

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE REPORTS BALANCED BUDGET, SURPLUS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS, EXPANDED OUTREACH, AND HEALTHY EARNED AND CONTRIBUTED INCOME MARK FIRST FULL SEASON UNDER WAYNE BROWN LEADERSHIP

Detroit, January 25, 2016 - Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) today announced a balanced budget for fiscal year 2015. The overall increase in net assets for the financial year was \$1.3 million with revenues of \$14.7 million. The company also reported a surplus in its operating budget in more than a decade with a year end result of \$532,582.

“The state of our company is sound,” said MOT Chairman R. Jamison Williams. “Ten years ago we wondered if the compromised local economy and the massive amount of debt we had would cause the curtain to fall...but after a decade of hard work and transition, I am proud to say that the future is bright.”

“The positive outcome of Michigan Opera Theatre’s 2015 fiscal year can be attributed to the herculean efforts of our dedicated stakeholders – a committed and engaged board of directors and trustees, individual and corporate partners, a brilliant artistic team and talented staff, among many others,” said MOT’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Wayne Brown. “My goal is to build on the solid foundation of David DiChiera’s vision that Detroit maintain and grow a vibrant and financially sustainable Michigan Opera Theatre and its related programs with artistry, relevance, meaningful community engagement, and a commitment to education and cultural enrichment. I believe we’re doing that.”

Operating on an \$11.9 million annual budget, Michigan Opera Theatre experienced increases in both earned and contributed income during fiscal 2015. The company cited fiscal prudence, expanded outreach, and new corporate and community partnerships for the positive results. News of the company’s fiscal health comes at the conclusion of Wayne Brown’s first full season as president and CEO, and Founder, Dr. David DiChiera’s transition to Artistic Director.

2015 highlights include strong sales of more than 36,000 single tickets for productions of opera and dance. MOT officials attribute the positive results to Brown’s leadership in the transition from a marketing and development platform to a patron management system that provides deeper engagement opportunities for single ticket consumers and greater benefits for subscribers.

Michigan Opera Theatre’s two largest annual fundraisers, The Opera Gala Weekend, and BravoBravo! were both extraordinarily successful. The Opera Gala, under the dynamic leadership of co-chairs, Gretchen Davidson, Elanah Nachman Hunger, and Karen Williams, generated a record \$584,691 in revenue and surrounding weekend festivities, including a free-to-the-public open house, welcomed in excess of 400 attendees. BravoBravo!, widely considered to be Detroit’s premier social event for young professionals, experienced “sold out” capacity for the eighth straight year. Additional annual fundraising events, including the annual golf outing, also contributed to the company’s positive bottom line.

Additionally, MOT continued to benefit from the longtime support of **Ford Motor Company** and **General Motors Corporation**, sponsors of the fall and spring opera seasons respectively, as well as the newly acquired dance season

support of the **Lear Corporation**, and the special sponsorship of *Frida* by **DTE Energy Foundation**. **The Masco Foundation** made possible the annual production of *The Nutcracker* and **The Chrysler Foundation** sponsored “BravoBravo!” Both, the opera and dance seasons benefited from multiple individual underwriters, as well.

In the area of Foundation support, MOT continued to benefit from the generosity of the **National Endowment for the Arts**, **Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs** and numerous corporate and family foundations. Of particular note was a transformative commitment of \$1 million from the **William Davidson Foundation** to enable MOT to create phase one of the opera company’s first Resident Artist Program, **Michigan Opera Theatre Studio**. Additionally, the **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan** was the first entity to embrace MOT’s new community engagement initiative with a commitment of \$300,000 over two years.

The recent transition of MOT Founder David DiChiera from General Director to Artistic Director provided him his long-awaited opportunity to focus on the company’s artistic mission and its mainstage offerings. The 2014-15 season, “Divas Exposed”, was DiChiera’s tribute to women of opera. The opera season, which included two company premiers, Strauss’ *Elektra* and Rodriguez’ *Frida*, and three perennial favorites, Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*, and Gounod’s *Faust*, also signaled the company’s return to a five opera season. The season featured an impressive roster of opera’s most celebrated artists including **Christine Goerke**, **Deborah Voigt** and **Noah Stewart**, among others.

The opera company’s Dance Season was highlighted by the Detroit Opera House premier of **Houston Ballet** with a stunning production of *Giselle*. The season included the return of **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** and **Eisenhower Dance** as well as the holiday tradition of **BalletMet Columbus** with *The Nutcracker*.

The signature event of the company’s 2015 community-based programming, an exciting new initiative, was the production of the opera *Frida*. In partnership with the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, the company produced the opera, based on the turbulent life of artist Frida Kahlo, to an audience of more than 9,100 at three venues serving Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties. The six performances were complemented by myriad *Overture to Frida* events taking place in Southwest Detroit, Ann Arbor and Flint. “*Frida Fever*” extended as far as Sarasota and Naples, Florida, as the opera company presented *Overture to Frida* to snowbirds.

“All things considered, 2014-15 was a very good season for MOT and a great launch for our ambitious future plans,” said Brown. “The City of Detroit is in a good place and MOT can benefit from the excitement in and about the city. We’re a big part of it and we aren’t going to squander the opportunity.”

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About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director), one of the nation’s most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded in 1971, the company’s mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.