

News Release

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Minnesota Opera announces world premiere of *The Manchurian Candidate*

Composer Kevin Puts' and librettist Mark Campbell's
second operatic collaboration will be the seventh production of
Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative

Minneapolis—At a preview of its upcoming world premiere of *Doubt* for Works & Process at New York's Guggenheim, Minnesota Opera unveiled its plans for another commission: *The Manchurian Candidate*, with music by Kevin Puts and a libretto by Mark Campbell. *The Manchurian Candidate* will be Puts' and Campbell's second operatic collaboration. *Silent Night*, also commissioned by Minnesota Opera, earned Puts the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

"I have long wanted to commission an operatic thriller," said ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON, "and after the incredible experience of *Silent Night* last season, I was eager to work with Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell again. *The Manchurian Candidate* is an all-around match made in heaven."

The Manchurian Candidate is a political thriller that will be based on the 1959 novel by Richard Condon about the son of a prominent U.S. political family who is brainwashed into becoming an unwitting sleeper assassin for a Communist conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. Condon's novel inspired two film adaptations. The first film, directed by John Frankenheimer in 1962, starred Laurence Harvey, Frank Sinatra and Angela Lansbury, and is widely regarded to be a masterpiece of its genre. Director Jonathan Demme's 2004 film updated the action to the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and starred Liv Ullmann, Denzel Washington and Meryl Streep.

"That the term 'Manchurian candidate' has been bandied about as recently as on the current Presidential campaign trail proves there's an enduring fascination with conspiracy theories of massive proportions," said Johnson. "Strong characters and tantalizing drama make for the best operas, and this story has those in spades. When you think about combining those elements with this existing cultural fixation and putting them in the hands of a Pulitzer-winning team, I think we have an incredibly exciting creative process ahead as we move to the premiere of this opera in our 2014–2015 season."

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The Manchurian Candidate is part of MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire with an infusion of contemporary works. Since fundraising began in March 2008, Minnesota Opera has raised more than \$6.68 million to support the New Works Initiative, which has produced the American premiere of Jonathan Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*; revivals of Dominick Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming* and Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights*; and the world premiere of Kevin Puts' Pulitzer Prize Award-winning *Silent Night. Doubt*, composed by Douglas J. Cuomo with libretto by John Patrick Shanley, makes its world premiere in January 2013, and *The Dream of Valentino*, newly revised by Dominick Argento, is slated for March 2014.

"That the New Works Initiative has been a success despite the recession is a testament to the power of opera," said **PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR KEVIN RAMACH**. "Minnesota Opera is grateful to the donors, visionaries and artists that have made these productions possible. Their work, as once noted in *USA Today*, 'restores confidence in the possibilities of contemporary opera as compelling theater.'"

***The Manchurian Candidate*: Plot Synopsis**

Major Bennet Marco, Sergeant Raymond Shaw and the rest of the infantry platoon are kidnapped during the Korean War and brainwashed to believe that Shaw saved their lives in combat – for which Congress awards him the Medal of Honor.

Years after the war, Marco begins having a recurring nightmare about Shaw murdering two of their men while under observation by Chinese and Soviet officials. When Marco learns that another soldier from the platoon also has been suffering the same nightmare, he determines to solve the mystery.

They discover that the Communists have been using Shaw as a sleeper agent, a guiltless assassin subconsciously activated while playing solitaire to obey orders. Shaw's KGB handler is his mother Eleanor, a ruthless power broker working with the Communists to quietly overthrow the U.S. government and establish her husband, the McCarthy-esque Senator Johnny Iselin, as a puppet dictator.

Composer Kevin Puts

Winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for *Silent Night*, Kevin Puts has been hailed as one of the most important composers of his generation. His work has been commissioned and performed by leading orchestras in the United States and abroad, including the New York Philharmonic; the Tonhalle Orchestër (Zurich); the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Detroit, Atlanta, Colorado, Houston, Fort Worth, Utah and St. Louis; the Boston Pops; the Minnesota Orchestra, which commissioned his *Sinfonia Concertante*; and by leading chamber ensembles such as the Mirò Quartet, the Eroica Trio, eighth blackbird, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Puts' orchestral catalog includes four symphonies as well as several concertos written for some of today's top soloists. In 2005, Mr. Puts received the tremendous honor of a commission in celebration of David Zinman's 70th birthday, and the result was *Vision*, a cello concerto premiered by Yo-Yo Ma and the Aspen Music Festival Orchestra. During the same year, his *Percussion Concerto* was premiered by Evelyn Glennie with the Pacific and Utah Symphonies. He has also written concertos for marimbist Makoto Nakura, violinist Michael Shih, clarinetist Bil Jackson, and a piano concerto commissioned by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and premiered in 2008 by pianist and conductor Jeffrey Kahane.

Puts has received awards and grants from the American Academy in Rome, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, BMI and ASCAP. He has served as composer-in-residence of Young Concerts Artists, the California Symphony, the Fort Worth Symphony, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, Music from Angel Fire and the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society. Since 2006, he has been a member of the composition department at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, Maryland.

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Puts received his Bachelor's Degree from the Eastman School of Music, his Master's Degree from Yale University and a Doctor of Musical Arts at the Eastman School of Music.

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Librettist Mark Campbell

Mark Campbell is one of the most in-demand librettists working in opera today, recently profiled in *Opera News* as one of the twenty-five people “poised ... to become major forces in opera in the coming decade.”

He has collaborated with many leading composers of this generation, including Mark Adamo, William Bolcom, Ricky Ian Gordon, Jake Heggie, Martin Hennessy, Paul Moravec, John Musto, Kevin Puts, Richard Peaslee and Michael Torke. His most successful operas include: *Volpone*, *Later the Same Evening*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, *Rappahannock County* and *Silent Night*.

Mark has received many prestigious awards for his work. Most recently, *Silent Night* was honored with the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music. *Volpone* received a 2010 Grammy nomination for Best Classical Recording. He also received the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, two Richard Rodgers Awards and a New York Foundation for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship.

As a lyricist, Mark penned all of the lyrics for *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, a theatrical song cycle with music by 18 composers, including Jake Heggie and Duncan Sheik. The show has since been produced in many venues around the world. Other musicals for which he has written lyrics include: *And the Curtain Rises*, *The Audience*, *Splendor*, *Akin* and *Light Shall Lift Them*.

Recordings of Mark's works include the Grammy-nominated *Volpone* (Wolf Trap Recordings), *Later the Same Evening* (Albany Records), *Bastianello/Lucrezia* (Bridge Classical) and *Songs from an Unmade Bed* (Sh-k-Boom Records). *Songs from an Unmade Bed* and *Silent Night* are also published by Bill Holab Music.

Minnesota Opera combines a culture of creativity and fiscal responsibility to produce opera and opera education programs that expand the art form, nurture artists, enrich audiences and contribute to the vitality of the community.

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