A Year in Review

OPERA IS DRAMA, EMOTION, MUSIC AND MAJESTY

This art form shines in its conflicting pulls toward intimacy and grandeur, and we as a company strive for both of those extremes. I am honored to take the reins at a company that has explored so many facets of opera on the stage, and is hungry to continue that artistic journey. Francesco Milioto, our new artistic advisor, brings great ideas and connections to the Florentine. We both happily join the incredible team here in celebrating a season of successes, transformation and music.

The Florentine Opera’s 85th season included our latest recording project highlighting Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players in a revised, fully orchestrated edition. Con Amore, the Baumgartner Studio Artist show, was charming and full of fun. Joining the

Florentine Opera in the spring of 2019 gave me the wonderful opportunity to step into a gorgeous production of Coronation of Poppea. Not only did the performers shine on stage, but the costumes designed by Mel Benson popped and became almost a character themselves. Observing our audience in the intimate Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall, I saw a strong appreciation for our Baroque orchestra on period instruments. And beloved favorite singers and new talent regaled us in A Night at the Opera, our closing concert with the Milwaukee Symphony. Additionally, over 20,000 people and schoolchildren enjoyed community and school performances all over the city.

We accomplished all of this, and ended the season with a surplus. The Florentine is definitely undergoing a transformation, but isn’t missing a step in the process!

As some of the newest members of the team, we’re in awe of the incredible history of this company. And new and old, we all thank you, the supporters of the Florentine, for all that you give to this company and this timeless art form with your presence and your gifts.

Season Success

OUR 85TH SEASON WAS A YEAR OF CELEBRATION AND TRANSITION TO THE FUTURE

By Maggey Oplinger
General Director & CEO

Ended the year with a surplus and net operating income of approximately $240,000, reversing the prior fiscal year’s operating loss ($237,479)
The annual fund grew from $2,400,392 to $2,559,751
Recorded Prince of Players, our 5th production for commercial release
Coronation of Poppea received rave reviews and was our best-ever grossing production in the Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall
Trained our 11th class of Baumgartner Studio Artists
Served 14,912 students with 74 performances of our school touring opera, The Three Little Pigs
Community Circle program created to make hundreds of tickets available for nonprofit community organizations
Paid down debt by $900,000 thanks to Burn the Note donor commitments to completely eliminate all debt in 4 years

Greeted Francesco Milioto as the company’s new Artistic Advisor
An American Icon’s newest opera
Culturally relevant
Adding to the national repertoire
World premiere recording soon to be released

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM
Nicole Heinen, soprano; Briana Moynihan, mezzo-soprano; Nicholas Huff, tenor; and Nathaniel Hill, baritone; were our 11th Class of Baumgartner Studio Artists. This concert showcased their development as artists as they prepare for professional opera careers.

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM | Claire & Glen Hackmann

Con Amore

Prince of Players

An American Icon’s newest opera
Culturally relevant
Adding to the national repertoire
World premiere recording soon to be released

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM
John Shannon & Jan Serr
OPERA America-Getty Innovation Grant
The National Endowment for the Arts
George & Angela Jacobi
Lloyd Gerlach
Nita Soref

Con Amore
Coronation of Poppea

Seduction and edge of your seat drama
Virtuoso Baroque musicians led by Jory Vinikour
Karim Sulayman’s first post Grammy-Award performance

Mel Benson’s stunning costume debut
Biggest-yet audience for a Wilson Theater opera production

Audience-requested favorites
Melt-your heart arias
Celebrating the past as we set the stage for the future

A Night at the Opera

The Gary and Cynthia Vasques Family Foundation
Nita Soref

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM

Mary Ann & Charles LaBahn
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Mary & Ross Read
Kate & Don Wilson
Kahler Slater
Sazama’s Fine Catering
Engaging the audiences of tomorrow as well as today, in the theater and the community.

22,000 people and 125 performances

Changing of the Guard

We celebrate the final bow of our long-time chorus master, Scott Stewart. Scott has served as Chorus Master and Associate Conductor for the Florentine Opera Company for over 40 years, participating in over 120 productions, for a personal catalogue of over 60 different operas. He also helped establish the Baumgartner Studio Artist Program and the high school Opera Camp. So many singers have benefited from his guidance and nurturing. Scott’s accomplishments are beyond count, but his heart and soul have been musically poured into this company so profoundly that we simply can’t say goodbye.

