

# MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF PLAYWRIGHTS

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, October 10, 2023 – 7:00 pm

### Hybrid in-person / Online Zoom Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Drader, Executive Director; Ann Hodges, Chair; Michelle Boulet (new member), Karen Clavelle, Cherry Karpyschin, Ian Ross, Melinda Tallin, Charlene Van Buekenhout (new member); Daniel Thau-Eleff (Associate Managing Director)

REGRETS: Chad Heath, Crystal Kolt, Elio Zarrillo

MEMBERS PRESENT: Scott Douglas, Jenny Gates, Robert Johannson, Siobhan Keely, Leigh-Anne Kehler, Sara Kreindler, Kevin Longfield, Lynne Martin, Sam McLean, Steve Ratzlaff, Brian Richardson, Armin Wiebe

#### 1. Call To Order:

Chair Ann Hodges called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm, asked everyone to introduce themselves, and thanked everyone for attending tonight.

#### 2. Land Acknowledgement:

Brian acknowledged that MAP's facilities in the Artspace Building in the Exchange district are located close to the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red rivers, which has been a focal point of traveling routes for people on this land for 1000's and 1000's of years. Winnipeg itself is located within Treaty One territory, which is the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabeg, the Dene, the Cree, the Oji-Cree, and the Dakota people, and the homeland of the Métis nation.

Other treaties in Manitoba are Treaties One through Six; Crystal Kolt is joining the meeting from Treaty Five area. The water we drink comes from the Treaty Three area, from the shores of Shoal Lake First Nations 39 and 40. The electricity powering all of our devices, including this meeting, comes from generating stations on rivers in Treaties One, Three, and Five.

He noted MAP supports storytelling, and it's important that we're mindful of the history of this fundamentally important practice and tradition on this land. We're grateful to all First Nations people for their traditional and ongoing stewardship of these lands and waters.

#### 3. Approval of Minutes of the October 11, 2022 Annual General Meeting minutes:

**MOTION:** (Jenny Gates/Scott Douglas) To approve the minutes of the Oct 11, 2022 AGM.

**CARRIED**

#### 4. Report from the Board President:

Chair Ann Hodges presented the following report:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Manitoba Association of Playwrights, thank you so much for joining us for our Annual General Meeting. As a member-driven service organization, we greatly appreciate you taking the time to attend and exercise your vote, because you are the reason we are here!

I'm going to be using the word "continue" a lot in the next few paragraphs. It's a good word, because in MAP's case it implies steadiness and constancy, which as you will hear today, are what has been the case MAP over the last year. The steady but smart growth and good planning and oversight that we talked about last year, has continued.

As time passes and we get farther and farther away from the peak of the pandemic, but still see the impacts of that difficult time on our community, we continue to be grateful and not a little bit relieved that MAP remains in such strong position. This is partly due to the fact that we are a service organization, not relying on groups gathering in order to do most of our work. But also, a great part of our stability and success over the past few years is due to the work of Brian, and more lately Daniel, in guiding the organization. They continue to keep their sights “on the goal” despite the chaos of the world around us. And that goal is: to support the playwrights of Manitoba, who can reflect that world to audiences, bringing thoughtfulness, new perspectives, joy, and understanding to our community (and beyond) through the act of theatrical storytelling. Brian and Daniel share that clarity — that MAP is here to support writers — and their persistence in doing so, has resulted in a very steady but exciting period of growth and renewal over the past few years.

Just as we reported last fall, MAP continues to be in excellent shape, and continues to thrive as our world is continuing to open up, and all those plays that were in development during the last 3 years are continuing to clamour for workshops and support. Later, Cherry will report on our financial situation, and Brian will update you on our artistic accomplishments in 2022-23, and outline some of the plans for the year ahead. I guess you’d say I’m the warm-up act.

We are continuing our Strategic Planning Process which was led by Pam Grahame of Blue Print Inc. We are well into the second year of our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

To summarize, our core strategies are:

- To enhance services to equity-seeking and underserved communities
- To increase and diversify revenues
- To develop and implement a plan to enhance organizational profile
- To create an HR plan for organizational stability

We’ve made good progress on all four core strategies, as demonstrated in our financials and the Executive Director’s report that will follow.

