

News Release

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Minnesota Opera announces its 2014–2015 season

The Manchurian Candidate, by the creators of the
Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night*, makes its world premiere

Season concludes with a new production of Bizet's sizzling *Carmen*

Other highlights include a company premiere of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*
and the first Minnesota opera productions of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*
and Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* in three decades

Minneapolis—Minnesota Opera announces its 2014–2015 season, which presents a world premiere, a company premiere, two masterpieces not seen at Minnesota Opera in nearly three decades and a new production of an operatic blockbuster. All five productions are new to Minnesota audiences.

The season opens on September 20, 2014, with the company premiere of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*. Soprano **CLAIRE RUTTER** stars as Minnie opposite tenor **RAFAEL DAVILA** as Dick Johnson, both of whom make their Minnesota Opera debuts. Bass-baritone **GREER GRIMSLEY** rounds out the love triangle as Jack Rance. In November, a new production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* directed by **DOUG VARONE** features mezzo-soprano **STEPHANIE LAURICELLA** and soprano **ANGELA MORTELLARO** in the title roles. In January, the season continues with one of the most enduring Italian comic operas, Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. Fast-rising soprano **NICOLE CABELL** makes her Minnesota Opera debut as Adina with handsome young tenor **LEONARDO CAPALBO** as her love-struck suitor, Nemorino. March brings the world premiere of *The Manchurian Candidate*, the third commission of the **NEW WORKS INITIATIVE** and the highly anticipated second opera from *Silent Night*'s Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **KEVIN PUTS** and librettist **MARK CAMPBELL**. The political thriller, based on a 1959 novel by Richard Condon, stars internationally acclaimed baritone **MATTHEW WORTH** as Sergeant Raymond Shaw with **BRENDA HARRIS** as his mother Eleanor Iselin, bass **DANIEL SUMEGI** as Senator Johnny Iselin and tenor **LEONARDO CAPALBO** as Ben Marco. The season concludes with a new look at Bizet's legendary *Carmen*, with mezzo-soprano **NORA SOUROUZIAN** making her company debut in the title role.

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“I am thrilled to announce Minnesota Opera’s new season,” said **PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR KEVIN RAMACH**. “These five operas will engage audiences both young and old, from the first-time opera goer to the experienced patron. We are pleased that our audience will be seeing productions that include a world premiere commission, as well as one of the great works by Puccini not previously produced by Minnesota Opera. None of this would be possible without the support of our patrons and donors. That support allows us to create world-class performances here in Minnesota featuring many Minnesota-based artists. I hope you will join us at this exciting time in our company’s history.”

“Unveiling a new season is always exciting, full of potential and an opportunity for new discoveries,” said **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON**. “From the lovely favorites from seasons long past to a Puccini classic new to our repertoire and a thrilling world premiere, the season is a potent blend of dramatic and comic. We indeed have something for everyone. This will definitely be a season to remember!”

La fanciulla del West by Giacomo Puccini

September 20, 25, 27 and 28, 2014

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera production.

From the Italian master who wrote *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot* comes a romantic portrait of America’s iconic Golden West. Puccini’s gorgeous melodies and blazing orchestral colors are set against a backdrop of a gold-mining frontier town, where a poker-playing, pistol-wielding saloon owner finds herself in a love triangle with a handsome outlaw and the sheriff who is in hot pursuit of him. Considered by Puccini as one of his greatest works, *La fanciulla del West* had its successful and highly publicized premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 1910.

Soprano **CLAIRE RUTTER**, who was hailed as “blest with a powerful stage presence and a top-end coloratura like warm steel” by *Classical Source*, makes her Minnesota Opera debut as the high-spirited Minnie, and tenor **RAFAEL DAVILA** also debuts as the bandit Dick Johnson. Completing the love triangle, bass-baritone **GREER GRIMSLEY** returns after a critically acclaimed *Macbeth* in January 2014 as the mining camp’s shady sheriff Jack Rance. Great River Shakespeare Festival artistic director and acclaimed fight choreographer (*Silent Night*, 2011), Minnesota-based **DOUG SCHOLZ-CARLSON** makes his mainstage directorial debut with this Minnesota Opera production. **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** (*Manon Lescaut*, *Arabella*, *Macbeth*) returns for his third season as Minnesota Opera Music Director to conduct the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

Hansel and Gretel by Engelbert Humperdinck

November 1, 2, 6 and 8, 2014

Sung in German with English translations projected above the stage.

A new Minnesota Opera production.

