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MINNESOTA OPERA ANNOUNCES ITS 2021 SPRING SEASON

Free digital programs extend access to innovative opera to audiences in Minnesota and beyond.

MINNEAPOLIS (December 17, 2020) – Following the success of the 2020 Fall Season, Minnesota Opera is pleased to announce the 2021 Spring Season, consisting of four artistic offerings from February through May 2021. They include MNIatures, a presentation of four short, world premiere operas by Minnesota artists; the 2021 MN Opera Virtual Benefit featuring the world premiere of *Art is a Verb*; Apart Together, an artist showcase that empowers the creative capacity and artistic freedom of Minnesota Opera artists; and a presentation of Benjamin Britten's springtime comic masterpiece *Albert Herring*. All digital offerings a part of the 2021 Spring Season will be available for free.

Additionally, the Opera is actively exploring options for live, outdoor presentations of *Albert Herring* in May, staying abreast of the shifting landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The originally scheduled 2020–2021 Season, spanning September 26, 2020 through May 23, 2021 was scheduled to include 28 performances of five operas, including Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist Tazewell Thompson's *Blue*, Rossini's *Cinderella* and composer Paul Moravec and librettist Mark Campbell's *The Shining*. The 2021 Spring Season announced today, which relies on free digital distribution and new presentations, continues to prioritize the safety of audiences and artists while championing access to innovative, world-class opera for all.

"As we lean into the external complications of life during a pandemic, we are deliberately taking this opportunity to think about the stories we sing, and how we contribute to create a healthier environment for our artists and audiences alike," said President and General Director Ryan Taylor. "We know that shared musical experiences build empathy and stronger communities, and with these offerings we will not only listen to creators but hear their messages of what it means to be human. We hope you will join us to explore life in this collection of new and familiar, bold and quiet, uncomfortable and uplifting performances."

All 2021 Spring Season digital events will be available at no charge to the public. For more information, the Patron Services team is available to assist patrons by phone at 612-333-6669, Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or patrons can visit mnopera.org. Donations in support of Minnesota Opera and the 2021 Spring Season may be made at mnopera.org/donate.

2021 Spring Season

MNIatures

Short World Premiere Operas from Minnesota Artists



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Streaming: February 5-19, 2021

Tiny operas, big ideas. This program features newly commissioned 8-10-minute operas from Minnesota artists with a variety of creative backgrounds. The MN Opera new works team will collaborate with four pairs of artists selected through a competitive application process to support the musical, visual and dramatic development of their work.

Creative Teams

Kashimana Ahua and Khary Jackson

Ritika Ganguly and Roshan Ganu

Asako Hirabayashi and Rebecca Nicholson

Charlie McCarron and Oanh Vu

Creative team biographical information below.

2021 MN Opera Virtual Benefit

Featuring the World Premiere of *Art is a Verb*

Digital Premiere: February 27, 2021 at 7 p.m.

Honor the past, celebrate the present, envision the future. You're invited to the 2021 MN Opera Virtual Benefit. The main program features the world premiere of a newly commissioned operatic piece as well as performances by members of the MN Opera Resident Artist Program. Proceeds from this one-of-a-kind event support MN Opera artists and artmaking.

"Art is a verb ... if you want to change the world, you've gotta art."

– Harrison David Rivers, *Art is a Verb* libretto

***Art is a Verb* Creative Team**

Composer – B.E. Boykin

Librettist – Harrison David Rivers

Director – Lily Tung Crystal

Arranger, Pianist – Joseph Li

***Art is a Verb* Cast**

Karen Slack, soprano

Andres Acosta, tenor

Sidney Outlaw, baritone

Andrew Wilkowske, baritone

Apart Together

A MN Opera Artist Showcase

Streaming: April 3-17, 2021



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Connect with your community. A year after the pandemic has changed how we come together, MN Opera brings you a digital collection of performances by members of the Minnesota Opera family. The showcase empowers the creative capacity and artistic freedom of performers as they offer original presentations created just for you.

Albert Herring

A Springtime Comic Masterpiece

Music by Benjamin Britten

Libretto by Eric Crozier

Premiering in May 2021

May Day mayhem. *Albert Herring* is a rollicking comedy about a shy, innocent boy who, frustrated with small-town conventions, breaks free from the expectations of society. Gently laced with Britten's musical wit and gifts for parody and caricature, this story about the world's reaction to an outsider is joyfully brought to life in this springtime presentation.

2021 Spring Classical MPR Broadcasts

Lakmé

Broadcast of Minnesota Opera's 2007 production

Music by Léo Delibes

Libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Philippe Gille

Tuesday, February 16 at 7 p.m.