One exciting structural change to help us accomplish many of these goals has been the expansion in Daniel Thau-Eleff’s role in the organization to Associate Managing Director. Brian will go into the details regarding this, but I’d like to officially welcome Daniel in his new position. MAP has long benefitted from Daniel’s passion for and deep understanding of our organization, its history and role in our community, and we can already see the impact that he is having on our organization with these expanded responsibilities.

While we’re on the topic of the people who work for MAP, in 2022-23 we introduced an employee benefit package, which offers extended health care and dental, travel and critical illness coverage to our permanent employees (Brian and Daniel). It’s the first time in our over 40-year history that this kind of thing has been arranged — and reflects our strategy of ensuring organizational stability — by making sure MAP’s staff are offered appropriate benefits when they sign on to work for us, benefits that are comparable to the kind of package that would be offered at other organizations and companies. We have good people working for us, and it’s just good business to treat them accordingly.

MAP continues to be a full member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, engaging artists under the Canadian Actors Equity Association Canadian Theatre Agreement contracts, and following all Playwrights Guild of Canada employment guidelines and regulations. As usual, we are

proud to be working within these of the professional associations, engaging our artists under professional contracts. We continue our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion for all our playwrights, artists, and employees.

Cherry will give the Treasurer's report, and will outline that we have an accumulated surplus. I want to note that this was a planned surplus, built up over the past 4 years, with the intent of having a cushion going into this period of HR restructuring and increased demand for our services. In essence, we anticipated needing a cushion to tide us over until we've built a sustainable sponsorship and fundraising strategy.

All of this is overseen, of course, by the Board of Directors. One of our Strategic Plan goals was to ensure the Board is refreshed and revitalized on a regular basis. We have a detailed schedule and succession plan for Board members to ensure a strong board at all times, despite the comings and goings of individuals as terms come to an end. We are half-way through that 4-year plan. As you can imagine, this needs to be done with great care to ensure the institutional knowledge of our organization is carried forward, while refreshing and revitalizing the board over time. In terms of Board changes at this meeting, I'd like to thank Sam Nguyen, whose term has ended, for his four years of service and his valued financial and accounting advice and guidance. And I'd like to welcome Charlene Van Buekenhout and Michelle Boulet who are on the slate for election at the end of our meeting today (assuming they are voted in!).

Before closing, a few thank you's:

First: a big thank you as always, to our funders – The Canada Council for the Arts, Manitoba Arts Council, Winnipeg Arts Council, the Winnipeg Foundation, the Gail Asper Family Foundation, Scirocco Drama, and our many individual donors and supporters.

I wish to thank my colleagues on the Board who give of their time and wisdom to support MAP's endeavours. Many thanks in particular to Cherry (Board Treasurer) and Melinda (Board Secretary) for their extra work in support of MAP. And of course, much appreciation to our Board members at large: Karen Clavelle, Chad Heath, Crystal Kolt, Sam Nguyen, Ian Ross, and Elio Zarillo.

We offer our sincere gratitude to our Associate Managing Director, Daniel Thau-Eleff, and of course to Executive Director Brian Drader, whose tireless efforts and clarity of vision is so vital to MAP. We are truly grateful to both for their vision, hard work, leadership, organizational skills, and good humour. We look forward to another exciting year under Brian and Daniel.

And finally — thank you again for being here tonight. As a service organization for playwrights, MAP is you. We really appreciate you joining us here this evening to share and celebrate the year with us.

I wish you all good health, safety and peace.

Warm Regards,  
Ann Hodges  
President, Board of Directors, Manitoba Association of Playwrights

##### **5. Report from the Board Treasurer:**

Treasurer Cherry Karpyshin referred members to the 3<sup>rd</sup> page in the Financial Statements, thanked everyone for attending, and presented the following report:

I'm delighted to report that MAP had another successful year. From the artistic and financial perspectives, we achieved the goals that were set out at the beginning of the year.

