



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

Winter 2016

ENJOY THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS AT THE OPERA HOUSE

Get into the Christmas spirit by attending a program of comedy and music at the Ellendale Opera House. OPERA, Inc. will be presenting three one act Christmas comedic plays along with musical performances on December 16, 17 & 18.

The first play involves a superhero from another planet experiencing his first Christmas and all the peculiarities of the season most humans take for granted. The second comedy features the hijinks of some odd characters on a Christmas Day afternoon. The third play has a group of people planning to spend Christmas in a house that unbeknownst to them, may be haunted.

Cast members are: Cindy Axt, Grant Crabtree, Tom Davis, Deb Elhard, Angie Kocher, Colton Maunu, Jolene Maunu, Katie Maunu, Mike Reinke and Brenda Rekow.

The Zion Lutheran Church Hand Bell Choir will perform during each performance as well as other musical acts.

Showtime is 7 pm on Friday, December 16 and Saturday, December 17 with a 3 pm matinee on Sunday, December 18. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for those 18 & under. All tickets are general admission, will be sold at the door. Refreshments will be served.

CAPACITY CROWD ENJOYS COMEDY NIGHT

OPERA, Inc. presented "Comedy Night at the Opera House" on Saturday, October 8 to a full house in the Lobby & Gallery section of the Opera House. A baked potato dinner preceded the

comedy entertainment offering a choice of broccoli cheese or chili topping along with cole slaw, lemonade, coffee and dessert. Prior to the entertainment, a short recognition program was held honoring John Wheelihan and Karl Rekow, longtime OPERA, Inc. board members, who recently retired from the board. The comedy consisted of a mixture of sketches and jokes performed by the cast of: Chloe Thurber, Megan Roehl, Wren Murphy, Chase Nishek, Cindy Axt, Deb Elhard, Brenda Rekow, Tom Davis and Grant Crabtree. Comedy Nights have been a periodic staple at the Opera House and have proven to be very popular. Look for another edition for 2017.

FOOD WAGON

The Opera Food Wagon was in business again this summer from May 20 to September 23 every Friday at the corner of Main Street and Hiway 281. We served Walking Tacos and All-Beef Hot Dogs, pop and occasionally specialty items. Early in the season, we offered a rhubarb ice cream dessert and off and on a variety of toppings for the hot dogs. The noon hour was busy as many customers stopped by for lunch and enjoyed it in the gazebo in Brandenburger Park. Several customers took their food home or to their office. Fargo Assembly employees often ordered tacos to go, some days as many as 12. Grant and Marilyn always completed the orders, many with special ingredients and toppings, in time for pick up.

In May and again in August, we headed south to Frederick, SD to do concessions at the Kick 'n Kountry Motor Cross races. Here we added Bar-B-Ques and bars. We also set up in the Frederick Park on June 25 for their celebration Finn Fest.

As in several years past, we had concessions at Kosel's Auction, which this year was at the farm. And on October 1st, the wagon as at Marcy Schlenker's auction in Ellendale.

The wagon was very busy on September 10 during AppleFest. The Fall Festival is a huge success for the Ellendale community and Opera is pleased to be a vital part of the event.

The last Thursday of each month, May-August, there was a Concert in the Park, sponsored by the Ellendale Area Arts Council. The Food Wagon was there to sell tacos and hot dogs to the evening crowd. Once again, we were very busy while still being able to enjoy the music.

Due to the cooler weather in September, the last two Fridays we served in the Opera House Lobby and still had a good crowd. There is something about the Lobby that entices people to sit and visit while enjoying a meal.

Workers in the wagon were Grant, Marilyn, Jeanette, Cory Murphy, Bobbi Burow, John Boekelheide, Tom Rude, Larry Davis, Deb Elhard, Carol Robb and Mary and Tom Denison.

We look forward to a busy 2017 summer.

Pi Day and Pie Social

March 14 was 'Pi Day' at the Opera House Lobby. This event, suggested by Grant Crabtree a few years ago, has proved to be a very successful annual event. Pi is 3.1416, thus the day for a pie social. Several kinds of pie with ice cream or whipped topping and a beverage are offered for \$3.14. As usual, customers ate and conversed.

