



m a n i t o b a  
UNDERGROUND  
opera

ANNUAL  
REPORT

2016

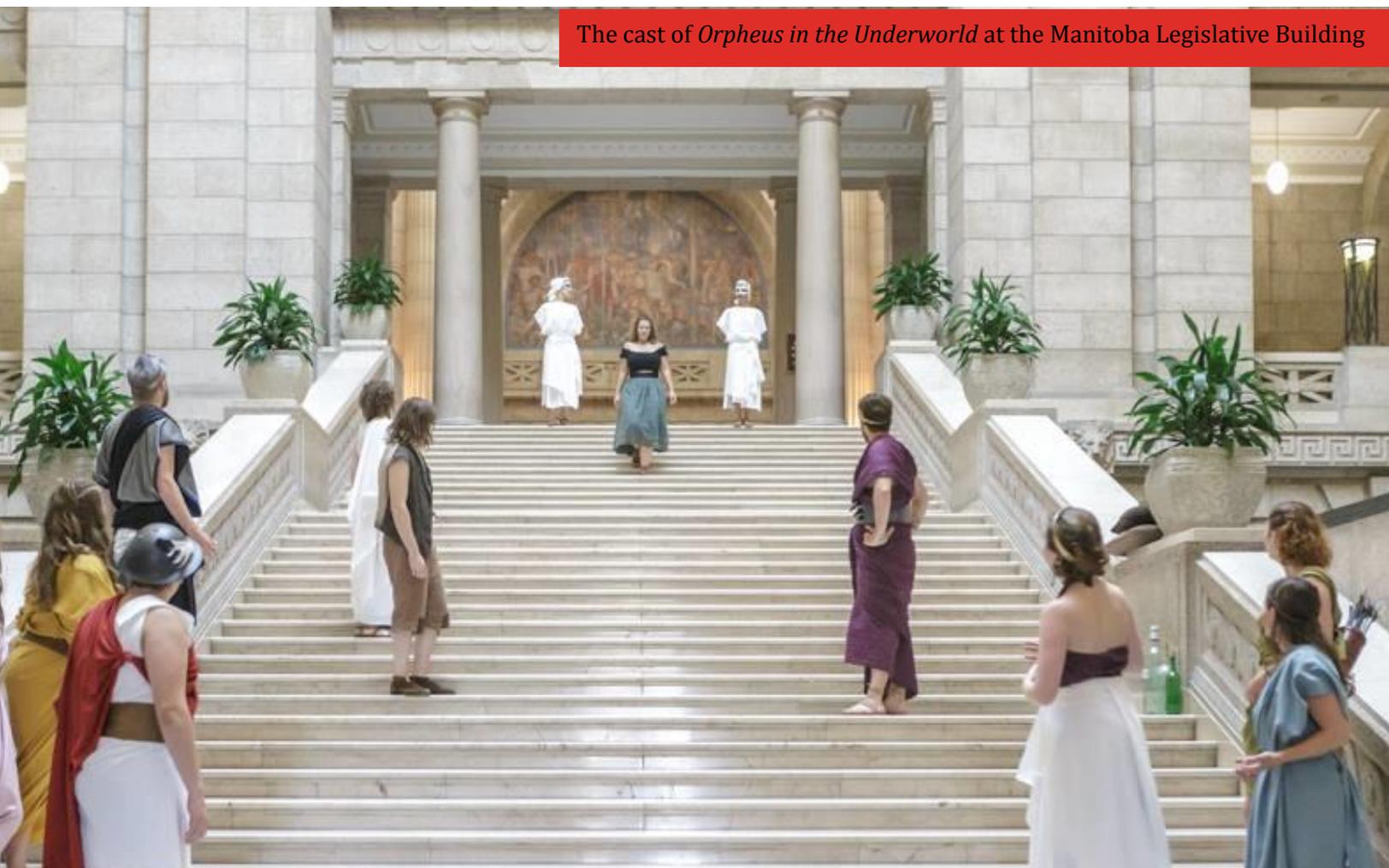
*COME ON A JOURNEY*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

