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SPIRITUAL CONVICTION MEETS EARTHLY DESIRE IN MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW PRODUCTION OF *THAÏS*

Kelly Kaduce returns to Minnesota Opera to star as the glamorous courtesan.

MINNEAPOLIS (April 12, 2018) – Minnesota Opera concludes its mainstage season with a new production and company premiere of Massenet's *Thaïs*—famous for the oft-performed symphonic intermezzo “Méditation”—May 12, 15, 17, 19 and 20 at the Ordway Music Theater.

A devout monk (Lucas Meachem) seeks to convert Thaïs, a ravishingly beautiful courtesan, but realizes too late that his pious obsession is rooted in lust, not religion. Minnesota Opera produces Massenet's sensual and melodic creation for the first time with Minnesota-born soprano Kelly Kaduce (*Rusalka*, *Tosca*, *The Shining*) in the glamorous title role. Set in the deserts and oases of fourth-century Egypt, this searing drama explores the conflict between the passion of the flesh and the salvation of the soul.

Painted backdrops, extravagant costumes and stunning sets will create a vibrant milieu for this powerful production, bringing a lavish aesthetic to this operatic jewel. The new production marks the return of celebrated Italian Stage Director Andrea Cigni and award-winning Set and Costume Designer Lorenzo Cutùli, who made their American debuts with Minnesota Opera's new production of *Tosca* in 2016. Both consistently receiving glowing praise and recognition for their outstanding work worldwide, Mr. Cutùli was awarded the prestigious International Academy of Lyric Opera Award as best set designer in 2014.

“*Thaïs* is an opera that is brimming with inspiration and originality,” said Artistic Director Dale Johnson. “The sheer mastery of voice and orchestral forces required to produce the work make it worthy of our attention. A company can program it only when it has a singer in mind to perform this staggering role. In Kelly Kaduce, we have such a person. She is the most dazzling of performers.”

Most recently seen in *Rusalka*, *Tosca* and *The Shining* during Minnesota Opera's 2015-2016 season, audience favorite Kelly Kaduce sings the notoriously difficult role of *Thaïs*. For her Boston Lyric Opera debut of the character, *Opera News* observed, “Kaduce sings with bell-like purity and silvery sweetness, and she suspends her legato with an effortless, sensual spin. A born actress, Kaduce is also a masterful illuminator of text.” A Minnesota native, St. Olaf College graduate and winner of the 1999 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Kaduce has sung with Boston Lyric Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She created the role of Rosasharn in the world premiere of *The Grapes of Wrath* for Minnesota Opera in 2007.

Kaduce stars opposite Grammy Award-winner Lucas Meachem, an internationally sought-after baritone whose compelling lyric voice and dramatic interpretations have led him to the world's

most important operatic stages. A resident of Minnesota, Meachem has been hailed by critics as “vocally faultless and a natural actor” (*Classical Chicago Review*) with “a clear baritone whose fragments can pierce the soul” (*Forum Opera*) and “a rock star of opera” (*Opera Pulse*).

- What: Jules Massenet’s *Thaïs*
Sung in French with English translations projected above the stage.
- Where: Ordway Music Theater, 345 Washington St., Saint Paul, MN 55102
- When: Saturday, May 12, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 17, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 19, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 20, 2018 at 2 p.m.
- Tickets: \$25-\$200. Call Minnesota Opera Patron Services at 612-333-6669, Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., or purchase online at mnoopera.org/thais.

The Creative Team

Conductor	Christopher Franklin
Stage Director	Andrea Cigni
Choreographer	Heidi Spesard-Noble
Scenic Design	Lorenzo Cutùli
Costume Design	Lorenzo Cutùli
Lighting Design	Marcus Dilliard

The Cast

Thaïs	Kelly Kaduce
Athanael	Lucas Meachem
Nicias	Gerard Schneider
Palemon	Wm. Clay Thompson*
Albine	Nadia Fayad*
Crobyle	Michelle Liebl
Myrtale	Nadia Fayad*
La Charmeuse	Jeni Houser**
Servant	Christian Thurston*

*Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

**Minnesota Opera Resident Artist Alum

To learn more about *Thaïs*, please visit mnoopera.org/thais. There you will find a full synopsis, artist biographies, audio clips, full director’s notes, ticketing services and other company information.

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