Then on July 19, a Pie Social was held. Many kinds of pie were available and all pieces were sold. Often there are 'take-out' orders. We extended the hours to 6:30 pm to accommodate business personnel and had a few takers. The Opera Board appreciates the support at these fundraisers.

EVENTS

The Lobby and Gallery was the scene for many events this last year. Sponsors in part were O.P.E.R.A. ,Inc, Ellendale Area Arts Council, Ellendale Tourism, Starion Financial, DRN and Greg Gackle.

In March a special exhibit entitled ND/SD Photographic Exhibition was on display. A number of well known photographers from North Dakota and South Dakota were featured.

ND/SD PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

During the summer of 2014 John Benasiak, Professor of Art at the University of South Dakota and Ryan Stander, Assistant Professor of Art at Minot State University, began conversations to curate a photographic print exchange and exhibit. Their goal was to highlight the many photographic artists working in the Dakotas and showcase their diverse styles and processes. Working together, the two curated the collection by approaching 15 artists from their respective states with the hopes of representing a current view of photography within the Dakotas. The diverse collection offered a striking range of styles, approaches and subject matter. It was a fun photographic exhibit and interesting with all the North and South Dakota photos.

TOWN HALL MEETING WITH DOUG BURGUM

A second event at the Opera House on March 15 was an informal meet and greet with Doug Burgum, candidate for ND Governor. Refreshments were served to the large crowd who came to meet the candidate and discuss issues. Mr. Burgum, an entrepreneur and philanthropist, has been recognized globally for his visionary business leadership, and credits his success to the values and ethics instilled in his early years by his family and community. He won the gubernatorial election in November.

“YES, I AM FREE”

“Yes, I am Free: The Inspiration of Dance and Paint” exhibit within the North Dakota Council on the Arts’ Art for Life Program, was on display in the lobby from April 12-29. The project combined traditional or folk dance and a mobile painting device to create four massive 12’ x 15’ contemporary paintings.

Imagine elders leaving marks with their feet, canes and walkers dipped in paint as they dance upon the canvas. Then imagine a “fifth wheel” attached to a wheelchair to allow people with mobility issues, some quadriplegic, to create broad calligraphic brushstrokes upon the same canvas.

This took place in care facilities over a two-day period at each of four North Dakota communities. Working together were the elders, Jeff Nachigall(artist and inventor of the mobile painting device) and four traditional dancers, Mary Louise Defender Wilson (Dakotah in Ellendale), Maureen McDonald(Irish sean nos in Enderlin), Margreat Sam(East Indian Bharatanatyam in Jamestown) and James “Cubby” LaRocque(Michif fiddle and jigging in Wahpeton)

A special reception was held April 21st from 3-6 pm for the residents and participants. The Prince of Peace Care Center was awarded the prestigious SPIRIT AWARD for their participation.

The four large canvases were hung on the spacious walls of the lobby which provided the visitors to closely view the footprints, handprints, thumbprints, the soles of shoes, wheelchair tracks, concentric marks from the rubber base of canes and lines from walkers.

WOMEN BEHIND THE PLOW

This exhibit was hosted by the Ellendale Historical Society during the month of May. “Women Behind the Plow” was comprised of large photographs celebrating the contributions of the many women on farms and rural communities of Emmons County, Logan County and McIntosh County. Seventeen acrylic panels told the story of

ladies who shared their photos and stories with the Tri-County Alliance organizations representing the three counties.

A knoephla soup supper was served on May 13, followed by a presentation by Sue Balcom who helped to make the exhibit.

RECITAL BY TARA BOHLEN AND MICHAEL LAND

On Friday, May 20, a special violin program was held in the Lobby. Tara Bohlen, a native of Bismarck, played three pieces accompanied by TBC Music Director Michael Land. Tara serves as associate concertmaster of the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra and youth orchestra conductor of the BMYSO. She teaches violin and viola in her home studio to students of all ages and abilities. Tara performs as 2nds violin in the Sonorus String Quartet, an ensemble that held regular concert series as well as performed a television program “Prairie Musicians” on PBS. Formerly she directed orchestra and Strolling Strings Performance Group in the Bismarck Public Schools.