Although MAP has been very successful in achieving a surplus at year end, to address concerns from funders regarding large accumulated surpluses, we are declaring a small operating deficit of (\$2,278.) compared to an operating surplus of \$7,447. last year. Therefore, to address funders concerns, the strategy is to spend some of the accumulated surplus of \$16,690. In 2023/24, MAP will allocate some of this surplus to the major restructuring in human resources with one full time person, Executive Director, Brian, and one three-quarter time person, Associate Managing Director, Daniel. With the growth and activity MAP has experienced over the past few years and continues to see, more administration support is needed to keep abreast of the demand for the many services and resources MAP provides. This is a great investment in the artists in our community.

In Statement of Operations and Net Assets – Revenues: Membership fees are down slightly from 2022 – from \$4,790 to \$4,310. Ancillary services see a substantial increase in 2023 from \$8,143 last year to \$26,672. Ancillary services include increased activity. Some co-ops/independent companies want to engage Equity actors and because they are not signatories to the Canadian Theatre Agreement, it becomes a cumbersome process. They engage the services of MAP to navigate Equity contracts, thereby impacting increases in income and expenses (see below). The companies have been able to secure grants which help to offset their expenses. Individual Donations saw a slight increase from the previous year. Although there is a decrease in The Canada Council funding, this amount represents our regular operating grant as all COVID support has been completed.

Expenses: Administration and resource centre saw an increase of \$10,000 which is attributed to an increase in hours for Daniel Thau-Eleff (due to the increased activity in the office) and annual salary increases. The Playlab/Special projects has increased by approximately \$20,000 which addresses the increase in activity (as noted above) which has also impacted CTA deductions. The Awards line is up in 2022 as there were no awards during COVID, therefore, this category has returned to normal activity. Other expenses are in line with budget.

*At this point Cherry called for the following motion:*

**MOTION:** (Lynne Martin/Scott Douglas) That the June 30, 2023 Year End Financial Review Engagement be approved as distributed.

**CARRIED**

On behalf of the Board of Directors, congratulations to Brian Drader, our Executive Director, for another very successful year. As Treasurer, I'm always given appropriate and timely documentation regarding financial matters which is shared with the Board of Directors. As you know, it's been a very difficult few years for everyone, and MAP has navigated the situation with strength and determination to ensure as many services as possible were available to our MAP members. Brian managed this with the support and partnership of Daniel Thau-Eleff, who was been by his side every step of the way. Sincere thanks to Brian and Daniel for a job well done!

Thank you to Scarrow & Donald for their financial expertise and guidance. We look forward to continuing to work with them.

*At this point Cherry made the following motion:*

**MOTION:** (Cherry Karpyshin/Leigh-Anne Kehler) That Scarrow & Donald LLP be engaged to do the Review Engagement for the Manitoba Association of Playwrights for year ending June 30, 2024.

**CARRIED**

MAP would not be here without the support and collaboration of you, our membership. Thank you so much for being with us tonight. Best wishes to you and your families.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cherry Karpyshin  
Treasurer

Discussion ensued wherein Brian explained the ancillary activities; an example is that a playwright receives a grant for a workshop, but doesn't have the administrative resources to do the casting, contracting, payroll and so on, so they engage MAP to do those tasks and reimburse MAP for the artist costs. This has become a very popular service in the community, as it takes off a lot of the administrative pressure for artists and MAP is well set up to take on the work. Membership was supportive of this initiative.

Ann thanked Cherry for her report.

#### **6. Report from The Executive Director:**

Brian Drader presented the following report:

Welcome to the 2023 MAP Annual General Meeting. Our AGM is vital to the ongoing operation of the organization as a non-profit, and I am truly grateful that you're all here to represent the MAP membership as voting members.

And welcome to our first AGM hybrid meeting! It's fantastic to see some of you here in person, and others joining us by zoom. I will do my very best to make sure those joining us by zoom are included in the Q. & A. following my report.

I am now well into my 7<sup>th</sup> year here at MAP, and I am pleased to share that we continue to thrive on the financial, administrative, and artistic front. Cherry has reported on our financial position, and Ann has covered governance highlights, so I'm going to dive straight into our operations and services.

Although the industry as a whole is still very much in pandemic recovery mode, MAP is as busy as we've ever been, hosting many workshops and meetings over the last year, and a lot more activity calendared right through until 2024 and beyond. It's fantastic to have people coming and going again, while maintaining the option of pivoting to zoom to include out of town artists and guests, as needed.