Message from General Manager _____	1
Message from Artistic Director _____	2
Artistic Cast and Team: The Magic Flute... Retold _____	4
Artistic Cast and Team: Orpheus in the Underworld _____	7
Outreach Summary _____	8
Season Launch _____	10
Financial Summary _____	11
Looking ahead to 2017 and beyond _____	14
2015/2016 Staff _____	15
2015/2016 Board of Trustees _____	15
Company Information _____	15

The cast of *Orpheus in the Underworld* at the Manitoba Legislative Building



# MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER

## Message from General Manager

2016 has been a great year for us! We maintained our trajectory of producing two operas in unconventional locations in Winnipeg within a festival format, while increasing staffing, revenues, and performance evenings.

This season we saw a fantastic overall increase in revenue by 130%. We would like to thank the Manitoba Arts Council for its third consecutive year of support. Furthermore, this was our first year of applying for and being awarded project grants from the Winnipeg Arts Council and a Government of Manitoba Arts Development Project Support Grant, which led to a doubling of grant money received.

Box Office records were also shattered as we not only sold out each show but we increased from five performances to eight. As an additional bonus, each of our performances sold out before the festival even opened! Our total audience reach was over 1,000 people including 800 paid audience members and over 200 unpaid. As both of our productions were in public venues we allowed patrons to stand and observe for no cost as we had sold every available seat with an optimal view. Particularly of note were the 50 people standing behind the 125 seated patrons observing the final evening of *The Magic Flute... Retold*. This was an unexpected but fantastic byproduct, as many people who were walking around during the beautiful summer weather got to see some opera! We believe that opera must do everything possible to confront old stereotypes of being unaffordable and stuffy, so it was great to allow people the chance to observe without any financial commitment or requirement to remain seated and still for an entire performance.

In addition to our main stage performances, MUO had 14 outreach events where singers sang at awards ceremonies, senior residences, general meetings, and city-wide events. We've begun to form partnerships with other organizations in the city including, Heritage Winnipeg, the Alliance for Arts Educators of Manitoba, and the Misericordia Health Centre.

2016's productions required an increase in the amount of personnel involved. Additional singers, orchestra members, and production staff were added to a total of 80 people involved on stage and behind the scenes. A personal highlight for me was conducting a total of 68 performers on stage and in the pit for *The Magic Flute... Retold* finales.

This year proved many things to the company. Winnipeg has a desire to see more opera and as we carefully expand, the demand is continuing to match the quantity of artistic products we are presenting. Our successes are not fortuitous coincidences; this combination of young artists and site-specific theatre is a viable and economical way for opera to reinvent itself to continue to be relevant and approachable in today's culture.

We can't wait to see you all next year!

Brendan McKeen  
General Manager



# MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Message from Artistic Director

“It’s the journey that teaches you a lot about your destination” very true words for our young and growing company. We have gone from a small organization producing maybe a production a year, to this season producing two fully staging production with three full casts of singers, in two different locations and more shows throughout the festival than we have ever had. Our Company has been called a phoenix rising each summer, brighter and bigger than the previous year, and this year was no exception. We have always striven to create productions that are new, challenging and engaging to our audience. Each year we’ve delved even farther into truly achieving the highest of goals and this year our journey brought us to even higher points, and has only motivated us to continue to strive upwards.



This season we continued our mandate of promoting, engaging and encouraging young Manitoban talent involving 31 singers, 27 orchestral musicians, and 22 community and other volunteers. This season’s festival included a production of Offenbach’s *Orpheus and the Underworld*, which saw us returning to the Manitoba Legislative Building and renewing our partnership with them. It was also a return of a local favourite Winnipeg director Jacqueline Loewen, who brought a revealing and engaging twist to this piece engaging a choreographer and dancers to help illustrate the story.