Michael Land holds the BM and MM degrees in piano performance from Lee University where he studied primarily with pianist Ning An. After working and teaching in Bismarck after college in 2010, he and his wife Rachel have lived in Ellendale. Since 2013 he serves as head of the music department at Trinity Bible College.

TWO WAY MIRROR, PORTRAITS AND SELF-PORTRAITS

Roddy MacInnes, well known in our area, brought his newest exhibit to the Lobby and Gallery in June. Photos that he had taken over the years were on display for a week. He started taking pictures in 1965 and over the years his subjects were others and himself. “This exhibition celebrates evidence of my existence, along with extended documentation of three significant relationships. Some of the people are gone and some remain.”

THE NEW YORK KAMMERMUSIKER NORTH DAKOTA WINDS OF CHANGE CONCERT

The New York Kammermusiker, a small double-reed chamber music ensemble that performs classical music, held a concert in the Opera House Lobby on June 25th. This unique chamber ensemble travels the world presenting a wide range of double-reed music, from the Renaissance era through Contemporary periods. The group is known for their experimental and improvisatory performances—often performing music written for their own unique sound—and for the excellence of their performances, regardless of what particular music is on the program. The group formed in 1969 seeks to reintroduce the instruments and the music of the double-reed band to modern audiences. The ensemble offers flawless performances in a lively, interactive manner, giving historical and cultural context to the music that is both educational and entertaining. The music and its history come alive.

JACK WILLIAMS PERFORMANCE

Jack Williams, one of the great singer/songwriters and guitar players, performed July 7th in the Lobby. His uniquely Southern-American music resonates with a steady pulse of tradition. He carefully crafts songwriting, sublime acoustic guitar and weathered tenor gracefully to encompass a host of musical idioms—folk, country, rock, jazz, blues and soul. After years on the road playing coffeehouses, concerts and festivals, he spent two years touring with the legendary songwriter Mickey Newbury, where he developed his songwriting. The artist performed to a full house with many asking for a repeat performance.

**“CAN I GET A WITNESS?”—
performed by the ND Governor’s School
Students.**

The Opera House hosted a talented group of high

school actors from around the state. These actors were participants in the annual summer ND Governor’s School. One of them, Kelsie Jenkins, is a senior at Ellendale High School.

The play, written and directed by the students, was titled “Can I Get A Witness?” As the audience of some three dozen—constituted the jury—watched the scenario play out on two different planets, they were challenged to consider two competing views of a just society. Which concept is preferable, “equity” or “fairness”? The students exchanged dialogue and it soon became clear that the two values often overlapped. The young dramatists incorporated major contemporary issues into their drama, including prejudice, poverty, environmental degradation and mass immigration.

Near the conclusion, the audience members were asked to discuss among themselves the question portrayed and voice their preference. In a show of hands, “Equity” prevailed by a small majority. Audience members were united, though, in applauding the Governor’s School team for their excellent production and expressing appreciation for their visit to Ellendale.

DAPHNE JOHNSON CLARK EXHIBITION

During the month of September, the Lobby hosted the Daphne JohnsonClark exhibition. This painter’s work captured the characters who lived in the western part of ND. The works were of people to remember. A number of the works are of people who are characters who live in the area and others are of those who have passed on. Other works in the collection are from discarded photos no one wanted anymore or no longer remembered who the subjects were. “There is a story in these rural areas just waiting to be told to the rest of the world and I want to be one of the people telling that story.”

This exhibit was featured during Ellendale’s Annual AppleFest and had a large attendance.

ELLEN DIEDERICH WATER COLOR CLASS

Ellen Diederich, prize winning water color artist from Fargo taught two classes at the Ellendale Opera House on Oct. 29th. The first class was for students age 7 and older who would like to learn water color. This session was held from 9:30-11:15 am and was free and every student received Ellen's book "Sampson" as a gift. Seventeen youth attended.

