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

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 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.

Maggey Oplinger
General Director & CEO
Brought live performances back in summer 2020, safely and to sold-out audiences, and established a strong foundation for Al Fresco, a new garden series begun thanks to COVID successes.

**SEASON SUCCESS**

- 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.
- 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 Ferrig 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 four of music around the world and around town.
- Stayed connected with our core constituents virtually including monthly cocktails, weekly Quarantine Opera book club, invites to meet the artists.
- Corporations and foundations delivered, achieving 135% and 112% of goals. (Net of COVID-relief grants)

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

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**PRODUCED DIGITAL CONTENT**

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**PLANING 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

LA VIE EN ROSE

LA VIE EN ROSE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY RONALD JACQUART

LIEDERABEND

FLORENTINE PRESENTS AND BLACK-TIE OPTIONAL MADE POSSIBLE BY Kasey’s Fund
LITTLE MAHAGONNY WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY CLAIRE AND GLEN HACKMANN WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.

SPOTLIGHT ON ERIC FERRING WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY PNC
Community Engagement

SCHOOL TOUR:
BRONZEVILLE BOHÈME

Major Support for Opera in the Schools Provided by

- 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 Classroom 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

Find a complete listing of School Tour Sponsors at www.florentineopera.org/operaforschools

Major Support for Opera in the Schools Provided by

- WE Foundation
- Herzfeld Foundation
- GMF Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- Rader Foundations
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.

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.
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
Demmer Charitable Trust
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Grace G. Horner Fund
Glen and Claire Hackmann
The Frieda and William Hunt Memorial Trust
Mary Ann and Charles LaBahn
John Shannon and Jan Serr
Robert Sobczak
George and Christine Sosnovsky Charitable Trust
Gary and Cynthia Vasques
Family Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Wilson

$15,000 to $24,999
Bader Philanthropies
Mark Berry and Daniel Schmidt
Bucyrus Foundation, Inc.
Drs. Peter Drescher and Karin Madsen Drescher
Emory T. Clark Family Charitable Foundation
Cathy and Mario Costantini
Marianne and Sheldon B. Lubar
Wayne and Kristine Luenders
Milwaukee County CARES
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pieper
Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts

$10,000 to $14,999
The Estate of Judith C. Anderson*
Ralph Evrinrude Foundation, Inc.
Jeffrey and Cynthia Harris
Margaretse and David Harvey
Ronald E. Jacquart
Mary and V. Ross Read III
Bert L. & Patricia S. Steigleder Charitable Trust
David V. Uihlein, Jr.

$5,000 to $9,999
Anon Charitable Trust
John P. Baumgartner
Deborah Beck and Fred Sweet
Wendy Burke
Dr. and Mrs. Gerardo Caballero
Mr. and Mrs. Mark A. Camei
Sarah and Peter Damsgaard
Foley & Lardner LLP
Dr. Richard J. Grunke and Mr. William Grasch
Hauske Family Foundation
Henry and Sue Herzing
Estate of Susan Hester*
Jenny and Bob Hilsil
Kahler Slater
Milwaukee Arts Board
William J. Murgas
Northwestern Mutual Foundation
David A. Paris Dentistry
PNC Foundation
Michael Schmitz
Mark and Julie Steinhafer
Supporters of Opera Singers
Raeveil Thoet and Craig Williams
The Kurt Weil Foundation for Music, Inc.

$2,500 to $4,999
Baird
Robert Balderson
Ms. Judy Bamberger
The Gardiner Foundation
Charles and Bevere Groeschell
William and Sandy Haack
Scott and Linda Haag
Gina and Tim Hansen
Reynolds and Linda Honold
Dorothy Inbusch Foundation, Inc.
Mr. Stanley Kritzik
Carrie and Paul Matteson
William and Marian Nasgovitz
Mrs. Susan Nichols
Donald Petersen and Corinthis Van Orsdol
Pieper Electric, Inc./Ideal Mechanical
Marcia J.S. Richards and Donald W. Whitaker
Mary H. Shiey

