



O.P.E.R.A. Inc.

Winter 2015

GREAT YEAR AT OPERA HOUSE GALLERY AND LOBBY

The North Dakota Museum of Art brought *FRACTURED: NORTH DAKOTA'S OIL BOOM* to the Historic Ellendale Opera House in April. There were several other events associated with this gallery exhibition. The North Dakota Humanities Council held one of their three yearly meetings in Ellendale in conjunction with this presentation. Jessie Veeder the North Dakota singer and writer sponsored by the NDHC performed at the Opera House during the Bakken Exhibition as a reception was held for the members of the ND Humanities Council. Jessie who lives in the heart of the Bakken talked about the boom on the region and of course sang her hit song *BOOM TOWN*. Also during this event the North Dakota Center for Heritage renewal held a round table called *MAN CAMP DIALOGUES* with several scholars from NDSU and UND who discussed the impact of the Oil Boom, Man Camps and the related political effect on North Dakota.

We had several painting workshops sponsored by the Ellendale Area Arts Council. Walter Piehl from Minot one of the best known North Dakota artists had a workshop in March and the wonderful Emily Williams-Wheeler of Fargo had a mixed media painting class in November.

We also had another art exhibition entitled *TRAIL DUST AND SENTIMENT* featuring the work of the very talented Sabrina Hornung of Fargo North Dakota. Her work has been featured at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo. This exhibit is part of the North Dakota Gallery Association which both the Opera House and Arts Council are members.

This summer local photographer Ken Smith and Minnesota poet Sharon Grenz Chmielarz had a book signing as earlier this spring they released a book called *VISIBILITY: TEN MILES*. They were joined by Angela Smith a NDSU professor who spoke about the relevancy of poetry and memory to place. Also this summer we had a *SUMMER SONG FESTIVAL* with area singers and the audience joining in for an evening of music.

In October a reception was held for Deb Marquart. An evening of words with the writer, poet, singer and Iowa State University professor. Deb was joined by local musician and Opera Board Member Justin Meidinger. Deb read from several of her prose books and poetry books and sang songs which she had written. She is also a touring musician and singer. Deb is originally from Napoleon, ND wrote the bestselling book *THE HORIZONTAL WORLD: GROWING UP WILD IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE*. She signed copies of her books during the evening. It was wholeheartedly enjoyed by the small Sunday evening crowd of some 40 people.

During the month of May we had the nationally known and RFD TV star Jeremiah Sundown performs at the Opera House lobby. A full house enjoyed close to four hours of pure entertainment as only Jeremiah could provide. The highlight of the evening was when Vic Runnels the nationally known Native American Artist came out of the audience and told Jeremiah he was singing the song *THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND* with the wrong words. Vic then grabbed the microphone and proceeded to sing the Native American version *THIS LAND IS MY LAND, THIS LAND IS NOT YOUR LAND* and four additional verses. The audience went crazy and gave them both a standing ovation.

APPLEFEST ART SHOW

During Ellendale's fall festival, "AppleFest", an art show of local artists was held in the Lobby and Gallery. A wide variety of 'art' forms was on display. Quilts, paintings, ceramics, drawings, rope art, needle-point, to name a few, were found all around the room. Music was enjoyed in the afternoon when Laura Barry, Dan Sheldon and Judy Oliver played fiddles and piano. It is always a treat to see the talent in our community on display.

"SUMMER SONG FESTIVAL"

We celebrated the end of summer with this music program on Friday, September 18th. Local musicians entertained the audience with a variety of songs and instrumentals. Hope Jury, Ken Smith, Carissa Monatukwa, Larry Lewis, and Austin Smith provided a wide genre of music. Accompanists were Sharon Langley and Michael Land. The audience joined in on the sing-a-long of several great songs, like "Good Night, Irene", "Sweet Caroline", "This Land is Your Land" and many others. A special treat was Ned Leiby singing "God Bless America" to end the program.

CHRISTMAS KICK-OFF

The Ellendale Area Chamber of Commerce used the Lobby for the annual Christmas Kick-off on November 30th. Soup was served by the Lions Club. After waking up Santa in Brandenburger Park, hot beverages and goodies were served. TBC students provided Christmas music and caroling around the piano followed. The Lobby looked very festive with the trees and decorations to the theme of "An Old Fashioned Family Christmas". This was done by Mary Denison, Peggy Brandenburger, Cindy Stave, Jamie Eberle and children Ella and David, Cyd Meidinger, Betty Martin and Arlene Steiger. OPERA is very appreciative of these willing volunteers.