The second session was an adult water color class and started at 11:30. There was a \$40 cost for this class. Sixteen artists from Devils Lake, Jamestown, LaMoure, Edgeley, Carrington, Verona, Japan, Oakes and Ellendale. Funding from the Ellendale Area Community Foundation provided funds for this class which was sponsored by the Ellendale Area Arts Council.

WHERE I'M FROM: LOCAL LIVES THROUGH STORIES

This project was an intergenerational collaboration between residents of Prince of Peace Care Center, high school students of Alison Radermacher, Candice Klipfel and Colette Middlestead and a group of volunteers. The idea originated with a poem written in 1993 by George Ella Lyon and came to Ellendale via Bonnie Tressler, a teaching artist from Jamestown, ND. Volunteers and the students interviewed the residents and assisted them in writing their personal poems. In addition, each of the students and volunteers authored their own poems using the template of the Lyon poem. The outcome told the story of a portion of the writer's life and identity including their homes, family, environment and nature that surrounded them.

On Wednesday, October 26, the finished products were read and displayed at the Prince of Peace Care Center. A reception open to the public was held November 1, 5-7pm at the Opera House. That evening poems were read and viewed and refreshments were served. The exhibit continued through November 13th.

SHOP ON AMAZON AND DONATE TO OPERA

If you shop on Amazon and you would like to support OPERA, Inc., please consider using AmazonSmile, a shopping portal that allows users to automatically direct 0.5 percent from the purchase price of any eligible item to OPERA. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you already know. Same products, same prices, same services. Your shopping experience will be exactly the same as before. There is no additional charge to you for using AmazonSmile. You can start today by using this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/45-0426945>. It's an easy way to support OPERA and it costs you nothing! Thanks to all who are already have signed up. The AmazonSmile Foundation has donated \$259.38 to OPERA, Inc. since we started the program in 2015. Every dollar is welcomed.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATION?

There are many non-profit charitable organizations a person can choose to donate to. Unfortunately, a common thread among many large organizations is the extremely high fundraising expenses such as overhead, administrative and marketing costs they incur. This often leads to a reduction in the percentage of your donation that actually goes to the cause you are supporting. In addition, one should think about what impact their donation will have. A \$100 donation to a small, local non-profit will have a much larger impact than that same \$100 to a large organization with a several million dollar budget. OPERA, Inc. encourages you to keep this in mind when considering what organization to donate to.



Throughout 2015 O.P.E.R.A. Inc. held a series of community meetings asking residents to communicate the needs of Ellendale and how the Historic Ellendale Opera House could be used to service those needs. From those conversations O.P.E.R.A. Inc., with the help of the NDSU Extensions Office, constructed a strategic plan. This strategic plan will guide O.P.E.R.A. Inc. in the restoration of the Ellendale Historic Opera House. To facilitate this strategic plan O.P.E.R.A. Inc. has hired its first Executive Director.

For those of you that don't know me, my name is Justin Meidinger, and I was hired as the Executive Director of the Ellendale Opera House in April of 2016, concluding my service on the Opera Inc. board from 2011 to 2016. I returned to Ellendale in 2009 after living in Denver CO and Las Vegas NV employed by Crescent Electric Supply Company as a District Operations Manager. I was born in Ellendale and prior to departing for Denver CO in 1999 I attended and graduated from Ellendale District Public School and attended college at Valley City State University as a Music Major with a Human Resource Minor. Currently I am an Ellendale city councilman, president of the Ellendale Area Arts Council, professional musician, and am the sole proprietor of both Backroom Studios and Meidinger Home Improvement. I reside in Ellendale with my high school sweetheart Jamie Eberle, my two children Ella and David, and our black lab Lloyd. Jamie is the coordinator of the "Kid's Art" program sponsored by the Ellendale Area Arts Council and is the sole proprietor of the JEberleCo Yoga studio, boot camp, and art events. Before moving back to Ellendale in 2009 I was unaware of the Historic Ellendale Opera House but after my first tour of the building I instantly fell in love and gained a passion for completing the renovation of this hidden treasure.