Our flagship production this season was our production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, cut and adapted for a modern audience and called *The Magic Flute... Retold*. This new version of the traditional piece with its racist and sexist undertones, saw all those elements removed, re-focusing the story back to the journey. It is paramount that any MUO production strives to challenge and change perceptions in a positive way, which is why the re-telling and adapting of this story was given exceptional care. In keeping with this mandate, we strove to create a story that was easily understandable, altering and eliminating many of the dramaturgical landlines of the original, while staying true to the thematic message and essence of the story, the internal journey to find yourself. This production was also our company’s first singspiel as well as our first production which was largely double cast. This is a step we have been slowly growing towards, which gives us not only more opportunities for up and coming talent, but also provides us with alternates if one of our singers should ever fall ill and be unable to sing a performance.

From a technical standpoint, this season we increased our own production elements in many veins. This season saw our first experience with a production manager, who excelled at the job and created an efficient and clear production process for both shows. We also saw the financing of the purchase of outdoor orchestra tents, as well as several risers and an assortment of props, costumes, and material. All of these items will be held in our storage area, and re-used in future seasons.

Overall this season saw immense growth, artistically and managerially. Throughout our history we have striven to demand an exceptionally high level of musicality and artistry from all of our arts. That demand has paid off creating new productions which given our ever-growing audience base can only be meeting its goal of engaging and challenging them.

Brenna Corner  
Artistic Director

# OPERA TODAY, Holly Harris

Lyric soprano Andrea Lett (with alternating casts) crafted a particularly strong Pamina, her acting skills notably having grown since she performed the lead role in last year's production of *Cendrillon, the Fable of Cinderella*. Tenor Jonathan Stitt likewise convinced as her heroic Prince Tamino, his mellifluous vocals soaring in "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön," or seamlessly blending with the three ladies (Emily Diehl-Reader, Rebecca McIntosh, and Meghan Symon).



Audiences always wait on tenterhooks for the Queen of the Night's "big" aria. Soprano Ashley Boychuk did not disappoint, fearlessly nailing her topmost notes while confidently skipping through florid colouratura runs during "Der Hölle Rache" that earned the evening's only cries of bravo.



Soprano Susan Watkins injected enough sparkling personality into her lead character Eurydice to light up a celestial night sky, decrying fiddle-playing "Bore-pheus" husband Orpheus sung by tenor Wes Rambo with her razor sharp comedic skills as potent as her clear colouratura voice. She fleshed out her long-suffering housewife with subtle nuance and pouty sighs, even daringly rubbing thighs with Jupiter during the Act III Underworld party that also included a raucous "Infernal Galop."



# ARTISTIC CAST AND TEAM: THE MAGIC FLUTE... RETOLD

## Artistic Cast and Team: *The Magic Flute... Retold*

### ARTISTIC TEAM

Conductor ..... Brendan McKeen  
Director ..... Anna Theodosakis  
Dialogue written by ..... Brenna Corner  
Vocal Coach/Chorus Master ..... Lisa Rumpel  
Répétiteur ..... Renate Rossol

### CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

<i>TAMINO</i>	Adam Sperry (21, 24, 27) Jonathan Stitt (19, 25)
<i>PAPAGENO</i>	Elliot Lazar (19, 25) Paul Winkelmans (21, 24, 27)
<i>FIRST LADY</i>	Emily Diehl-Reader (19, 25) Lynlee Wolstencroft (21, 24, 27)
<i>SECOND LADY</i>	Rebecca McIntosh (19, 25) Judy Oatway (21, 24, 27)
<i>THIRD LADY</i>	Meghan Symon (19, 21, 24, 25, 27)
<i>QUEEN OF THE NIGHT</i>	Ashley Boychuk (19, 24, 25, 27) Andrea Lett (21)
<i>FIRST SPIRIT</i>	Naomi Derksen (19, 25) Deanna Smith (21, 24, 27)
<i>SECOND SPIRIT</i>	Deanna Rempel (21, 24, 27) McKenzie Warriner (19, 25)
<i>THIRD SPIRIT</i>	Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar (19, 21, 24, 25, 27)
<i>SPEAKER</i>	Nicholas Niebuhr (19, 25) Jean van der Merwe (21, 24, 27)
<i>PAMINA</i>	Andrea Lett (19, 25) Jessica Kos-Whicher (21, 24, 27)
<i>MONOSTATOS</i>	Chris Donlevy (19, 21, 24, 25, 27)
<i>SARASTRO</i>	John Anderson (19, 21, 24, 25, 27)
<i>PRIEST</i>	Nicholas Niebuhr (21, 24, 27) Jean van der Merwe (19, 25)
<i>PAPAGENA</i>	Emily Ready (19, 25) Nikita Silagy (21, 24, 27)