SUMMER JAM SESSIONS

Several local musicians met every Thursday evening in the Lobby for a 'jam session'. Laura Barry, Tucson, helped to organize and get it going. She played her fiddle and guitar, John Beckius on the accordion, Jeanette Robb on the accordion, Ken Smith and Austin Smith on guitars, Carissa Monatukwa on the trumpet, Yuliet Monatukwa and friends on saxophone and clarinet, Larry Lewis from Hecla on guitar and Willie Blumhardt on dolbro. Each took a turn to choose a song. Quite often people stopped by to listen. As it seemed that everyone enjoyed the sessions, they will continue next summer.

CHRISTMAS COMEDY AND CAROLS

An entertaining program of comedy and Holiday music graced the Opera House Lobby and Gallery for two performances on December 11 and 13 to full house audiences.

The crowds heard a beautiful performance given by the Zion Lutheran Church Handbell Choir, traditional Christmas carols from singer Jolene Maunu, some modern day Christmas songs sung by Aleena Morgan and guitarist/singer Jake Cummins rounded out the musical entertainment with more songs including an original piece that he wrote.

The musical performances were interspersed with three 15-20 minute comedy sketches featuring Christmas themes that the audience greatly approved of by virtue of the extent of their laughter. Cast members played multiple parts with Colette Middlestead, Grant Crabtree, Tom Davis and Tim Steinwand playing roles in each of the three sketches while Cindy Axt and Brenda Rekow were in two each. Colette's young daughter Aubrey also joined the cast as a performer in one of the sketches.

OPERA FOOD WAGON

The OPERA Food Wagon was in operation again this summer at Brandenburger Park, corner of Main Street and Highway 281. They were open every Friday between 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Walking tacos, All-Beef Hot Dogs, pop and coffee were on the menu. It was very busy with regular local clientele, orders from Fargo Assembly and passers-by on Highway 281. Manning the wagon were Marilyn Burow, Jeanette Robb, Grant Crabtree, Cory Murphy (Marilyn's granddaughter) with John Boekelheide assisting with preparation and set-up as well as working in the wagon, helping out many days were Tom Rude, Karen Boekelheide and Carol Robb. The profits were a big help to the budget. The wagon was also set up at the Dickey County Fair, Motorcross races in Frederick, and at AppleFest.

NDSU STUDENTS AT THE MUSEUM AND OPERA HOUSE

Eleven Local History students and instructor Dr. Angela Smith from a NDSU Field School spent 10 days in Ellendale working at the Coleman Memorial Museum. They used the Lobby as a work space for digitizing photos, planning new exhibits at the museum, for a space for their technical equipment and as dining room for some of their meals. They dismantled all of the exhibits at the museum, painted walls, removed the carpet and dropped ceiling tiles to establish space for the exhibits. The Opera House kitchen was utilized for meals and snacks. The Lobby provided the necessary space to do the work. They were housed at TBC. At the end of their stay, two public programs were held, one of photos by one of the students and poetry, and an informational session on what they had accomplished.

OPERA HOUSE WEST FOUNDATION

The Opera House building faced a challenge this past year as the west foundation is in need of repair. When the Opera House was built, an exterior room was constructed to

store coal. This coal room was located outside of the west wall underneath the sidewalk along Railroad Avenue.

Over the years, water from rain and snow seeped into this room causing the walls to deteriorate and eventually collapse. This resulted in stress to the foundation and caused a structural crack on the west wall.

Bradco Restoration, Inc., a company from Fergus Falls, MN that specialized in historical preservation and who had done previous work on the Opera House was contracted to stabilize the foundation and wall as well as do brick repair. The work concluded this past June at a total cost of \$44,853.

Thanks to the generous donations of many individuals, a little bit of grant money and using financial resources OPERA, Inc. had on hand, we were able to finance this project that keeps the structural integrity of our building sound.

However, the project made quite a dent in OPERA Inc.'s financial health. We hope that you will consider a donation to help us get financially healthy and to help us continue our progress toward restoring the Opera House.

OPERA, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. Donations may be sent to: OPERA, Inc., PO Box 334, Ellendale ND 58436-0334.