A tale of ill-fated love. In Delibes' sumptuous opera, Lakmé, the daughter of a priest, falls hopelessly in love with the British officer Gerald, who, unwittingly breaking a sacred taboo, seals their fate. Including one of opera's loveliest and most famous duets, *Lakmé* is a romantic treasure.

The Barber of Seville

Broadcast of Minnesota Opera's 2019 production

Music by Gioachino Rossini

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini

Tuesday, March 23 at 7 p.m.

Let your hair down. Figaro, Seville's quick-witted barber, helps a young woman flee an unsuitable suitor and find true love. Naturally, nothing goes according to plan, and Figaro must think on his feet to save the day. *The Barber of Seville* features instantly recognizable music that sparkles in this razor-sharp, irresistible rom-com.

Flight

Broadcast of Minnesota Opera's 2020 production

Music by Jonathan Dove

Libretto by April De Angelis

Licensed by arrangement with C.F. Peters Corporation, New York

Tuesday, May 4 at 7 p.m.

Make your connection. Eight strangers find they have more in common than they think. Stranded overnight in an airport, they meet a refugee forced to call the terminal his home and soon realize they need each other to get to their destinations. Inspired by a true story, Jonathan Dove's *Flight* is a charming and deeply human dramedy all about what it means to make a real connection.

MNiatures Creative Teams Biographical Information

KASHIMANA AHUA & KHARY JACKSON

Kashimana is a mother, musician, composer, producer, and teaching artist with a rich soulful blues voice that soars through their original compositions. The name Kashimana means 'that's their heart' and you can hear Kashimana's heart beating in the compelling sound of her music which is a mix of pop, soul, R&B, folk and rock. Kashimana often draws inspiration from her experiences growing up in Nigeria, Kenya, traveling through Africa, Europe and finally settling in the United States. Kashimana was the 2018-19 In Common Composer in Residence in Willmar, Minnesota, a community residency geared towards teaching songwriting as a tool to encourage community sharing of stories. Kashimana was also a 2019 Cedar Commissions Artist, where her project, 'Phantom Cries' - a musical exploration of new motherhood while shedding some light on the higher maternal mortality rate of African American women. Kashimana was a Northern Spark Festival Artist in 2018 (Applause Posse) and in 2019 (*Soundscape of stories*). Kashimana is also one of the teaching artists at COMPAS.

Khary Jackson is a writer, dancer and musician. He has written several plays, one of which (*Water*) was produced in 2009 at Ink and Pulp Theatre in Chicago. As a hip hop/street dancer he was fortunate to create and perform a piece at the 2018 Choreographers' Evening at the Walker Art Center. He has been a recipient of several generous grants, including the 2019 Jerome Artist Fellowship, the 2016 McKnight Artist Fellowship in Writing, the Minnesota State Arts Board's 2012 Cultural Community Partnership Grant and 2010 Artist Initiative Grant for Poetry, the Many Voices Fellowship from The Playwrights' Center in 2005 and 2007 as well as the 2009 VERVE Spoken Word Grant from Intermedia Arts. He is an alumnus of Cave Canem, the esteemed writing fellowship for black writers. His first poetry book, *Any Psalm You Want*, was published with Write Bloody Publishing in the spring of 2013.

ASAKO HIRABAYASHI & REBECCA NICHLOSON

A harpsichordist and composer, **Asako Hirabayashi's** first recording on Albany Label, whose program is entirely composed and played by herself, was selected as one of the top 10 albums of the year 2018 and won the Gold Medal Award by the Global Music Awards. It was also selected as one of the five best classical CDs of the year in 2010 by the *Star Tribune*. It received seven favorable reviews internationally. She won numerous grants and awards including the 2009 McKnight Fellowship for Performing Musicians and two Minnesota State Arts Board's Artist Initiative grants as a soloist. She has appeared as a featured guest soloist in international festivals and concert series worldwide since her New York debut recital at Carnegie Hall. Her live performance of her own composition was featured in the United States' most popular classical music program *Performance Today* in 2018. As a composer, she won 2016 McKnight Fellowship for Composers, several first prizes in Alienor International Harpsichord Composition Competition (won the sixth, seventh and eighth consecutively) and NHK International Song Writing Competition in Japan. She was awarded 2012 Jerome Fund for New Music by American Composers Forum to write her first opera *Yuki-onna* (Snow Witch) and a 2019 Schubert Club Composer Award to complete her second opera *Hebi-onna* (Snake Woman). Her compositions have been performed in 14 countries. She holds a doctorate's degree in Harpsichord Performance from the Juilliard School and a master's degree in composition from Aichi Art University in Japan.