Jonathan Stitt as *Tamino* and Elliot Lazar as *Papageno*

# ARTISTIC CAST AND TEAM: THE MAGIC FLUTE... RETOLD

## CHORUS

Soprano  
Anna Bigland-Pritchard  
Beverley Covert  
Andrea Dicks  
Linda Feasby  
Elena Howard-Scott

Alto/Counter Tenor  
Jillian Bonner  
Montanna Coad  
Ryan Daun  
Celine Menard  
Edlin D'Souza

Tenor  
Nathan Glowach  
Nolan Kehler  
John Tanner  
Xi Yin

Baritone  
Ian Ingram  
Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck  
Nicholas Urquhart

## PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Production Manager ..... Laura Gow  
Assistant Production Manager ..... Carmen Harris  
Costume Designer ..... Susan Watkins  
Costume Assistant ..... Meghan Symon  
Prop Design Assistants ..... Heather McKeen-Edwards & Denise Gow





*The Magic Flute...  
Retold  
Production Images*



*Above*  
Andrea Lett (*Queen of the Night*) and  
Jessica Kos-Whicher (*Pamina*)



*Above*  
Naomi Derksen (*First Spirit*),  
McKenzie Warriner, (*Second Spirit*)  
and Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar (*Third  
Spirit*)



*Above*  
Meghan Symon (*Third Lady*),  
Rebecca McIntosh (*Second Lady*),  
Ashley Boychuk (*Queen of the Night*),  
Emily Diehl-Reader (*First Lady*), and  
Chris Donlevy (*Monostatos*)



*Above*  
Adam Sperry (*Tamino*)



*Above*  
Nikita Silagy (*Papagena*) and  
Paul Winkelmanns (*Papageno*)



*Above*  
Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar (*Third  
Spirit*), Deanna Rempel (*Second  
Spirit*), Jessica Kos-Whicher  
(*Pamina*) and Deanna Smith (*First  
Spirit*)



*Above*  
Lynlee Wolstencroft (*First Lady*),  
Meghan Symon (*Third Lady*), and  
Judy Oatway (*Second Lady*)

All production photos  
credit to Paul McKeen

*Above*  
Andrea Lett (*Pamina*) and John  
Anderson (*Sarastro*)

# ARTISTIC CAST AND TEAM: ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

## Artistic Cast and Team: *Orpheus in the Underworld*

### ARTISTIC TEAM

Conductor ..... Brendan McKeen  
 Director ..... Jacqueline Loewen  
 Choreographer..... Janelle Hacault  
 Vocal Coach ..... Lisa Rumpel  
 Répétiteur ..... Megan Dufrat

### CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

PUBLIC OPINION	Susanne Reimer
EURYDICE	Susan Watkins
ORPHEUS	Wes Rambo
PLUTO	Devan Ryner
MINERVA	Emily Ready
MERCURY	Jean van der Merwe
CUPID	Ashley Rees
VENUS	Carmen Harris
DIANA	Marlise Ritchie
JUPITER	Nicholas Urquhart
JUNO	Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar
GREEK CHORUS	Janelle Hacault Alex Garrido

### PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Production Manager ..... Laura Gow  
 Assistant Production Manager ..... Adam Sperry  
 Costume Designer ..... Jacqueline Loewen



From top to bottom

- <sup>1</sup> Susan Watkins as *Eurydice* and Wes Rambo as *Orpheus*.
- <sup>2</sup> Janelle Hacault as one of the Greek Chorus
- <sup>3</sup> Devan Ryner, Jean van der Merwe, Carmen Harris, Ashley Rees, Marlise Ritchie, Nick Urquhart, Emily Ready and Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar as the Greek Gods



# OUTREACH SUMMARY

## Outreach Summary

### STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

Manitoba Underground Opera created many partnerships this year and performed year-round at various locations. From monthly performances at the Misericordia Health Centre facilities, to singing at annual general meetings, to performing opera at Heritage Winnipeg's annual Doors Open event.