A tremendous thank you to all who generously donated funds to OPERA, Inc., this past year. Every single dollar helps us toward our mission. Thanks to:

AmazonSmile
Laura Barry
Albert & Betty Bauder
Bickey Bender
Bobbi Jo Burrow
Robert Coleman Family
Grant Crabtree
Deb & Gene Elhard
Ellendale Area Foundation
Judy & Greg Gackle

DeeAnne Gall
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Frances Muckenhirn
Don & Teresa Paul
Pete Retzlaff
Rockwell Corporation
Lana & Warren Schlecht
Daniel Schneck
Lori Jo Sipper
Joan Toay
J.P. Wheelihan

If anyone donated who was not included on this list, our apologies if we overlooked you.

17th ANNUAL SOUP KITCHEN

A crowd pleasing favorite, the Soup Kitchen, returned to the Opera House on December 13. Attendees were treated to ten varieties of delicious homemade soups along with homemade breads. As always, the event was an all-you-can eat affair and everyone sampled several of the available soups. By the end of the day many of the soups had run out limiting the choices. The annual Cookie Walk was also held in conjunction with the Soup Kitchen providing people with a wide variety of Christmas goodies.



STRATEGIC PLAN IN PROGRESS

The Opera Board decided to hold a Community Meeting this summer to get input from the community as to the future of the Opera House. The first meeting was July 28 with burgers and brats at 6 p.m. and the meeting to follow. About 50 people turned out, including Senator Erberle, Rep. Mike Brandenburg, Prof. Tom Isern, and Richard Rothaus. The meeting was chaired by Jodi Bruns

Many ideas for the future of the building were offered and good discussions followed. Senator Erberle encouraged us to pursue appropriation funds from the legislature. He also said he'd like to sing in the auditorium some day!

Jodi took the input from the meeting and would bring it back to a second meeting for more discussion. That meeting was held Sept. 15th. A smaller crowd discussed and re-discussed the five main objectives Jodi had determined from the first meeting's information. These were: finish the two remaining main floor sections, fix the front façade with windows, lights, signage, restore the auditorium and the auxiliary rooms. Then the crowd voted on priority of the five. Finish the two remaining main floor sections was #1, repair and renovate the front façade was #2, restore the upstairs/main theater auditorium #3, and #4 was to do the upstairs auxiliary rooms.

Another meeting of the board determined the logistics and the plan on how to proceed should we get the funding.

Jodi then took this information and put together the 'plan', which has been revised several times to make it as correct as possible. It is now ready to send to the legislators for consideration.

Donor Recognition Program

OPERA, Inc. has an ongoing recognition program. Donations that are received over time accumulate toward various donator categories. Donations to OPERA, Inc. a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization are tax deductible. Contributions no matter how large or how small can be mailed to: OPERA, Inc., PO Box 334, Ellendale ND 58436-0334

Supporting Players

(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Anonymous

Larry Barry

John Boekelheide

Dorothy Mouw Brown

Bobbi Jo Burow

Marilyn Burow

H. Preston & Robert W Coleman Family

J.D. & Esther Crabtree

Dakota Valley Electric

Mary Jane Davidson

Dickey County Children's Theatre

Mary Ewing

Amy Hartman

Jay & Pat Kendall

Duane & Beverly Mattheis

Brad & Kari Nishek

ND Community Foundation

Karl Rekow

Pete Retzlaff

Daniel Schneck

Starion Financial

Orpha Steinwand

Warren Wedell

Leading Players

(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

American Legion Post #137

Anonymous

Anonymous

Anonymous

Grant Crabtree

Tom & Mary Denison

Deb & Gene Elhard

Ellendale Gaming Association

Ellendale Pharmacy

Patricia Wallace Ingraham

Ken & Betty Kosel

Glenn Mastel

Montana Dakota Utilities Co.

Preservation North Dakota

Jeanette Ruenz

Stewart Ruenz

Directors

(\$5,000 - \$9,999)

Ellendale Area Foundation

Lana & Warren Schlecht

A.J.Wedell

Clara & John Wheelihan

Jim & Eileen Zimmerman

Producers

(\$10,000 - \$19,999)

ND State Historical Society

Angels

(\$20,000 & Above)

Greg & Judy Gackle

Ned Leiby