Some Highlights:

The 2023 Fringe Festival and MAP's Harry Rintoul Award for Best New Manitoba Play were back for a second year post-pandemic, and we once again had support from the Manitoba Arts Council which allowed us to retain our expanded prize portfolio. A great showing of new regional work this year.

And 2022/23 saw a flush of MAP-supported plays going up on our Canadian stages, or securing productions for the upcoming season:

- *Sonja and Richard* by Steven Ratzlaff at the Gargoyle Theatre.
- *The Outside Inn* by Sharon Bajer and Elio Zarrillo at Festival Antigonish in Nova Scotia, with a remount coming up at PTE in the spring.
- Daniel Thau-Eleff's play *Narrow Bridge* at the Winnipeg Jewish Theatre.
- Elio Zarrillo's *Volare* at Prairie Theatre Exchange.
- SIR's *The Dark Lady* by Jessica Hill.
- Theatre By The River's upcoming production of *Glad To Be Here*.
- Walk & Talk Theatre and TPM's co-production of *The End of the Line* premiering in May 2024.
- Mammalian Diving Reflex & UNIT productions' *Everything Has Disappeared*, presented by PTE in February 2024. Fun Fact: *Everything Has Disappeared* is the second project supported by our 2020/2022 Digital Dramaturgy Initiative to hit the stage, with other DDI projects continuing development towards future productions.

It should be noted that, in line with our Strategic Plan, we are making a concerted effort to make sure we're credited for our support, towards enhancing our organizational profile. It's tricky! And we do understand why; as a support organization our work is mostly done by the time a play has its big splashy premiere, and we are often forgotten in the credits, but we are being more aggressive about following this up and ensuring that we're included in the acknowledgements, including formalized acknowledgement agreements. The playwright or company is never reluctant to do so, it really is just a case of often being the first supporters and so the first to be forgotten. But we're getting there, and we truly and deeply appreciate the projects and organizations that remember to give us a shout out for our support.

The plays I listed off are ones that MAP has supported throughout their development process, with workshops and/or dramaturgical support. There are a number of projects that have also received ongoing studio support such as Waawaate Fobister's *Omaagomaan* and the Neurodiversity Arts Conference. There were of course many other plays that we've supported either dramaturgically or with workshops over the last year, some of which are still in early to mid-development and some of which are in a production stream for future seasons. Those announcements are for the theatres to make, not for MAP to make. But the good news is the work that MAP has been doing with the storytellers in our region is making its way to the stage, and we are very proud to be supporting the full diversity of our community in other ways as well.

The Scirocco High School Playwriting Program is alive and well and this year is cementing yet another exciting phase in its continued evolution. The first leg, finding the young playwrights and their plays, remains relatively unchanged, but once the development work begins we'll once again be partnering with the Manitoba Theatre for Young People Theatre School for workshops along the way and a final public share of the work in late spring of 2024, which answers to our belief that at that age there is great strength in peers working with peers, guided by professional dramaturgical support. This is our 2nd year working with the MTYP School and the partnership continues to deepen. Last year we also had the privilege of working with Native Youth Theatre on one of the plays, a relationship that both organizations are excited to build on as we enter into the 24th year of supporting the future of theatre.

This year the Prairie Theatre Exchange Playwrights Unit has been rebranding to become the PTE/MAP Playwrights Unit in recognition of what has become a true partnership between the two companies. We are now in the 2nd year of this particular iteration of the Unit and have spring workshops planned for all seven plays that are being developed there.

Our Resident Dramaturg Program was initiated four years ago to deepen engagement with and response to the needs of our community's equity seeking story tellers and theatre creators. Our Resident Dramaturgs in 2020/21 were Debbie Patterson, Ian Ross, and Hazel Venzon, in 2021/22 it was Tracey Nepinak, and in 2022/23 Elio Zarrillo. We are delighted to be expanding the program this year to include two dramaturgical mentees, Kara Joseph and Melissa Langdon. This initiative will remain as a plank in our service & program portfolio, evolving each year to target specific needs in the organization and in our community, and to continue deepening our region's dramaturgical pool.

