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MINNESOTA OPERA'S MNIATURES RETURNS WITH NEWLY COMMISSIONED MINI OPERAS BY MINNESOTA ARTISTS

In its second year, MNiatures offers a new collection of brand new, short operas by artists from a variety of backgrounds.

MINNEAPOLIS (October 21, 2021) – Minnesota Opera brings back MNiatures, a program intended to make space for a variety of voices by offering local artists a platform to create and share their stories through an operatic medium. MNiatures will be available on YouTube and at mnopera.org starting Saturday, October 30, 2021.

With MNiatures, Minnesota Opera seeks to sustain the diversification of voices, genres and stories taking center stage in opera, thereby ensuring the advancement of the artform for future generations. This program, now in its second year, will pair Minnesota artists into creative teams and give them the support they need to develop and record brief, fully original pieces—with the hope that the resulting works might yet again challenge the traditional operatic mold.

“Our organization continues to concentrate on identifying and breaking down the barriers that keep members of our community from participating in opera as an artform,” said Minnesota Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor. “By commissioning local artists with a variety of artistic backgrounds and expertise to create new operatic works, we hopefully begin to fracture those barriers and create space for all members of our community to join us, whether that be on the stage or in the seats.”

This year's MNiatures features composers, playwrights, illustrators and other interdisciplinary artists interested in the operatic creative process, from those with traditional training in opera and classical music to those with expertise in other musical and artistic mediums.

Participating creators work in teams to develop mini operatic compositions that feature a narrative element written primarily for the voice. During this program, Minnesota Opera facilitates a series of virtual and in person meetings and rehearsals, as well as provides professional video and audio recordings of the final compositions. Creators have the opportunity to collaborate with Minnesota Opera artistic and production staff to support the creation of their performances, both musically and visually. Each team receives a stipend, along with additional funding and support for singers and instrumentalists for the final presentation.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

CHRISTIAN BARDIN & MO HOLMES

Christian (she/her and they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist and teacher originally from Houston, Texas who lives and works in Minneapolis. Their favorite work in any discipline tends to come at the intersection of great risk, great craft and great love. As a composer, collaborators include Eric Mayson, Peter Morrow and Toby Ramaswamy. Her first full-length album of original music, *Shorts*, explores themes of rebirth using principles of musique concrète and imaginative versus real sonic space using their primary instruments: piano and voice. Their primary instruments are piano and voice. A professional actor since 2009, she has had a long relationship with CornerHouse, a Children's Advocacy Center, assisting in forensic interview trainings to help prevent the re-traumatization of children who have seen or experienced abuse. Other performance work has crisscrossed genres with the Guthrie Theater, Minnesota Opera and Jungle Theater, among others. She co-directed the devised work *The Nature Crown* (Guthrie) and is assisting on the regional premiere of *Redwood* (Jungle). She has taught for the University of Minnesota, Augsburg University, Abiitan Mill City assisted living and is currently using the arts to amplify the voice and choice of individuals with disabilities as a teaching artist with Upstream Arts. B.F.A. acting, University of Minnesota. Christian is the composer and director for 2021 MNature *YR GOD MY GOD*.

Mo (she/her) is a black queer Southern playwright, dramaturg and all-around theater maker, currently working in the Twin Cities. She is a 2021 Everwood Farmstead Retreat Artist, the 2019-2020 Playwrights' Center Many Voices Mentee and 2019 New Works Artist-in-Residence at Minneapolis' Center for Performing Arts. In her writing she is most interested in identity, ritual, intimacy and internet culture, as reflected in her first chapbook *DEAR, DEAR* and her plays *10 HOUR OF RAIN SHORTS* (CFPA), *WE SO SHORT* (Playwrights' Center) and *STRANGER*, produced by Holmes' company Perspectives Theater for the 2017 MN Fringe. As a dramaturg, she has supported development of several new works, including Lynn Nottage's *FLOYD'S* at the Guthrie, Brittany K. Allen's *REDWOOD* at the Jungle, Brian Grandison's *DIESEL HEART* at the History Theatre. B.F.A. english, Carleton College. Mo is the librettist for 2021 MNature *YR GOD MY GOD*.

MITCHELL BERCIER

Mitchell, M. Mus., is a composer, illustrator and producer. He studied design and art history at the University of Minnesota Duluth where he was awarded a B.F.A. in graphic design (2013). He studied Music at the University of Aberdeen under the supervision of Professor Paul Meador, where he was awarded a master's in music (2018). His work has been supported by the MN State Arts Board (2012) and The Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (2014). He has presented his research in music and sonic arts at international conferences including the 6th International Conference on New Music Concepts (Treviso, Italy) and Convergence 2019 (De Montfort University, Leicester). His first exposure to algorithmic dance music was during a workshop with Tidal Cycles creator Alex Mclean and he has been producing electronic and algorithmic dance music since under the artist name GHOSTCHAMB3R. He also works with electroacoustics and Avant Cello under the artist name Not In Flight. He is a resident of Minnesota and a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe.

LEYNA MARIKA PAPACH & STEPHANIE HENRY

Leyna is a composer, director and interdisciplinary artist from Japan and the United States. Her compositions house the languages of dance, theater, sound and image. Leyna's performative work has been presented internationally in Europe, Japan and the U.S. She has written and directed four evening-length, music/dance-theater pieces alongside her work as a composer and violinist. She was recently awarded the Music Creator Award from American Composers Forum (2020). As a composer and violinist, she has worked with a wide range of artists, both as a collaborator and instrumentalist (Taylor Mac, J.G.Thirwell, Geraldine Fibbers, Dada Tapan Kanti Baidya and many others), performing in venues/festivals such as; Unlimited Festival (Austria), HAU (Berlin), International House (Japan), Dance Afrique Dance (Paris/Tunisia) All Tomorrow's Parties (US), BAM, MoMA and many others. Her research in music has been supported by residencies and grant programs such as HARP (HERE Arts Center), Arts International, Frank Huntington Beebe Fund (music+dance research in the Czech Republic and West Africa) and Japan/US Friendship Commission, amongst others, and she was a recent space grant artist at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange. Leyna holds an M.F.A. in interdisciplinary studies from Bard College, and M.A. in theater and dance studies from DAS Theater, Amsterdam. She studied dance with Germaine Acogny at L'école des Sables, Senegal, and violin at the Prague Academy of Music. She currently resides and works in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Leyna is the composer/librettist and director of *Semblance, part II: Mina at Night*. www.leynamarikapapach.com

Stephanie is a classically trained pianist and composer from Minneapolis, MN. She has performed with classical and theatrical ensembles, as well as with rock bands. She composed original works for film, musical theater, orchestras, quartets and solo piano. Her music has been applauded for its originality and charismatic charm. She studied music at St. Olaf College and received her master's from Hamline University. In 2015, Stephanie participated in the Nautilus Music Theater's Composer-Librettist Studio as a composer and performed a variety of music including her original works at the New Griots Festival. Most recently Stephanie was selected to compose a piece for White Snake Projects' Sing Out Strong: Decolonized Voices. Outside of composing and performing Stephanie has maintained a piano studio where she teaches music to people of all ages. Stephanie is the composer/librettist and director of *Semblance, part I: Leigh Opulent*.

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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.