### MISERICORDIA HEALTH CENTRE

MUO performed monthly at the Misericordia Health Centre and Misericordia Place. Concerts consisted of young artists presenting a variety of arias and duets from traditional operatic repertoire. During August, main stage artists presented excerpts from *The Magic Flute... Retold* and *Orpheus in the Underworld* for the residents in both locations.

### PEMBINA PLACE PERSONAL CARE HOME

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, MUO continued performing for residences around the city. Three singers and a pianist presented a concert lasting approximately 45 minutes for 35 residents and staff in their third-floor lounge. This complimentary performance was provided thanks to the generosity of the singers and pianist involved.

### DECEMBER CAROLING

In December, MUO sent groups to two senior residences to spread the Christmas cheer and performed some operatic selections within Christmas carol sing-a-longs.

### ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATORS OF MANITOBA

On June 9<sup>th</sup> MUO performed at AAEM's Annual General Meeting and board members were invited to an MUO dress rehearsal. MUO will be using AAEM as a key resource in the development of its education program.

### HERITAGE WINNIPEG

This year MUO formed a partnership with Heritage Winnipeg. MUO performed at their Annual Presentation Awards and the launch of the World War I Digital Memorial Project. Soprano Lynlee Wolstencroft and pianist Megan Dufurat sang Duparc's *Au pays où se fait la guerre* as the digital memorial launched showing the names of soldiers who lost their lives during the war. MUO also sang at one of the locations for Doors Open. Six singers and two pianists performed from 11am to 4pm at the Millennium Centre to over 800 visitors who wandered through to explore Winnipeg's vast architectural history.



Top –  
June 8<sup>th</sup>, Misericordia Place, soprano Andrea Lett and pianist Rachel Dyck performing for residents.



Top Left –  
February 19<sup>th</sup>, Misericordia Health Centre 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Chapel, soprano Marlise Ritchie and pianist Megan Dufurat performing for residents.



Left –  
July 7<sup>th</sup>, Pembina Place Personal Care Home, mezzo Soprano Elizabeth Hoyt-Surdhar performing for residents.

Left –  
February 15<sup>th</sup>, Heritage Winnipeg's Annual Presentation Awards and World War I Digital Memorial Project, soprano Lynlee Wolstencroft.



Left –  
May 29<sup>th</sup>, Heritage Winnipeg's Doors Open, soprano Rebecca McIntosh and pianist Megan Dufurat.

# SEASON LAUNCH

## Season Launch

### GARDEN PARTY

On July 6, we held our first ever season launch celebration in the form of a garden party! We advertised this as an evening of arias and snacks but it turned out to be so much more. The weather was beautiful, the food from Stella's Catering was delicious and the wine from Poplar Grove was fantastic. DAVIDsTEA Polo Park served iced and hot tea for audiences who enjoyed operatic performances throughout the evening. We were especially proud to welcome Flipside Opera to share the stage with us for several numbers. Wonderful prizes were donated to our raffle from Poplar Grove Winery, DAVIDsTEA Polo Park, Fountain Tire McPhillips, Burns and Black Salon, Cha Cha Palace, Radiance Gifts, Made with Love by Liv, Orla's Dream, Collector Studio, and many individual supporters. The evening would not have been possible without our team of dedicated volunteers: Danielle Tétrault, Lynlee Wolstencroft, Janet and Brian Dufrat, Laura Gow, Deanna Rempel, Chris Donlevy, Nick Neibuhr, Susan Watkins, Rebecca McIntosh and Rob Stansel.

