

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Verdi's *Nabucco* opens on September 22

Minnesota Opera's 50th Anniversary Season opens with the company's first presentation of Verdi's monumental opera, led by Music Director Michael Christie and a powerful trio: Brenda Harris, Jason Howard and John Relyea

- What:** Giuseppe Verdi's *Nabucco*
Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.
- Where:** Ordway, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102
- When:** Saturday, September 22, 8pm Tuesday, September 25, 7:30pm
Thursday, September 27, 7:30pm Saturday, September 29, 7:30pm
Sunday, September 30, 2pm
- Tickets:** \$20 – \$200. Call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612.333.6669, Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm, or purchase online at mnopera.org.
- Media:** An online press kit (available now on Dropbox at bit.ly/mnoperapressroom) includes full bios, artist headshots, design renderings, production photos and other useful resources.
Contact Communications Manager Daniel Zillmann to take advantage of the following interview, photo and video opportunities at dress rehearsals at Ordway: **Wednesday, September 19, 7:30pm** and **Thursday, September 20, 7:30pm**.
- Preview:** Minnesota Opera hosts its first **Social Media Preview Night** of the season for bloggers and tweeters, including a reception with Minnesota Opera's new **Music Director Michael Christie** and exclusive access to the dress rehearsal on **Thursday, September 20, 5pm**. Email Daniel Zillmann to R.S.V.P.

Minneapolis—Verdi's monumental opera follows the plight of the Jews as they are conquered and exiled from their homeland by King Nebuchadnezzar (*Nabucco*). With its soaring choruses, triumphant arias and bold drama, *Nabucco* established Verdi's reputation as an operatic icon and national hero. The opera's infamous chorus, "Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate" (also known as the "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves"), was considered an anthem for the patriots who sought to unify their country during the Italian Risorgimento of the mid-nineteenth century.

American stage director and scenic designer **THADDEUS STRASSBERGER** makes his Minnesota Opera debut with this beautiful new production that evokes the notorious Italian opera house, La Scala, where

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Nabucco premiered. According to *Opera Now*, he is a director/designer who "... manages to straddle the sometimes very different worlds of European and U.S. opera production seamlessly ... Strassberger's productions are fresh and thoughtful, and he often presents us with modern parallels without being contrived." Baritone **JASON HOWARD** (*Salome*) stars in the title role with soprano **BRENDA HARRIS** (*Roberto Devereux*, *Mary Stuart*) as his supposed daughter Abigail. One of today's finest bass-baritones, **JOHN RELYEA** makes his company debut as the Jewish high priest Zaccaria. Members of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S RESIDENT ARTIST PROGRAM** complete the cast: mezzo-soprano **VICTORIA VARGAS** (*Wuthering Heights*) is the king's true daughter Fenena; tenor **JOHN ROBERT LINDSEY** (*Silent Night*) is Ismaele, her lover and the nephew of the King of Jerusalem; bass-baritone **RICHARD OLLARSABA** debuts as the High Priest of Baal; and soprano **CHRISTIE HAGEMAN** debuts as Anna, Zaccaria's sister. **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** (*Madame Butterfly*) begins his tenure with the company as Music Director conducting the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Michael Christie
Stage Director and Scenic Designer	Thaddeus Strassberger*
Choreographer	Heidi Spesard-Noble
Costume Designer	Mattie Ullrich*
Lighting Designer	JAX Messenger*
Original Lighting Designer	Mark McCullough
Wig and Makeup Designers	Jason Allen and Ronell Oliveri
Associate Director	Joel Ivany*
Assistant Director	Daniel Ellis*+
Assistant Conductor	Aaron Breid*+

THE CAST

Zaccaria, <i>High Priest of the Hebrews</i>	John Relyea*
Ismaele, <i>nephew of the King of Jerusalem</i>	John Robert Lindsey+
Fenena, <i>younger daughter of Nabucco</i>	Victoria Vargas+
Abigail, <i>older daughter of Nabucco</i>	Brenda Harris
Anna, <i>Zaccaria's sister</i>	Christie Hageman*+
Nabucco, <i>King of Babylon</i>	Jason Howard
High Priest of Baal	Richard Ollarsaba*+
Abdallo, <i>Nabucco's officer</i>	Jon Thomas Olson

*Minnesota Opera Debut, +Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

To learn more about *Nabucco* ...

Please visit mnopera.org/season. There you will find casting updates, artist biographies, synopses, background notes, audio and video clips, suggestions for further reading and listening, ticketing services and other company information.

The Minnesota Opera season *Nabucco* are sponsored by Ascent Private Capital Management of U.S. Bank.

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.