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Minnesota Opera 2018-2019 Season Features Two 21st Century Works

Lineup includes a world premiere, the homecoming of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Minnesota Opera commission *Silent Night* and three operas new to Minnesota Opera audiences.

MINNEAPOLIS (February 20, 2018) – Minnesota Opera today announced its 2018-2019 season, building upon the company’s reputation as a champion of new work with the presentation of two Minnesota Opera commissions while also continuing to reinvent the classics in innovative ways.

The season features five productions at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. Puccini’s *La Rondine*, a rarely performed romantic and nostalgic treasure, opens the season in October. In November, homecoming performances of the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Silent Night* honor the centennial of World War I’s conclusion. In January of 2019, the uproarious comedy *The Italian Straw Hat* comes to the stage bringing plenty of laughs and bright, breezy music. The season continues in March with the world premiere of *The Fix*, an opera based on the notorious Black Sox scandal of 1919. And finally, Verdi’s beloved *La Traviata* returns to the stage in May, boasting sumptuous, hummable melodies.

“We are excited to announce Minnesota Opera’s 2018-19 season,” said Minnesota Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor. “Opera has the unique power to celebrate our common humanity and to create a powerful bond between artists, audience and community. This season exemplifies Minnesota Opera’s continued commitment to excellence and storytelling that resonates with our audiences. By bringing innovative creative teams, a mix of classics and contemporary compositions, and some of the world’s most exciting singers to Minnesota, we are expanding what opera can be to our community. We invite everyone to join us for what promises to be a bold and moving season.”

The 18-19 season marks the return of several artists familiar to Minnesota Opera audiences, in addition to noteworthy debuts. Irish soprano Celine Byrne makes her debut as Magda in *La Rondine*, alongside tenor Leonard Capalbo (*The Elixir of Love*, 2015). *Silent Night* brings the return of the Karin Wolverton, who created the leading soprano role of Anna Sørensen, and baritone Edward Parks (*La Bohème*, 2016). Lyric tenor Miles Mykkanen joins them as Nikolaus Sprink, the beloved German opera singer. Alek Shrader (*Diana’s Garden*, 2016) stars in the hilarious story of *The Italian Straw Hat*. Joshua Dennis (*Rigoletto*, 2017) leads the cast as legendary White Sox player “Shoeless” Joe Jackson in *The Fix*. *La Traviata* marks the return of Minnesota Opera favorite and 2005 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World winner Nicole Cabell (*La Bohème*, 2016) and Mexican tenor Jesús León, in his company debut, as the ill-fated lovers of Verdi’s classic tragedy.

MINNESOTA OPERA PREMIERE
La Rondine by Giacomo Puccini
 Oct. 6, 9, 11, 13 and 14, 2018

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Which Life Would You Choose? From the composer of *Madama Butterfly* and *La Bohème*, this rarely performed gem tells the story of an unlikely relationship between Magda, a high-society woman and a naïve, handsome poet. But the fate of their courtship is uncertain as Magda is torn between the life she wants and the life she knows. Puccini's achingly beautiful score charmingly conveys the romantic bliss and irrational desires of unexpected lovers. Wistful and nostalgic, *La Rondine* revels in the gaiety of Paris, the stinging sorrow of regret and the sensual richness of love.

Conductor Sergio Alapont*
Stage Director Octavio Cardenas+
Magda Celine Byrne*
Ruggero Leonardo Capalbo
Lisette Lisa Marie Rogali*
Prunier Christian Sanders*
Rambaldo Andrew Wilkowske+

Silent Night by composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark Campbell

Nov. 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18, 2018

Sung in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin with English translations projected above the stage.

All Is Calm, All Is Bright. Minnesota Opera's Pulitzer Prize-winning, international sensation makes its homecoming, honoring the centennial of World War I's conclusion. Recounting a miraculous moment of peace during one of the bloodiest wars in human history, Scottish, French, and German officers defy their superiors and negotiate a Christmas Eve truce. *Silent Night* masterfully weaves together songs from home and serene lyricism, standing as a heartfelt hymn to our common humanity, underscoring yearning, despair and ultimately, hope.

Stage Director Eric Simonson
Anna Sørensen Karin Wolverton+
Nikolaus Sprink Miles Mykkanen*
Lt. Audebert Edward Parks
Lt. Gordon Christian Thurston*
Father Palmer Troy Cook
Ponchel Andrew Wilkowske+

MINNESOTA OPERA PREMIERE

The Italian Straw Hat by Nino Rota

Jan. 26, 29, 31, 2 and 3, 2019

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Brimming with Laughs. This uproarious comedy, by the composer best known for *The Godfather* film scores, comes to Minnesota Opera for the first time ever. Groom-to-be Fadinard gallops around Paris on his wedding day in search of a straw hat to replace the one his horse has inadvertently eaten. The bright and breezy score perfectly captures the increasingly ridiculous situation that rides on the edge of chaos. After seeing this 1950s madcap romp, you'll never look at a hat—or a night at the opera—the same way again!

Conductor Jonathan Brandani+
Stage Director Andrea Cigni
Fadinard Alek Shrader

Elena Lisa Marie Rogali
La Baronessa di Champigny Victoria Vargas⁺

A WORLD PREMIERE NEW WORKS INITIATIVE PRODUCTION

The Fix by composer Joel Puckett and librettist Eric Simonson

Mar. 16, 19, 21, 23 and 24, 2019

Sung in English with English captions projected above the stage.

Shoeless Joe and the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. One of the most notorious scandals in American history comes to life in this new, major league opera. The 1919 Chicago White Sox were arguably the best team in the game, but they were also the most poorly paid, always at odds with their penny-pinching owner. Resentment, revenge and ambition gone awry motivate eight players to conspire with gamblers and fix the World Series. With a lyrical, poetic score and legendary figures such as Shoeless Joe Jackson, Ring Lardner and Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, *The Fix* is a tale of epic proportions about betting against the establishment, all set against the backdrop of America's favorite pastime.

Conductor Timothy Myers*
Stage Director Eric Simonson
"Shoeless" Joe Jackson Joshua Dennis
Arnold "Chick" Gandill Wei Wu*

La Traviata by Giuseppe Verdi

May 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18 and 19, 2019

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

To Live and Die for Love. Verdi's sumptuous melodies and timeless depiction of tragic love have made *La Traviata* an undeniable favorite for generations. Violetta, a glamorous courtesan, gives up everything for her devoted lover Alfredo—only to have their idyllic love affair shattered when the stern demands of Alfredo's father spell disaster for the enraptured couple. From the frenzy of Violetta's pleasure-filled life, to her heart-wrenching decision to leave her beloved—Verdi's treasured opera is a captivating tribute to what it means to live and die for love.

Conductor Christopher Franklin
Violetta Nicole Cabell
Alfredo Jesús León*
Germont. Joo Won Kang*

* Minnesota Opera Debut

⁺ Minnesota Opera Resident Artist Alum

^{*} Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

TICKETS

Season ticket packages (\$60-\$821) for the 2018-2019 season are available now online at mnopera.org, or by calling or visiting the Minnesota Opera Patron Services at 612-333-6669 or 620 North First Street in Minneapolis (open Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.). Individual tickets go on sale August 2018.

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Minnesota Opera changes lives by bringing together artists, audiences, and community,
advancing the art of opera for today and for future generations.