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Deficit builds for orchestra, down for stage WSO may be \$3.3-M in red, while MTC, RWB, Manitoba opera even

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Orchestras hit sour notes in the revenue symphony as the new millennium took centre stage, *Statistics* *Canada* figures show.

"The overall financial deficit of Canadian orchestras jumped from nearly \$3.0 million in 1999 to \$4.3 million in 2001, and their accumulated debt hit \$18 million," the agency reported yesterday. "It was the bleakest financial picture of all performing arts organizations."

The national picture was played out in Manitoba as the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra endured a dismal year in attendance and on the bottom line.

Season ticket sales dropped to 8,600 last year from 9,400 the previous season. The WSO is expected to declare a loss of almost \$1.5 million on last season's operations, bringing its accumulated deficit to \$3.3 million.

However, in spite of singing the financial blues, large Canadian orchestras attracted more than 2.7 million people in 2001, up 36.2 per cent from 1999. And their revenues rose 7.1 per cent to \$45.2 million.

"The situation was somewhat more difficult for small- and medium-sized organizations, both of which incurred substantial declines in attendance and earned revenues."

Other arts companies were dancing to the bank -- a picture which again was reflected in Manitoba.

"Theatre, music, dance and opera entered the new millennium with a healthy financial surplus, thanks to record revenues of \$543.7 million."

"Overall, the four performing arts groups recorded a surplus of \$3.6 million in 2001, a reversal from a deficit of more than \$4.9 million in 1999. Theatre companies were the major contributors to the turnaround, with a surplus of almost \$8.2 million."

Revenues at \$543.7 million were up 14.7 per cent from 1999, while total operating expenses reached \$540.1 million, up 12.7 per cent.

Winnipeg's other major arts groups, such as Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Manitoba Opera, conformed to the national average, recording balanced budgets in 2002.

Many smaller groups, including Prairie Theatre Exchange, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, Winnipeg Film Group and Cercle Moliere, moved from deficit to surplus positions.

Some of the results locally were motivated by the groups' desire to qualify for extra funding from Arts Stabilization Manitoba, a \$6-million fund established to reward fiscal prudence in the arts. To date, no money has been dispersed.

Nationally, attendance rose by seven per cent to an estimated 14.2 million, but that was still below the peak of 15 million in 1993.

"Attendance declined for theatre, dance and opera companies, but rose 15 per cent for music organizations," *Statistics* *Canada* reported.

The agency also found that:

z Ticket sales, subscriptions and other promotions accounted for 49 per cent of total revenues for performing arts companies in 2001. Government grants accounted for 30 per cent, private donations for 21 per cent.

z Private-sector donations were about \$114.2 million in 2001, up 17.6 per cent from 1999. Government grants increased 16.2 per cent to \$165.5 million.

z Private funding for opera soared 34.9 per cent to almost \$16.1 million between 1999 and 2001, surpassing government funding at \$13.3 million. Corporate donations for large theatres doubled to \$6.5 million during the same period.

z Government grants to music amounted to just under \$51 million in 2001, up from a low of \$39.2 million in 1997.

-- Canadian Press