Rebecca Nichloson (She/Her): Rebecca is a singer/songwriter, composer, poet, fiction writer, playwright and theatre maker. She is the author of numerous creative works, including *Mara*, *Queen of the World* (an acapella musical), *The Wild, Bold Enlightenment of Velvet the Mistress*, *Cooking With Keisha* (or Anatomy of Pie), and *Jill, Jack & the Martian Lady*; a play she created for a children's educational workshop at Minnesota Opera. Her fiction and performance pieces include *Children of the First Hummingbird*, *Intelligence*, and *Zar-Baby*, among others. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting (Multiplatform Writing) from Columbia University and an M.A. in English Literature. She was also the recipient of a 2020 Commission from the Cedar Cultural Center for which she created *Multicolored Musings: Jewels of Love, Loss, & Triumph* (a three-part collection of songs exploring her African and African American heritage and passion for genre eclectic music) and received a 2020 honorable mention from the McKnight Foundation (Spoken Word). In addition, she is the recipient of the Liberace Award, the Howard Stein Fellowship, The Matthew's Fellowship, an America-in-Play Fellowship and a Many Voices Fellowship from the Minneapolis Playwrights Center (2008-2009). She is currently working on a collection of poetry and new music. Learn more at www.RebeccaNichloson.com.

RITIKA GANGULY & ROSHAN GANU

Ritika Ganguly, PhD., is a Minneapolis-based singer, composer, performance artist, and anthropologist, born and raised in New Delhi, India. She applies anthropological insights to practical problem-solving in the areas of equity in the arts and cross-cultural medicine. Her consulting practice and artistic practice both strive for an equality based on difference, rather than on the similarity of things, people, and knowledges. Ritika was commissioned as a composer by The Cedar Cultural Center in 2016, received the Jerome-supported Naked Stages award in 2017, and an MRAC Next Step award in 2018 for her research and new musical work in *Baul* (Bengali Sufi music/poetry). She has trained in multiple genres within Bengali music and in

contemporary Indian musical theater. Her vocal and compositional work bring disparate musical styles, literatures, and disciplines together.

Roshan Ganu is a storyteller and a visual-experimental artist who uses different mediums to tell stories about our everyday lives. She has successfully collaborated with the Minneapolis Institute of Art on a two-part storytelling series titled *Chappal Visits MIA* where a slipper from the Indian subcontinent expresses her views on the exhibits in the museum. Her storytelling work has found a mention in the *Star Tribune* and has been exhibited at ArtReach St.Croix-Stillwater, Soo Visual Arts Center, the Twin Cities Zine Fest, Women Who Influence Conference and Solid State Records among others. Ganu is also the creator and founder of *The Banyan Tree Project* which is a participatory, public art, storytelling project that uplifts the notion of community in adversity.

CHARLIE MCCARRON & OANH VU

Charlie McCarron is a film composer, songwriter, video producer, visual artist, and board game designer in Minnesota. He is the executive director of Film Score Fest and produced the podcast *Composer Quest*. Notable films Charlie has composed for are Emmy-nominated *Beneath the Ink*, STARZ documentary *Silicone Soul* and Kare 11's *Love Them First: Lessons From Lucy Laney Elementary*, the best-selling film in the history of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Film Festival. For his podcast *Composer Quest*, Charlie crowdfunded a tour throughout the US, Australia, Taiwan, and Japan, interviewing and writing music with composers there. In 2018, Charlie was selected as a finalist in the Banaue International Music Composition Competition for his orchestral piece "Balitúk: The Divided Child," traveling to the Philippines for a three-week immersion program in the mountain village of Banaue. In 2019, Charlie was a guest speaker at Catalyst Content Festival, presenting about film scoring with members of the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra performing his scores live onstage. With over 25 self-produced albums to his name, Charlie often approaches composition as a record producer does: building the journey layer by layer. His songs often involve intricately woven melodies and rhythms, with the aim of giving each instrument or electronic layer a unique role to play.

Oanh Vu is a puppeteer, filmmaker, educator and community organizer. She is a second generation Vietnamese American who grew up in rural Minnesota. She uses humor and the playfulness of puppetry to tell stories of healing for herself and her Southeast Asian community. Her stories feature characters grappling with the past and their pain. Ultimately, they are transformed by the struggle, and able to walk through the world from a place of hope and power. She was a 2020 Puppet Lab Artist and her work has been shared through Monkeybear's New Puppetworks, Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

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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.