$1,000 to $2,499
Laura and Mike Arnow
Mr. and Mrs. R. Schwartz Atherton
Nancy H. Balcer*
Clair and Mary Baum
Derin Bjugstad
Barbara Brennan Nelson
Dan Brzusac and Cynthia Lien
Marjorie L. Christiansen Foundation
John Dragic
Dr. John E. Dyer and Ms. Theresa Skrivesth
Julie Edell-Berlin
Albert J. & Flora H. Ellinger Foundation
Mr. James Ericson
Kelly and Jeff Fitzsimmons
Dr. Frank and Cheryl Gaika
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Dr. Carl Eberbach & Elisabeth Falk Eberbach Fund
Milred L. & Herbert W. Rohr Fund
David C. Scott Charitable Trust
Bernard J. & Marie E. Weiss Fund
Marion and Mitch Gottschalk
Eckhart and Ischi Grohmern
Dr. Carla Hay
Mrs. Louise L. Hedrick
The Heil Family Foundation
Judy and Mark Hibbard
Jerry Hirschmann
Ellen Iiron
Ms. Bett Jaucquet
Michael and Monica Jurken
Gordon Lang and Julie Ziefle
Christopher and Jana Lind
Lubar & Company, Inc.
Matching Gift Program
Estate of Elizabeth P. Mackintosh
Dr. and Mrs. Jack Manley
Dr. A. Bela Maroti
Drs. Caryl and Stratton McAllister
Dr. Ann H. McDonald
James L. McFarland
Ann and Steve Merkow
Drs. Kamal and Nettie Nassir
Maggie and David Oplinger
Charles D. Ortgiesen Foundation
Joseph R. Pabst
Lois and Richard Pauls
Laura and Adam Peck
Cindy and Bruce Pindyck
Gen Schauer
The Plunkett Family Foundation
Thomas and Susan Quadracci
Inger Riley
Lisa and Steve Robbins
The Kurt Weil Foundation for Music, Inc.

$500 to $999
Anonymous
Michael Francesco and Katherine Alliot
David and Patricia Anderson
Tara Argali and Chris Fitzpatrick
Richard and Sara Aster
Julie Attermeer
Mr. and Mrs. John Baratti
David Benner and Diane Benjamin
Ann and Mark Berhoff
Mr. Art Blair
Mr. Allan Bradley
Dr. Rick J. Brewer
Jill Broekhuizen
Murph Burke
Thom Chuminatto
Heidi Cooper
Fr. David Cooper
Ed and Linda de Roo
Dr. Carl Eisenberg
Mr. Joseph Engman
Charles and Dorothy Farina Trust
Stanley and Janet Fox
Dr. David Galbis-Reig and Lisa Defazio
Constance Ganapes and James Mazulla
George and Eileen Stone
Mrs. Ruth P. Taylor*
Deanna and Eric Tillisch
Olivia and Eunice Toussaint Foundation
Jan Wade
Mr. Kenneth R. Waid
and Dr. Antoinette Zell
Heide Wetzel
Weyco Group Charitable Trust
Timothy and Marsia Wilberg
Aimee Wiedmeyer
Edwin P. Wiley*
Kamiah Williams-Kemp
Woman's Club of Wisconsin Foundation

$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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Wayne and Kristine Luenders
Milwaukee County CARES
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pieper
Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts
In the penultimate year of this initiative, these opera champions have eliminated Florentine debt to strengthen the company’s mission.
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.
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 Ayler (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!

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**Igniter Award**

**This Year’s Igniter Award is Presented with Great Affection and Appreciation to Nita Soref.**
# 2020–21 Florentine Opera Staff

## Administration
- Eric Lind
  - Director of Advancement
- Sara Hood
  - Director of Marketing
- Linda Beczkiewicz
  - Finance Manager
- Stephanie Kellenberger
  - Box Office and Patron Services Manager
- Jennifer Schulte
  - Annual Campaign Manager

## Artistic
- Lisa Hanson
  - Director of Artistic Administration
- John Stumpff
  - Manager of Education and Community Engagement
- Janna Ernst
  - Principal Pianist and Coach
- Dr. Benjamin Rivera
  - Chorus Master
- Lizzy Cichowski
  - Production Associate

## Production
- Lisa Schlenker
  - Production Manager
- Mel Benson
  - Costume Shop Manager
- Erica Cartledge
  - Resident Wig and Makeup Designer
- Mark Hare
  - Properties Master

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*From Little Mahagonny, 2021*