After the nose to tail upheaval of the pandemic years, we were delighted to start ramping up our professional development activities again, both in person and on line. We gathered our ad hoc team of dramaturgs for a Dramaturgically Speaking seminar last spring, and for that seminar we continued our investigation into the synergy between digital and theatre arts – a lively discussion, to say the least – and we tested out a new initiative last year, Let's Play Together, writing days that any of our members can join in on, with check-ins throughout the day to break the isolation and share progress. Those will continue throughout this year, and I will also be keeping an eye out for national and international webinars that we can gather to watch together in person, followed by discussion. This is an idea that we came up with last year and just couldn't find the right webinar at the right time, but I'll continue to watch for them. I am sure they'll be fun and informative evenings when I can find the right content & calendar fit.

And the Sidney & Margaret Jarvis Playwrights Resource Centre continues to draw on its extensive catalogue of plays for loans to the community, as well as provide a working space for out of town playwrights as needed.

If I'm to be brutally honest, we – and by we, I mean me and Daniel – have so much going on in a given year that I'm 100% sure I've forgotten to mention at least some of it, and what a fantastic position that is for an organization to be in.

Beyond the continued support of our playwrights and the theatre community at large, this upcoming year marks a significant shift in our operations. As many of you know, Daniel is now MAP's Associate Managing Director and is spearheading many internal accounting, operation, and administrative changes, as well as sponsorship, foundation, and fundraising initiatives. This on top of his already stellar work with our artist engagement and contracting, co-ordinating the High School Playwriting Program, assisting in Studio management, overseeing our Society Compliance, and consulting with me on pretty well everything MAP does. It's a very exciting year as Daniel drags MAP's administration into the 21st century, while increasing our capacity to meet the needs of our community. I thank you, Daniel, for all that you are doing, and for being the best and most fun office mate an ED could hope for.

Wrapping up:

Huge thanks to all our funders and supporters – the Canada Council for the Arts, the Manitoba Arts Council, the Winnipeg Arts Council, the Winnipeg Foundation, the Gail Asper Family Foundation, Scirocco Drama, and all of our individual donors.

And the unsung heroes of any not-for-profit – the Board of Directors. I am thankful every day to the MAP Board for volunteering their time and bringing an extraordinary passion and skill set to the governance of the organization. Ann, Cherry, Melinda, Karen, Chad, Ian, Elio, Crystal – and our hopefully soon-to-be-voted-in new board members Charlene and Michelle – thank you.

And last but certainly not least - a huge thank you to our MAP membership. You are MAP, and we wouldn't be here without you.

Brian Drader  
Executive Director

Discussion ensued wherein membership indicated how pleased they are to have Daniel in the position, not least because of concern Brian would burn out! MAP was also commended for getting benefits for the employees as that's really hard to find in arts positions, and it's great that arts administrators are being remembered.

Daniel Thau-Eleff added that after 40 years of the MAP Executive Director handwriting cheques for thousand of artists, this morning's workshop was special in that all the cheques were printed on Quickbooks – so much more professional, and such a better use of time. He also noted that MAP is getting ready for Membership renewal. Daniel concluded by saying he's been here a few years now and is so appreciative of Brian, the Board and the MAP Members, it's been a great experience and he thanks everyone for the opportunity.

As there was no further discussion or questions, Brian thanked everyone again and Ann thanked Brian for his report.

## 7. Board Elections:

Ann Hodges reviewed the following slate for election and re-election to the Board of MAP, to be presented in one motion:

Joining the board for a two-year term:

- Michelle Boulet
- Charlene Van Buekenhout

Standing for re-election for a final two-year term:

- Cherry Karpyshin
- Ian Ross
- Melinda Tallin

Brian explained that Board members can sit for up to six years, with a maximum of 3 two-year terms; Board terms are overlapped to allow for continuity and Executive succession.

**MOTION:** (Kevin Longfield/Armin Wiebe) To accept the full MAP slate as presented.

**CARRIED**

Ann welcomed Michelle and Charlene to the Board.

## 8. Adjournment:

Chair Ann Hodges thanked everyone for attending and entertained a motion to Adjourn.

Adjourned: 7:47 pm (Scott Douglas).