

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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La fanciulla del West opens Minnesota Opera's 2014-2015 season on September 20

A free, festive outdoor simulcast of opening night's performance is open to the public in Rice Park

Minneapolis – Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*), opera's first "Spaghetti Western," opens Minnesota Opera's 2014-2015 season on September 20, led by Music Director Michael Christie and a powerful trio: Claire Rutter, Rafael Davila, and Greer Grimsley. The drama and excitement of opening night inside Ordway will extend outdoors that evening with a free, live video simulcast under the stars in Rice Park.

From the Italian master who wrote *La bohème*, *Madame Butterfly*, and *Turandot* comes a romantic portrait of America's iconic Golden West. Puccini's gorgeous melodies and blazing orchestral colors are set against a backdrop of a gold-mining frontier town, where a poker-playing, pistol-wielding saloon owner finds herself in a love triangle with a handsome outlaw and the sheriff who is in hot pursuit of him. Considered by Puccini as one of his greatest works, *La fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*) had its successful and highly publicized premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 1910.

Soprano **Claire Rutter**, who was hailed as "blest with a powerful stage presence and a top-end coloratura like warm steel" by Classical Source, makes her Minnesota Opera debut as the high-spirited Minnie. Tenor **Rafael Davila** also debuts with the company as the bandit Dick Johnson, who was applauded by Bachtrack as "a real revelation ... with a full and strong voice and a powerful and expressive sound." Completing the love triangle, as the mining camp's shady sheriff Jack Rance, is **Greer Grimsley**, who returns after a critically acclaimed performance as Macbeth in January 2014. The Star Tribune praised, "Greer Grimsley is a force of nature; his bass-baritone, dark and sinewy, is tactile. The man may earn his keep singing Wagner, but he knows how to squeeze import from an Italian vowel."

Michael Christie (*Manon Lescaut*, *Arabella*, *Macbeth*) returns for his third season as Minnesota Opera Music Director to conduct the Minnesota Opera Orchestra. **Doug Scholz-Carlson**, Great River Shakespeare Festival's artistic director and acclaimed fight choreographer (*Silent Night*, 2011), makes his mainstage directorial debut with this Minnesota Opera production.

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For the first time in Minnesota Opera's history, the company will offer a simulcast of opening night's performance on September 20 in downtown St. Paul's Rice Park. Food trucks, beer and wine, fire elements, vendors, and more will create a festive and inviting atmosphere perfect for families, opera lovers, and the opera curious. Video entertainment, including Minnesota Opera's popular show preview Opera Insights, will begin at 6pm, and intermission features will be presented to enhance the evening's entertainment. The simulcast of opening night is free with an online registration at mnop.co/simulcast.

Visit mnop.co/fanciulla to find casting updates, creative team and artist biographies, audio and video clips, show synopses, and background notes.

What: *La fanciulla del West* by composer Giacomo Puccini. Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Where: Music Theater at Ordway, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

When: Saturday, September 20, 8pm; Thursday, September 25, 7:30pm; Saturday, September 27, 7:30pm; Sunday, September 28, 2pm

Opera Tickets: \$25 – \$200. Call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612-333-6669, Monday–Friday, 10am–5pm, or purchase online at mnopera.org.

Media Opportunities

Media: Contact Communications Manager Julie Behr to take advantage of interview, photo and video opportunities at *La fanciulla del West* dress rehearsals at Ordway on **Wednesday, September 17 or Thursday, September 18 at 7:30pm.**

Preview: Minnesota Opera invites a group of press members, bloggers and social media influencers to attend the *La fanciulla del West* dress rehearsal at Ordway on **Thursday, September 18 at 6pm.** We encourage live tweeting, blogging, note taking, and illustrating. Prior to the start of the rehearsal, an informal meet and greet with other attendees is held in the Marzitelli Foyer of Ordway. A member of Minnesota Opera's creative team will speak about the production and answer questions from the group. Please submit the online application at mnop.co/preview by September 16.

The 2014–2015 Minnesota Opera season is supported by Target.

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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.