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MINNESOTA OPERA TO KICK OFF 2025 WITH *THE SNOWY DAY*

Operatic adaptation of best-selling children’s book by Ezra Jack Keats by composer Joel Thompson and librettist Andrea Davis Pinkney comes to Ordway with new orchestration

MINNEAPOLIS (December 11, 2024) – Minnesota Opera’s 62nd season will continue with *The Snowy Day*, an operatic adaptation by composer **Joel Thompson** and librettist **Andrea Davis Pinkney** of Ezra Jack Keats’ Caldecott Medal-winning children’s book. The opera will open on Saturday, February 8 and run through Sunday, February 16 at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Saint Paul.

The Snowy Day premiered in 2021 at Houston Grand Opera and has since captivated audiences around the country as a joyful adaptation of Keats’ book of the same name, which is known for being one of the earliest examples of a Black protagonist in children’s literature. Like the original, Thompson and Pinkney’s opera tells the story of Peter, a young boy who wakes to find that the first snow of winter has fallen overnight, and an exciting day of adventure awaits. Peter spends the day exploring the city, going sledding with a new friend, and getting into a snowball fight before returning home to Mama and Daddy.

In creating the work, Thompson, (a 2018 American Prize recipient for his choral work *The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*) and Pinkney (a *New York Times*-bestselling children’s book author of titles including *Bright Brown Baby*, *The Red Pencil*, and more) were intentional in their mission to depict Black joy and experience on the operatic stage. Pinkney’s playful yet earnest text is set to a sweeping, cinematic score which Thompson will reorchestrate specifically for MN Opera’s production, engaging the full forces of the MN Opera Orchestra under the baton of returning guest conductor Kelly Kuo (*The Daughter of the Regiment*).

“Since our founding, MN Opera has been focused on contributing to and uplifting an American operatic repertoire and this production embodies that perfectly,” says MN Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor. “Our vision to sing every story requires us to be constantly mindful of who we are able to empower to expand the circle of our musical storytelling. We are excited to take another step closer to that goal by presenting a production of this beautiful, joyful work by Joel Thompson and Andrea Davis Pinkney.”

The cast will be led by soprano Raven McMillon in her MN Opera debut as Peter. Joining her will be soprano Leah Hawkins in her company debut as Mama and MN Opera Resident Artist John Mburu (*Romeo and Juliet*) as Daddy. Soprano Zulimar López-Hernández (*Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*) will return to the company to sing the role of Peter’s friend Amy. Resident Artists Ángel Vargas (*Romeo and Juliet*) and David Wolfe (*Romeo and Juliet*) will sing the roles of Jasper/Papí and Tim, respectively, and Resident Artist alumnus Allen Michael Jones (*Don Giovanni*) will sing Billy.

Omer Ben Seadia's original production will be led by Conductor Kelly Kuo and Stage Director/Choreographer Eboni Adams in her MN opera debut. It will feature scenery by Amy Rubin, costumes by Jessica Jahn, and lighting by Karin Olson. Pogi Sumangil will serve as Intimacy Director

Inspired by the source material for *The Snowy Day*, MN Opera will be producing a three-day literacy festival in partnership with the Hennepin County Library System, the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NDCAD), and the Saint Paul Public Libraries. The festival will feature children's book readings, book signings, a panel discussion, and musical performances at various venues around the Twin Cities. The company is also partnering with NDCAD and the nonprofit Tickets for Kids to provide 50 children with the opportunity to see the opera as well as meet the artists onstage after the performance.

In addition to the performances at the Ordway, MN Opera will host an Offstage Event at MetroNOME Brewery in Saint Paul's Lowertown on Wednesday, February 5. The event will include a conversation between MN Opera's VP of Impact Darius Gillard and local performer and educator Ilah Raleigh on the ways in which engagement with the arts can help address the negative impacts of the pandemic on early childhood literacy as well as a musical performance from Raleigh. Joseph Li (VP, Artistic) will present Opera Insights in the Ordway's Target Atrium one hour prior to each performance, exploring the ways in which composer Joel Thompson uses musical idioms to capture the magic of childhood and the spirit of exploration and adventure.

Tickets for *The Snowy Day* range from \$28-\$258 and are available at mnopera.org/the-snowy-day. Youth tickets are also available for \$23.

Quick facts:

- What:** *The Snowy Day*
Music and New Orchestration by Joel Thompson
Libretto by Andrea Davis Pinkney
- The opera will be sung in English with English captions projected above the stage.
- Where:** Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102
- When:** Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2 p.m.
- Tickets:** \$28-\$258 (adult); \$23 (youth).
Call Minnesota Opera Patron Services at 612-333-6669, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., or purchase online at mnopera.org/the-snowy-day.



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Run Time: One hour and fifteen minutes with no intermission

Media: Digital assets are available on our [Online Press Room](#).

Learn More: Offstage Event at MetroNOME Brewery
Wednesday, February 5 at 6:30pm
385 Broadway Street, Saint Paul, MN 55101

Opera Insights – one hour prior to the show in the Target Atrium at the Ordway

Creative Team

Conductor | Kelly Kuo
Stage Director and Choreographer | Eboni Adams
Original Stage Director | Omer Ben Seadia
Intimacy Director | Pogi Sumangil
Scenic Designer | Amy Rubin
Costume Designer | Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer | Karin Olson
Wig, Hair, and Makeup Designer | Emma Gustafson

Cast

Peter | Flora Hawk
Amy/Ensemble | Zulimar López-Hernández
Mama/Ensemble | Leah Hawkins
Jasper/Papi/Ensemble | Ángel Vargas*
Daddy/Ensemble | John Mburu*
Tim/Ensemble | David Wolfe*
Billy/Ensemble | Allen Michael Jones[°]
Ensemble | Roland Hawkins

* Resident Artist

[°] Resident Artist Alumnus

To learn more about *The Snowy Day*, please visit mnopera.org/snowy-day.

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Minnesota Opera advances the art of opera for today and for future generations
by expanding the circle of musical storytelling.