Based on the Brothers Grimm classic, this beloved fairy tale whips together frothy folk tunes with sumptuous orchestration into a deceptively sweet, deliciously dark confection that has delighted families for generations. Minnesota Opera’s new production of Engelbert Humperdinck’s enduring masterpiece arrives just in time for the holiday season. A perfect opera for adults and children alike, *Hansel and Gretel*’s music is familiar, the fairy tale on which it is based is universal, and the musical story Humperdinck weaves is open to interpretation by every generation.

Former Minnesota Opera Resident Artist soprano **ANGELA MORTELLARO** (*Werther*, 2012), who *South Florida Classical Review* called “... an exceptionally convincing Gretel ... singing with a rich, youthful soprano voice and strongly

conveying Gretel's terror at being lost in the woods" sings opposite mezzo-soprano **STEPHANIE LAURICELLA** (debut) as her brother Hansel. Internationally recognized Verdian mezzo-soprano **MARIANNE CORNETTI** (*Aida*, 1999) stars as the evil Gingerbread Witch. Bass-baritone **CRAIG IRVIN** (*Arabella*, 2013) sings the role of Hansel and Gretel's poor broom-maker father. Stage director and choreographer **DOUG VARONE** (*Faust*, 2009) returns to lead this new Minnesota Opera production, and **ANNE MANSON** (*Mary Stuart*, 2011) conducts the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

The Elixir of Love by Gaetano Donizetti

January 24, 25, 29 and 31, 2015

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera production.

In one of the most endearing Italian comic operas, a love-struck country bumpkin sets out to win a feisty landowner's heart, aided by a "magic" potion and a doctor of dubious credentials. Donizetti's light-hearted comedy bubbles with effervescent arias and charm as the elixir causes as many problems as it solves. Containing the popular tenor aria "Una furtiva lagrima," added after the opera's successful premiere in 1832, *The Elixir of Love* has become one of Donizetti's most-performed works.

Soprano **NICOLE CABELL**, Decca recording artist and 2005 winner of the BBC Singer of the World Competition in Cardiff, makes her Minnesota Opera debut as the wealthy beauty Adina. **LEONARDO CAPALBO** (debut), whose tenor was called "... lithe, sunny and effortlessly lyrical" by *The Times*, sings the role of her bumbling suitor Nemorino. Baritone **ANDREW WILKOWSKE** (*Manon Lescaut*, 2013) will delight audiences as the traveling quack Dr. Dulcamara. **HELENA BINDER** (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*, 2007) directs this Minnesota Opera production with **LEONARDO VORDONI** (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2012; Opera under the Stars *La bohème*, 2013) conducting the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

The Manchurian Candidate (a World Premiere)

Music by Kevin Puts

Libretto by Mark Campbell

Based on the novel by Richard Condon

March 7, 8, 12 and 14, 2015

Sung in English with English captions projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative production.

Politics and paranoia collide in this heart-pounding new opera. An American soldier, decorated during the Korean War, is brainwashed into becoming an unwitting assassin in a conspiracy to overthrow the United States government. Can a fellow POW crack the code in time to stop him? This taut and suspenseful thriller is the highly anticipated second opera by the creators of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night*.

"That the term 'Manchurian candidate' has been bandied about as recently as on the most recent Presidential campaign trail proves there's an enduring fascination with conspiracy theories of massive proportions," said **ARTIST DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON**. "Strong characters and tantalizing drama make for the best operas, and this story has those in spades. The combination of those elements with this existing cultural fixation and a Pulitzer-winning team is already resulting in an incredibly exciting creative process and, given our recent first glimpse, it's going to be a real thriller."

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The opera is based on a 1959 novel by Richard Condon, which inspired two film adaptations. In the story, Major Ben Marco, Sergeant Raymond Shaw and the rest of their infantry platoon are kidnapped during the Korean War and brainwashed to believe that Shaw saved their lives in combat – for which Congress awards him the Medal of Honor. Years after the war, Marco begins having a recurring nightmare about Shaw murdering two of their men while under observation by Chinese and Soviet officials. When Marco learns that another soldier from the platoon also has been suffering the same nightmare, he determines to solve the mystery. They discover that the Communists have been using Shaw as a sleeper agent, a guiltless assassin subconsciously activated while playing solitaire to obey orders. Shaw's KGB handler is his mother Eleanor, a ruthless power broker working with the Communists to quietly overthrow the U.S. government and establish her husband, the McCarthy-esque Senator Johnny Iselin, as a puppet dictator.

Tenor **LEONARDO CAPALBO** will appear as Major Ben Marco, baritone **MATTHEW WORTH** (*Così fan tutte*, 2011; *Doubt*, 2013) will create the role of Sergeant Raymond Shaw, soprano **BRENDA HARRIS** (*Macbeth* and *The Dream of Valentino*, 2014) will sing the role of Eleanor Iselin opposite bass **DANIEL SUMEGI** (*The Flying Dutchman*, 2003) as Senator Johnny Iselin. **KEVIN NEWBURY** (*Doubt*) directs and Music Director **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** conducts this Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative production.