Ashley Rees  
Director of Marketing



Soprano Lynlee Wolstencroft, Co-Emcee and Performer

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

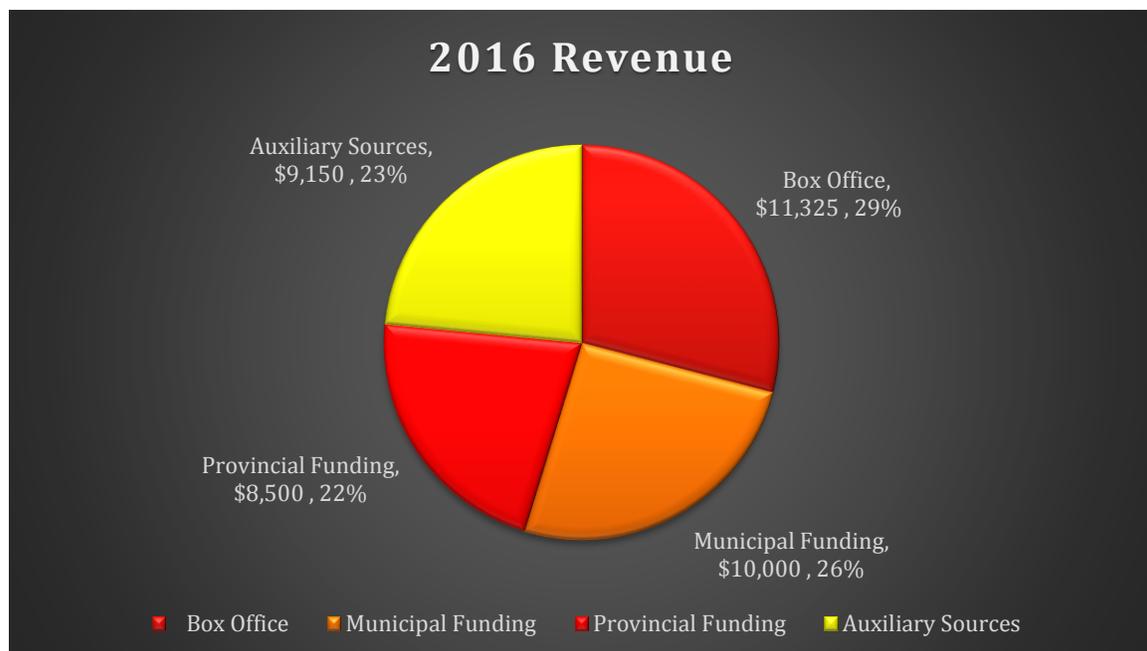
## Financial Summary

### REVENUE

CATEGORY	2016 TOTAL (\$)	INCREASE FROM 2015 (%)
<b>Total Revenue</b>	38,974.84	+130
<b>Box Office</b>	11,325	+99
<b>Municipal Funding</b>	10,000	+∞
<b>Provincial Funding</b>	8,500	-6
<b>Auxiliary Sources</b>	9,149.84	+302

- Box Office increases due to performance capacity and total quantity increased.
- Box Office revenue maintained an average ticket price of \$15.
- This is the first year MUO obtained a Winnipeg Arts Council Grant.
- Funding from Manitoba Arts Council decreased from \$9,000 to \$7,000.
- This is the first year MUO obtained a Government of Manitoba Department of Culture, Tourism and Heritage Grant with a total of \$1,500.
- Auxiliary Sources include corporate donations, advertising sales, fundraising events, and honorariums for community outreach events.

Manitoba Underground Opera maintains a healthy division of revenue. Box Office sales at 29% is above industry standard and far below summer festivals like Glyndebourne and Salzburg, who are trying to relieve pressure from that department.