Below is an overview of our strategic plan:

2016

- Secure funding for Executive Directors Salary
- Create a fundraising campaign for building infrastructure allowing for tenant improvements.

- Solicit potential commercial tenants to occupy main street level vacancies.

2017

- Secure commercial tenants and the funding to renovate the main street level.
- Acquire auditorium restoration and remodeling cost analysis.
- Create architectural and rendering drawings.
- Research funding opportunities to renovate front of building façade and replace windows.

2018

- Solicit funding to renovate auditorium.
- Complete façade and commercial space renovation.

2019

- Start renovation of upstairs auditorium.
- Solicit funding to renovate auxiliary rooms on 2nd and 3rd story.

2020

- Complete total renovation of the Historic Ellendale Opera House Building
- Schedule 2021 Inaugural Season events.

2016 has been a year of success and of setbacks. My salary was funded by two current O.P.E.R.A. Inc. board members on a bridge loan basis, and by a City of Ellendale JDA grant. The Dickey County JDA was not in a position to provide funding in 2016 but invited us to revisit our request in 2017. I applied for a Bush Fellowship grant from the Bush Foundation, notification of applicants moving to semi-finals in early December. This Bush Fellowship has the potential to facilitate an Executive Director's full time employment for 2017 and 2018. We have made many new contacts and found several new potential funding opportunities, all of which take many hours to develop and harvest. We have received a grant from the Ellendale Area Foundation to secure the balcony. Unfortunately it was strongly suggested by a donor/architect that we might need to get a structural engineer involved before plans are finalized for the balcony. Our insurance provider completed an inspection of the auditorium and had many

concerns regarding the temporary electrical and lighting. We were instructed to remove all wiring that was not installed by a licensed electrician, so currently there is no lighting or electrical on the 2nd and 3rd stories of the building. The good news is we should be able to use the Ellendale Area Foundation grant for the electrical instead of the balcony once their board approves our request. The lobby has had emergency exit lights installed ensuring the safety of our patrons and volunteers during events. I have been touring the building with potential commercial tenants and have started compiling bids for tenant improvements. First quarter of 2017 I plan to introduce a matching fund campaign that will pay for this first step in our strategic plan, which is to separate the electrical metering for each section of the building, install an adequate electrical service to the building, and install new floor joist and subfloor in the far west main street level portion of the building. I am looking for 3 or more \$5000 and 4 or more \$2500 matching donors for this particular fundraiser. If you have the means and are so inclined to provide Opera with these funds please contact me and I can give you further detail of this matching fund opportunity.

For those of you that have not been to the Opera House in a while or have not seen the auditorium and would like to take a tour, schedule an event, or how you could help support O.P.E.R.A. Inc. give me a call at 1-701-535-0347 or email me at jmmeid@hotmail.com.

Sincerely
Justin Meidinger



OPERA, Inc. would like to thank all those who donated to our organization over the past year. OPERA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and all donations are tax deductible. Donations can be sent to OPERA, Inc., PO Box 334, Ellendale ND 58436-0334. Every single dollar helps us toward our goals. Thanks to:

AmazonSmile
Albert & Betty Bauder
Bickey Bender
Rose Bennett
Bob Brady
Bobbi Jo Burow
Linda Christman
Robert & Preston Coleman Family
Dakota Valley Electric
Grant Crabtree
Deb & Gene Elhard
Ellendale Area Community Foundation
Ellendale Tourism
Judy & Greg Gackle
North Dakota Art Gallery Association
Patricia Wallace Ingraham
Family of Virginia Monroe
Faye Reimers
Tom Rude
Lana & Warren Schlecht
Eugene Ulmer
J.P. Wheelihan

If anyone donated who was inadvertently not included on this list, our apologies for overlooking you.





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 Bank

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)

Deb & Gene Elhard

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