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## MINNESOTA OPERA ANNOUNCES CHRISTOPHER FRANKLIN AS PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

**Franklin will build on an extensive history with MN Opera and play critical role in leading the MN Opera Orchestra as well as in season planning**

MINNEAPOLIS (December 11, 2023) – Minnesota Opera announced today the appointment of Christopher Franklin as Principal Conductor on a three-year contract, beginning with *The Elixir of Love* in February and *La bohème* in May 2024 and continuing for most performances through the 2025-2026 season. In this role, Franklin is responsible for guiding the Minnesota Opera Orchestra in its artistic growth, shepherding the musical standard of excellence in its performance of inherited repertoire and in contributing to the development of new work. He will also contribute to season planning as a member of the company’s Artistic Planning Team, which includes the President and General Director as well as the Vice Presidents of Artistic, Production, and Impact.

Franklin rose to the top of a list of notable candidates through an extensive, multi-season search that began well prior to the pandemic and incorporated feedback from both management and the musicians of the MN Opera Orchestra. “Our goal with this position is to reinforce our commitment to a more dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive approach to opera that benefits patrons, artists, and the community well into the future,” said **President and General Director Ryan Taylor**. “It was critical for us to identify a principal conductor who approaches the work of both reimagining existing operas as well as developing new ones with equal care and curiosity, and we are thrilled to have found those qualities in Christopher.”

Franklin has a 12-year history with MN Opera, beginning with *Cinderella* in 2011 covering a wide variety of repertoire including *La traviata*, *Hamlet*, *Thaïs*, *Così fan tutte*, the world premiere of *Doubt*, and *The Anonymous Lover*. “Christopher has an inspired and studious approach to an opera score, collaborating closely with artists to both investigate traditional performance practices and innovate new musical ideas,” said **Joseph Li, MN Opera’s VP, Artistic**. “Our orchestra has responded well to his leadership, and we are all looking forward to seeing how this musical partnership develops over the coming seasons.”

A native of Pittsburgh, Franklin launched his conducting career in Italy after completing a BA in violin and German literature at Macalester College in Saint Paul as well as subsequent degrees at the University of Illinois and the Peabody Conservatory. He has conducted at major European opera houses and festivals including the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Palau de les Arts in Valencia, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Teatro Regio di Torino, the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, and the Arena di Verona, among many others. He has enjoyed further international success with career highlights that include leading the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the London Philharmonic while on tour in Spain, the Tokyo Philharmonic at the New National Theater in Tokyo, and productions of *Turandot* with San Francisco Opera and *Il viaggio a Reims* at the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna. He has collaborated frequently with renowned tenor Juan Diego Flórez, performing in venues around the world including the Herkulesaal and the Gasteig in Munich, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. He is currently preparing performances of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Liège, Belgium before coming to the Twin Cities to begin rehearsals for *The Elixir of Love* in January.

A former Fulbright Fellow, Franklin is also a winner of the Gino Marinuzzi International Conducting Competition, the La Bottega-Toti dal Monte Competition, and is a recipient of the Franco Ferrara Prize from the Accademia Chigiana in Siena.

“Minnesota Opera is a company that I’ve had a long and fruitful relationship with for years and it seems like a natural development for our artistic paths to cross in this way,” said Franklin. “Because my father was from Willmar, we spent our summers in Minnesota, so this feels like a homecoming of sorts. Since my student days at Macalester I’ve known the Twin Cities to be such an open-minded and arts-friendly community, and I’m thrilled to be joining it in this new capacity. Since its inception, Minnesota Opera has been dedicated to new works and at the cusp of new ways of working, leading other developments in the field like intimacy direction. It’s an honor to be stepping into more regular collaboration with such a respected and forward-looking opera company and its wonderful artists.”

More information about Christopher Franklin, as well as headshots, can be found [here](#).

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by expanding the circle of musical storytelling.