

**For Immediate Release**  
December 13, 2011

**OPERA.CA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENT OF THE  
2011/12 NATIONAL OPERA DIRECTORS RECOGNITION AWARD  
SPONSORED BY BMO FINANCIAL GROUP**

**PETER GEORGE OF MANITOBA OPERA**

Toronto, ON – Opera.ca, the national association for opera in Canada, is proud to announce the 2011/12 recipient of the Opera.ca National Opera Directors Recognition Award – **Peter George**, Past Chair of the Board of Trustees for **Manitoba Opera** (MO). Now in its fourth year, the National Opera Directors Recognition Award, sponsored by BMO Financial Group, highlights the tenets of good governance, celebrates models of volunteer excellence, and raises the bar for board director commitment.

The following excerpt from Mr. George's nomination encapsulates the accomplishments of this year's honouree:

Peter George is the embodiment of what Kay Sprinkel Grace calls “the AAA Board Member” – Advocate, Ambassador, and Asker. Peter is a strong advocate, a passionate ambassador, and a skilled asker. He is dedicated to the cause and serves the organization selflessly. He has been a true partner in the leadership of the company.

“As a supporter of many opera companies in Canada, BMO understands the vital role volunteer directors make in developing strong ties between opera companies and the communities in which they perform,” said Nada Ristich, Director, Corporate Donations, BMO Financial Group. “BMO is pleased to sponsor the National Opera Directors Recognition Award which recognizes Peter George as this year's recipient.”

Peter George joined the board of Manitoba Opera in 2001, at a time when the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. As a new board member, he re-energized the organization, inspired the board to redouble their efforts to ensure the organization survived, and has contributed financially to the company, both on a personal level and with in-kind support through his advertising company.

## 2. 11/12 National Opera.ca Directors Recognition Award Announcement

As Board chair from 2004 to 2011, he guided MO through an extended period of re-building; a transformative strategic plan that resulted in increased professional capacity for the organization; the elimination of the company's long-standing debt; the commissioning and successful world premiere of Manitoba Opera's first main stage creation, *Transit of Venus*; and an increase in fundraising for the organization of over 250%.

"There is no doubt in my mind that had Peter not stepped forward to volunteer his time, expertise, and lend financial support, Manitoba Opera would not be here today," said nominator Larry Desrochers, General Director and CEO, Manitoba Opera.

"Opera.ca is delighted to be joining with BMO Financial Group in celebrating Peter George's contributions to Manitoba Opera," commented Christina Loewen, Executive Director, Opera.ca. "Opera.ca believes the strength of an opera company is directly related to the quality of its governance, and Peter exemplifies the impact that leadership and strong governance can have on an opera company in its community."

The Adjudication Committee oversees the annual selection process. This year's committee was chaired by Vancouver Opera Past Chair Bruce Wright. Other committee members were Nada Ristich, Senior Manager, Corporate Donations, BMO Financial Group; Olga Farman, Lavery LLP, Quebec; Susan Danis, General Director, Sarasota Opera; and Rita Menzies, Festival Director, Agassiz International Chamber Music Festival.

Opera.ca's commitment to recognizing excellence in governance is shared with sister association OPERA America through their Annual National Opera Trustee Recognition Award, in which a single honouree is chosen from each of the four OPERA America budget categories.

### **About Opera.ca**

Opera.ca is the national association for opera companies and professionals in Canada. It seeks to create and sustain an environment that makes opera central to Canadian life. It works with members across the country to advance the interests of Canada's opera community and create greater opportunity for opera audiences and professionals alike.

### **About Manitoba Opera**

The 2011/12 season marks the 39<sup>th</sup> season for the only full-time professional opera company between Toronto and Calgary. Manitoba Opera serves a region which also includes northwestern Ontario, Saskatchewan, and the Dakotas. Each year more than 25,000 people attend productions, as well as school and audience outreach programs. The MO annual operating budget is \$1,850,000.

### 3. 11112 National Opera.ca Directors Recognition Award Announcement

The company just closed a critically acclaimed presentation of *Salome* in November, will be co-presenting *Dido and Aeneas* in Concert with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, February 7 and 8 at Westminster United Church, and will close the season at the Centennial Concert Hall with Donizetti's comedy, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, April 21, 24, and 27.



#### **Peter George**

Peter George was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, and raised in Winnipeg. He credits his parents with instilling him with a love of classical music and opera, in particular, at a young age. He sang in his high school choir and studied voice for 10 years. His first involvement with Manitoba Opera was as a chorus member in *Turandot* in 1980. He performed in the chorus for 10 operas over the next several years and performed with the Manitoba Opera school tours.

In 1989, Peter began his career in advertising as a graphic designer. Today, he is President and CEO of McKim Cringan George, Manitoba's leading full-service marketing communications firm, with offices in Winnipeg and Regina, Saskatchewan. Peter is a recognized business leader in Manitoba and a dynamic speaker. He has a graphic design diploma and an executive MBA.

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