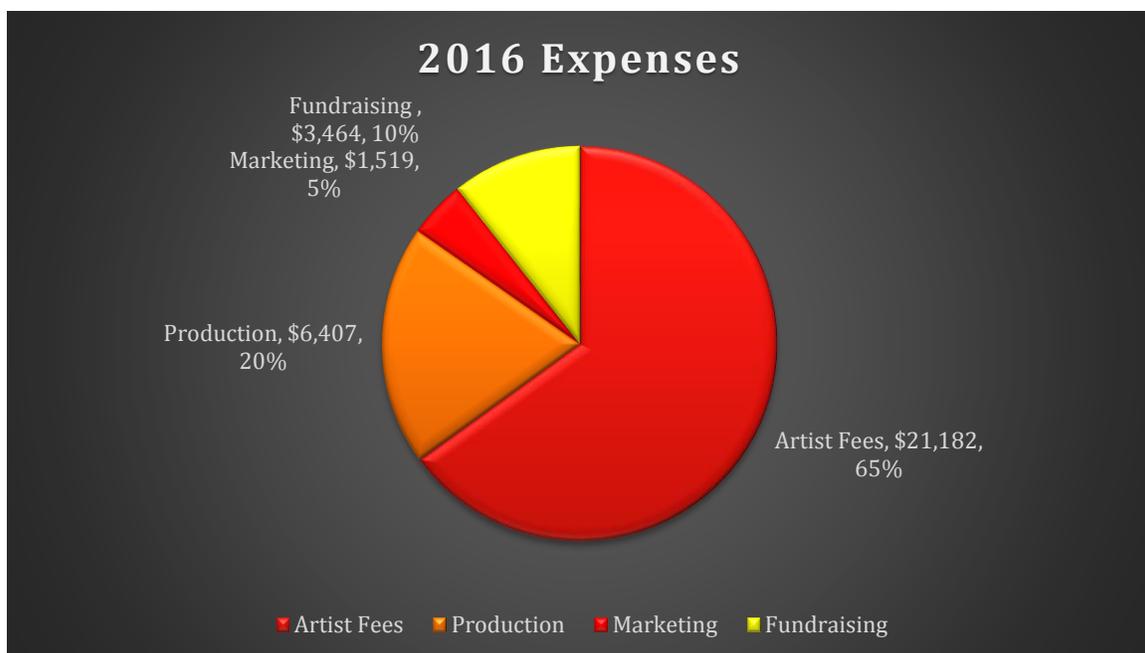


# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## EXPENSES

CATEGORY	2016 TOTAL (\$)	INCREASE (%)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	32,571.89	+111
<b>Artist Fees</b>	21,182.09	+136
<b>Production</b>	6,407.34	+11
<b>Marketing</b>	1,518.81	+122
<b>Fundraising</b>	3,463.65	+∞

- Artist fees increased due to the number of singers involved, an increase to orchestra size and quality, and increases to director fees.
  - Careful planning and risk strategies were implemented to ensure that the growth in this department reflected expected growth within the Revenue categories
- Production fees slightly increased to accommodate 2016 specific rentals as well as long-term purchases for future seasons (tents, risers, and heaters).
  - 2015 proportionally was a more expensive production year as it included grand rights fees for *Cendrillon* and included the food/beverages/décor for the outdoor ball scene.
- Marketing expenses increased due to larger quantities of printing and advertising purchases to increase the reach of the company brand. MUO also experimented with different forms of advertising including program ads in other local opera companies and online advertisement through Google and Facebook.
- This is the first year MUO hosted an annual fundraising event. Costs were higher than anticipated in various areas but profits well exceeded what was expected.

