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MINNESOTA OPERA TO KICK OFF 2026 WITH THE WORLD PREMIERE OF MY NAME IS FLORENCE

The brand-new chamber opera will be the first from
the company's New Works Initiative cohort

MINNEAPOLIS (December 2, 2025) – Minnesota Opera's 2025-2026 season will continue in the new year with the world premiere of *My Name is Florence*, a chamber opera celebrating the life, career, and legacy of American composer Florence Price. The 51st world premiere in MN Opera's 63-year history, *My Name is Florence* will run **January 31-February 8, 2026 at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts** in downtown Saint Paul.

My Name is Florence, composed by B.E. Boykin to a libretto by Saint Paul-based playwright Harrison David Rivers, was commissioned by MN Opera as part of the company's New Works Initiative, a groundbreaking creative development program focused on uplifting and contributing to the American operatic canon. Boykin and Rivers are both members of a six-person cohort of three composers and three librettists who are working together over the course of several seasons to produce, in multiple pairings, three large-scale operas, three chamber operas, and three song cycles. MN Opera announced the initial three titles that will make it to the Ordway stage in October 2024 and *My Name is Florence* is the first to receive a public premiere.

The chamber opera is comprised of a series of vignettes from throughout Price's life, spanning from her childhood in Little Rock, Arkansas to her time as a student at the New England Conservatory of Music, to the completion of her famous *Symphony in E Minor*. While Florence Price's music has recently become more popular in classical music circles, Boykin and Rivers sought to shine a light on the human being behind the art, delving into the generations of traditions, ideas, and people that influenced her life, work, and legacy. In particular, the piece explores Price's relationships with her mother and daughter—both of whom were also named Florence.

The work will be brought to life under the leadership of Stage Director **Eboni Adams** in an intimate staging that will feature the MN Opera Orchestra and Chorus onstage under the baton of Head of Music **Mario Antonio Marra**. Eli Sherlock's set designs also place significant visual emphasis on a revolving steel frame piano in reference to Florence Price's love of the instrument, writing that playing piano "feels like walking barefoot through the grass."

"Bringing new opera to life has long been a central part of what we do here at this company, and the New Works Initiative is a continuation of that tradition," said MN Opera President and General Director Ryan Taylor. "Over the next several seasons, we will be working to expand the American operatic canon—introducing new stories and the creative perspectives of new storytellers to further enrich the repertoire at large. It is hard to imagine a more perfect subject for this first premiere than Florence Price, a barrier-shattering artist whose legacy continues to resonate."

Soprano **Flora Hawk** will make her company debut in the title role of Florence Beatrice Price, joined onstage by mezzo-soprano **Deborah Nansteel** as Florence Irene Price (“Granny”) and soprano **Arianna Rodriguez** as Florence Louise Price (“Lo-Lo”). *My Name is Florence* will also feature multiple members of the MN Opera Resident Artist Program, fresh off a successful run of *Così fan tutte* earlier this year—bass **John Mburu** will sing the role of Florence Beatrice’s father, Papa Jay, with mezzo soprano **Kara Morgan** and tenor **Ángel Vargas** singing the roles of Jane and George Whitefield Chadwick, a classmate and professor of Price’s during her time at the New England Conservatory.

Eboni Adams, who made her MN Opera debut last season at the helm of *The Snowy Day*, will lead a creative team comprised of former Company Artist **Margaret Jumonville** as Assistant Stage Director, Set Designer **Eli Sherlock**, Costume Designer **Trevor Bowen**, Lighting Designer **Rachael N. Blackwell**, and Wigs, Hair, and Makeup Designer **Emma Gustafson**.

Outside of the performances themselves, there will be several opportunities for audiences to engage with the new opera. MN Opera’s Impact Department will host an Offstage Event at the newly-opened Playwright Center in Saint Paul. The event will feature a discussion between MN Opera VP of Impact Darius Gillard and librettist Harrison David Rivers about the process of Rivers’ creative process and digging into themes from the opera. Additionally, MN Opera VP, Artistic, Joseph Li will present Opera Insights in the Ordway’s Target Atrium one hour prior to each performance, focusing on the myriad of musical influences and styles that appear in Boykin’s score.

MN Opera will also present a pair of recitals featuring the work of Florence Price herself, both of which will take place at the Luminary Art Center. On Wednesday, January 14, soprano Karen Slack will perform selections from her Grammy-winning album *Beyond the Years*, which includes a number of unpublished songs by Price. On January 17, members of the MN Opera Orchestra, Principal Coach and Chorus Director Celeste Marie Johnson, and mezzo-soprano Kara Morgan will perform even more of Price’s chamber and vocal works.

Tickets for *My Name is Florence* start at \$28 and are available at mnopera.org/my-name-is-florence.

Quick facts:

What: *My Name is Florence*
Music by B.E. Boykin
Libretto by Harrison David Rivers

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, January 31, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: From \$28. Call Minnesota Opera Patron Services at 612-333-6669, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., or purchase online at mnopera.org/my-name-is-florence.



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Run Time: One hour and 20 minutes (no intermission)

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

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

Creative Team:

Conductor | Mario Antonio Marra
Stage Director | Eboni Adams
Scenic Designer | Eli Sherlock
Costume Designer | Trevor Bowen
Lighting Designer | Rachael N. Blackwell
Wigs, Hair, and Makeup Designer | Emma Gustafson
Assistant Stage Director | Margaret Jumonville[°]

Cast:

Florence Beatrice Price | Flora Hawk
Florence Irene Price (Granny) | Deborah Nansteel
Florence Louise Price (Lo-Lo) | Arianna Rodriguez
Papa Jay | John Mburu*
Jane | Kara Morgan*
Professor Chadwick | Ángel Vargas*

[°] Company Artist Alum

* Resident Artist

To learn more about *My Name is Florence*, please visit mnopera.org/my-name-is-florence.

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