticket sales during the festival. Annual and extraordinary contributions were provided by the Vancouver Opera Foundation and heartfelt thanks are extended to all Foundation board members.

On the bottom line, VO achieved an operating loss of $469,476 on a budget of $ 9.68 million. This had the effect of increasing the accumulated operating deficit to $1,126,742.