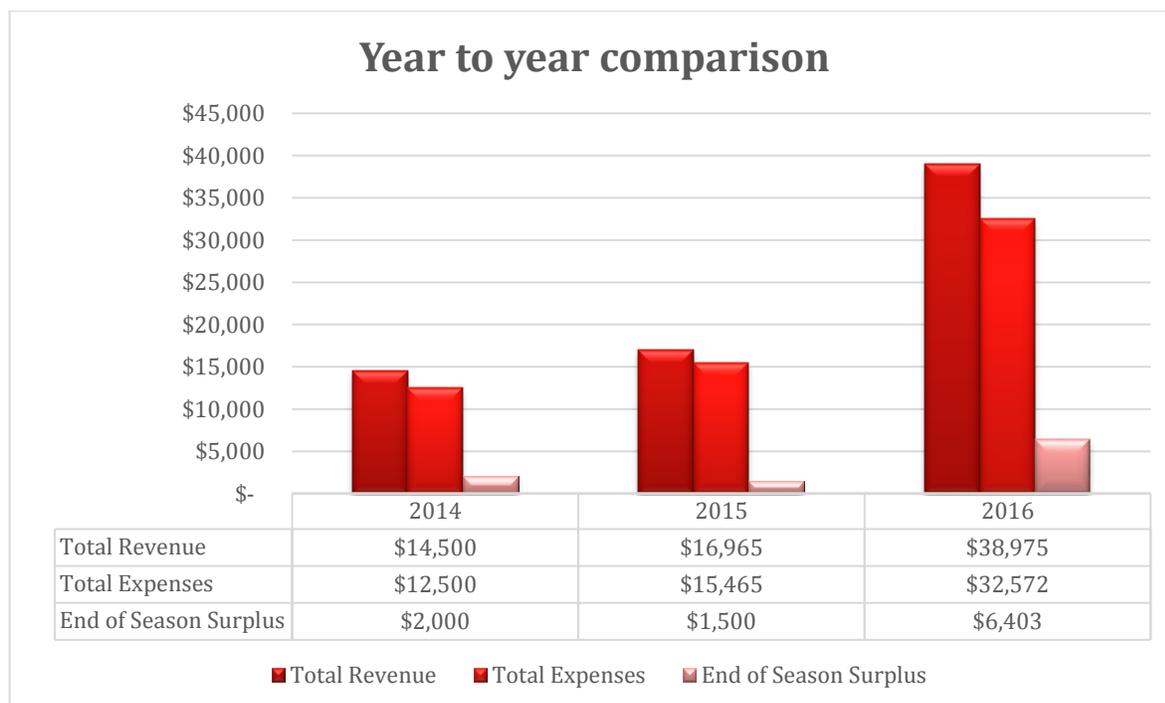


# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## YEAR TO YEAR COMPARISON

Due to large increases in revenues and expenses, 2016 contained the largest growth to date for the company.

- All of the following three years of operation are based on the summer festival model with two mainstage productions taking place during August and September. At the end of each season, the surplus is rolled over into the new season.



### SURPLUS NOTES

The above surplus amounts for each year have never included any financial compensation for administrative work. This coming year, it is being strongly recommended to the board to approve annual administrative costs to allow the organization to keep functioning at a competitive level to other theatre and music organizations in the city.

### SPONSOR PATRONAGE

We would especially like to thank our granters for their support this season. Without the Winnipeg Arts Council, the Manitoba Arts Council, and the Government of Manitoba Arts Branch, this season would not have been possible.



# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 AND BEYOND

## Looking ahead to 2017 and beyond

After an extremely successful season, MUO is looking to expand its corporate assistance, ticket revenues, and individual giving. Action plans are being developed to continue to increase multiple revenue streams over the fall of 2016 with implementation beginning in 2017. By diversifying revenue, MUO hopes to create a sustainable model for not only indie opera but opera of all kinds within Canada.

MUO will be growing its administrative staff from three to seven for the 2016/2017 fiscal year. We are establishing three departments; Marketing & Outreach, Production, and Education. Each department will increase our brand value and work towards expanding the season of activities for the company.

MUO will be investing in the creation and development of a five-year plan to help clarify its long-term objectives and how they will materialize.

Artistically, MUO is looking forward to increasing its production season and incorporate more young artists as well as community members. We will continue to work with many of those that we have in the past and to increase our numbers to allow many other artists of all disciplines to come together and create innovative experiences. Our goal is to continue to have the operatic genre reflect the strength, talent, and values of the Manitoba community.



Soprano and Directing of Marketing Ashley Rees as *Cupid* with Nick Urquhart as *Jupiter*.

## 2015/2016 STAFF

### 2015/2016 Staff

**BRENDAN MCKEEN**  
GENERAL MANAGER



**BRENNA CORNER**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



**ASHLEY REES**  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING



### 2015/2016 Board of Trustees

Brendan McKeen, Chair (Final term as chair)

Danielle Tétrault, Vice-Chair

Andrea Bellhouse, Treasurer

### Company Information

Manitoba Underground Opera  
36 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg, MB R3T 3K3  
**Tel** 204.981.6514  
[www.manitobaundergroundopera.com](http://www.manitobaundergroundopera.com)



Andrea Lett (*Pamina*) and Elliot Lazar (*Papageno*)