The Manchurian Candidate is part of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE**, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire with an infusion of contemporary works. Since it was launched in March 2008, the New Works Initiative has produced the American premiere of Jonathan Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*; revivals of Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* and Dominick Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming* and *The Dream of Valentino* (opening March 1, 2014); and the world premieres of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *Silent Night*, winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and Douglas J. Cuomo's *Doubt*, with a libretto by John Patrick Shanley. *The Shining*, with music by Paul Moravec and a libretto by Mark Campbell, based on Stephen King's 1977 best-selling novel, will premiere in 2016.

***Carmen* by Georges Bizet**

April 25 and 30; May 2 and 3, 2015

Sung in French with English translations projected above the stage.

A new Minnesota Opera production.

The smoldering femme fatale, *Carmen*, is one of the most captivating heroines in all of opera. Obsession turns deadly when her gypsy seductions ensnare both a love-sick soldier and a swaggering toreador. With its passionate, sultry orchestration and a veritable hit parade of recognizable tunes, Bizet's tour de force sizzles in a new staging.

Mezzo-soprano **NORA SOUROUZIAN**, called "... magnificent in the title role, displaying a very physical interpretation and a rich timbre, brazenly youthful" (*Le Temps*), makes her Minnesota Opera debut as the fiery gypsy, *Carmen*. **MICHAEL CAVANAGH** (*Manon Lescaut*, 2013) directs this new Minnesota Opera production and **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** conducts the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

Music Director Michael Christie's contract extended to 2017-2018 season

Minnesota Opera is pleased to announce the extension of Music Director Michael Christie's contract through the 2017-2018 season. Maestro Christie is charged with enhancing the company's artistic product through his work with the Minnesota Opera Orchestra, as well as leading the majority of Minnesota Opera's productions. He begins his third season with the company in 2014-2015 conducting *La fanciulla del West*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Carmen*.

“We are excited to announce Maestro Christie’s contract extension,” said **PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR KEVIN RAMACH**. “He has been a wonderful addition to the artistic team at Minnesota Opera. His work with the orchestra and our artists has been impeccable, and he is a remarkable colleague who challenges us all to achieve our highest potential.”

“I’m thrilled to continue my deepening relationship with Minnesota Opera well into this decade,” said **MUSIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL CHRISTIE**. “Our dynamic company is poised to continue to thrill patrons and our industry with new works and stunning productions of the know repertory.”

The 2014–2015 Minnesota Opera Resident Artists

Minnesota Opera announces the 2014–2015 roster of Resident Artists. Soprano **REBECCA KRYNSKI**, soprano **SHANNON PRICKETT** and bass **CHRISTIAN ZAREMBA** return, as well as assistant conductor **AARON BREID** and coach/accompanist **GEOFFREY LOFF**. New in the 2014–2015 season are mezzo-soprano **LACEY JO BENTER**, tenor **COOPER NOLAN**, baritone **ANDREW LOVATO**, bass-baritone **GERARD MICHAEL D’EMILIO**, assistant director **ALISON MORITZ**, coach/accompanist **JONATHAN BRANDANI** and artistic administrator **NICKOLAS SANCHES**.

Minnesota Opera’s Resident Artist Program offers a full season of employment for talented artists beginning their professional careers. From late August through the end of the season, Resident Artists gain valuable experience in assignments ranging from ensemble, understudy and comprimario to leading roles in mainstage performances.

Mainstage Season Information

All productions will be staged at Ordway, 345 Washington Street, St. Paul. Sunday matinee performances begin at 2pm. All other performances begin at 7:30pm, with the exception of Opening Night on September 20, 2014 (Opera Gala 2014), and January 31, 2015 (Winter Carnival Torchlight Parade), which begin at 8pm.

Season tickets are now on sale and may be ordered by calling 612-333-6669 or online at mnopera.org. Full-season subscription packages range in price from \$110–\$815, with three- and four-opera packages starting as low as \$75. Single tickets ranging from \$25–\$200 per ticket will be on sale to the general public for all shows in July 2014.

For ticketing services, education programming and other company information, please visit mnopera.org. Season-related background notes, synopses, casting updates, artist biographies and videos will be posted as available.

Minnesota Opera combines a culture of creativity and fiscal responsibility to produce opera and opera education programs that expand the art form, nurture artists, enrich audiences and contribute to the vitality of the community.

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