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MINNESOTA OPERA NAMES LEE BYNUM VICE PRESIDENT OF IMPACT

Bynum's appointment in this newly created role brings MN Opera's work in closer alignment with the organization's mission and vision through a renewed focus on fostering greater equity and social justice in the institution and opera field.

MINNEAPOLIS (August 31, 2020) – Minnesota Opera is pleased to announce the appointment of Lee Bynum in the Company's newly created role of Vice President of Impact, effective October 5, 2020.

As the Vice President of Impact, Bynum will lead a team that listens and learns from the community to make meaningful, authentic, mutually beneficial and lasting relationships through the power of opera. He'll oversee MN Opera's learning and training programs, community engagement footprint and equity, diversity and inclusion efforts. A member of the seven-person senior leadership team, Bynum will promote internal alignment throughout the interconnected departments of the institution. In addition, Bynum will work with a newly created Impact Committee of the Board of Directors ensuring that the opera's work aligns with community need.

Bynum is currently the Senior Program Associate and Associate Director of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and has been with the organization since 2011. At the Foundation, Bynum administers diversity, equity and inclusion grants to colleges and universities, and has supported the creation of K-12 music education programs, as well as arts majors at Spelman and Morehouse Colleges and Johnson C. Smith and Tuskegee Universities. Before joining the Foundation, Bynum served as the Assistant Director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race at Columbia University, where he was responsible for the administration of the Latinx, Asian American, Native American and comparative ethnic studies programs. He also spent a year as a Visiting Scholar at Caritas Francis Hsu College in Hong Kong.

In addition, Bynum has been active with a number of nonprofits, having served on the boards of The Dream Unfinished Orchestra, TakeRoot Justice, Black Feminist Project and as the Founding Artistic Director of the Harmony Theatre Company in New York City. During his tenure with The Dream Unfinished, the orchestra has commissioned works from Jessie Montgomery, Courtney Bryan and Evan Williams. As a dramaturg, he has collaborated on the development of new works with American Opera Projects, the John Duffy Institute for New Opera and Columbia University. His historical research on race and ethnicity in classical music, concert dance and theatre has been published by the university presses of Oxford, Harvard, Columbia, New York University, University College Cork and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He's been invited to speak by the League of American Orchestras, Institute for Museum and Library Services, European Research Institute and University of Cape Town. Bynum received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Columbia University.



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“I am humbled by the opportunity to join the Minnesota Opera family at this critical juncture for our nation,” says Bynum. “Mr. Floyd’s murder has underscored the urgent need to interrogate the ways in which so many communities have been excluded from the American Dream, and cultural anchors like Minnesota Opera play a vital role in ameliorating that reality. I look forward to expanding the many ways the Company already has been a conduit for progressive change in the Twin Cities and the field of classical music.”

“Lee Bynum has been for the last eight years an important contributor to Mellon Foundation grant strategy and decision-making regarding diversity, inclusion and equity,” says Dr. Armando Bengochea, Senior Program Officer of Higher Learning at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. “He will be a thoughtful collaborator and leader for Minnesota Opera and a rallying voice in community relations.”

“At this pivotal moment, we couldn’t be more excited to welcome Lee Bynum in this crucial role within the Company,” says Minnesota Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor. “Our organizational journey to create this new role started in earnest more than three years ago, when Minnesota Opera embarked on a journey to explore how we can better foster equity, diversity and inclusion in our organization through the creation of a Diversity Charter. This year, we took another step and unveiled an updated charter, specially naming our organizational focus on anti-oppression and anti-racism. That shift, along with the deep inequities exposed through the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing systemic racial injustices at play within in the opera industry, made clear that the time is now to make this addition to our leadership team. After an exhaustive search and interview process attracting a remarkable group of candidates, we couldn’t be more thrilled to add Lee to our organization as our new Vice President of Impact. Today marks the beginning of a new chapter for Minnesota Opera that will create new and exciting paths forward for us. The addition of this new position brings our work in closer alignment with our mission and vision, allowing us to continue to serve our community with pride, passion and integrity and to foster greater equity and social justice in our institution and field.”

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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.