So, Scott will be our Chorus master emeritus, and will be at home at the Florentine whenever the fancy (or music) brings him back. Thank you for four decades of music, Scott.

Scott Stewart
CHORUS MASTER EMERITUS

Through tumultuous times of change, Kate Wilson’s passion and energy for the Florentine never wavered. We thank her profoundly for her years of board service, but especially as board president for the last three years. She led the wave of change that brings us into the future with enthusiasm and care.

Kate Wilson
OUTGOING BOARD PRESIDENT

As we journey into the future, we also consider ourselves fortunate to have Dr. Peter Drescher stepping into the presidency. His 7 years on the board and lifelong love for the operatic art form ensure a successful transition to the next era of leadership. He and Maggey are both looking forward to building on Kate’s successes.

Dr. Peter Drescher
INCOMING BOARD PRESIDENT

We celebrate the final bow of our long-time chorus master, Scott Stewart. Scott has served as Chorus Master and Associate Conductor for the Florentine Opera Company for over 40 years, participating in over 120 productions, for a personal catalogue of over 60 different operas. He also helped establish the Baumgartner Studio Artist Program and the high school Opera Camp. So many singers have benefited from his guidance and nurturing. Scott’s accomplishments are beyond count, but his heart and soul have been musically poured into this company so profoundly that we simply can’t say goodbye. So, Scott will be our Chorus master emeritus, and will be at home at the Florentine whenever the fancy (or music) brings him back. Thank you for four decades of music, Scott.

Thank you, Kate & Scott
THESE PASSIONATE DONORS MADE A GIFT TO THE ANNUAL CAMPAIGN IN THE 2018-19 SEASON

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BURN THE NOTE
Thanks to the incredible stakeholders who gave to the Burn the Note initiative we have already reduced the Florentine’s debt by $900,000 and will completely eliminate the company’s debt within the next three seasons.

Herzfeld Foundation
Nancy and Terry Anderson
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Handwritten Notes

BURN THE NOTE

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...
Our New General Director & CEO

Maggey began her tenure as the company’s seventh General Director on March 1, 2019. She was chosen from a robust national and international field of candidates through a selection process that involved the company’s stakeholders, staff, and patrons as well as Milwaukee’s artistic, civic, and business leaders.

“’The Florentine has accomplished such great things: diversity on stage, highlighting modern American operas, nurturing young artists and audiences, and building an authentic relationship with the city of Milwaukee,” Maggey said. “I’m excited about all of this potential, and have many ideas that respect the artistic integrity, history, and strengths of a company of this caliber, while innovating within the constant fiscal constraints so familiar in the arts. Florentine performances will showcase great artistry and fresh takes on masterpieces new and old. I am thrilled to lead the Florentine in creating great opera in my hometown, setting the scene for a strong centennial.’”

Maggey joined the Florentine Opera from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO), where she held the roles of Director of Community Partnerships and Director of Shared Experiences. Maggey spent nearly a decade of her career as an opera singer. She was honored to be a fellow in the invite-only Kittleman Associates’ Development Leadership Consortium. She also spent five years with Johnson Controls as an innovation catalyst and sales proposal team lead. Maggey holds Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Music Performance from McGill University and a Graduate Diploma in Nonprofit Business Administration from Concordia University’s Molson School of Business.

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Kathleen Wilson
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Claire Hackmann
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Wendy Burke
VP Human Resources

Mary Shiely
VP Finance & Investments

Raechell Thuot
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We fondly remember the Life Directors whom we’ve lost this year: George Jacobi, Marilyn Wermuth

Cathy Costantini
VP Education & Community Engagement

Mark Cameli
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VP Artistic Advisory

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Cathy Costantini
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Completed Board Service
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2019-20 Board Elect

Igniter Award: Mary Read

This year’s Igniter Award is presented with great appreciation to Mary Read. With a long family commitment and passion for opera, Mary joined the Florentine Board of Directors in 2000 and became a Life Director in 2012. Over the years, Mary and her husband Ross have generously supported many Florentine projects and productions—from education and community engagement programs to title sponsorships. This past season Mary stepped up to lead the Transition Committee, to secure a new CEO, at a pivotal moment in the Florentine’s history. Her skilful leadership galvanized our board and engaged the entire community.

Past Recipients
2014 Herzfeld Foundation
2015 Florentine Opera Club
2016 Wayne & Kristine Lueders
2016 Colectivo Coffee Roasters
2017 George Jacobi
2018 Donald & Donna Baumgartner
The Florentine Opera

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