

News Release

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CONTACT: Daniel Zillmann, 612.342.1612

Minnesota Opera announces premiere of a revised *The Dream of Valentino*

Dominick Argento's opera, which premiered at The Kennedy Center in 1994,
will receive a major revival in Minnesota Opera's 2013–2014 season

Directed by Eric Simonson and conducted by Cristoph Campestrini, *The Dream of Valentino* is the sixth production of Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative

Minneapolis–Minnesota Opera is pleased to announce its next New Works Initiative production, *The Dream of Valentino*. Composed by **DOMINICK ARGENTO**, with libretto by **CHARLES NOLTE**, as a joint commission by Washington and Dallas operas, the work received its world premiere in 1994 at The Kennedy Center, where it was described by the *Chicago Tribune* as “visually and theatrically ... a thumping success.” **ERIC SIMONSON** (*The Grapes of Wrath*, *Silent Night*) directs and Maestro **CHRISTOPH CAMPESTRINI** (*Werther*) conducts this revised premiere as a part of the company's 2013–2014 season.

“I have known Dominick since my first season when Minnesota Opera premiered *Casanova's Homecoming* in 1985 and have always admired the freshness and vibrancy of his works,” said **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON**. “*The Dream of Valentino* is the only major Argento opera that we have not staged and I thought it imperative, as we began the New Works Initiative, that we invest in producing his entire canon. After I approached Dominick to discuss this revival, he spent the summer making major changes to literally give *Valentino* a new beginning. By reworking the dramaturgy and focusing more on Valentino the artist, Dominick feels that the work will better embody how Hollywood uses its artists and tosses them away when they are no longer convenient.”

The Dream of Valentino is part of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE**, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire with an infusion of contemporary works. Produced as part of the Initiative: an American premiere, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Dove); two revivals, *Casanova's Homecoming* (Argento) and *Wuthering Heights* (Herrmann); and a world premiere, the Pulitzer Prize Award-winning *Silent Night* (Puts). *Doubt*, composed by Douglas J. Cuomo with libretto by John Patrick Shanley, makes its world premiere in January 2013. Following *The Dream of Valentino*, a yet-to-be-

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announced world premiere will complete the seventh and final year of the Initiative in the 2014–2015 season. Since fundraising began in March 2008, Minnesota Opera has raised more than \$6.68 million to support the New Works Initiative.

About *The Dream of Valentino*

Rudolph Valentino, an Italian immigrant, becomes a popular Broadway dancer after his arrival in 1913 and aspires to become a great stage actor. A Hollywood film mogul discovers him and makes a note to watch him in the future even though he is on contract with a rival studio. Valentino signs a personal contract with the famous actress Alla Nazimova. Afterwards, he proposes to the actress Jean Acker what turns out to be a disastrous marriage. He becomes an overnight sensation with the release of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, and the Mogul buys out Valentino's Metro contract. In the course of filming *The Sheik*, the beleaguered Mogul finds out about both Valentino's personal contract with Nazimova and his potentially scandalous marriage with Acker. As a result, Valentino is forced against his will into his next film, which fails miserably at the box office. He loses control of his career, and drops out of Hollywood, taking up the life of an itinerant actor and dancer. Valentino dies at the age of 31 in New York as headlines proclaim his passing and propel him into legend.

About the composer

Dominick Argento, considered to be America's pre-eminent composer of lyric opera, was born in York, Pennsylvania in 1927. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Peabody Conservatory and his Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music. Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships allowed him to study in Italy and following his Fulbright, Argento became music director of Hilltop Opera in Baltimore, and taught theory and composition at the Eastman School. In 1958, he joined the faculty of the Department of Music at the University of Minnesota, where he taught until 1997. He now holds the rank of Professor Emeritus.

Following his arrival in Minnesota, Argento helped to found Minnesota Opera (then Center Opera Company) in 1963 and premiered his opera, *The Masque of Angels*, at the company's opening. Since the early 1970's Argento's operas have been heard with increasing frequency abroad. Among these are Minnesota Opera commissions, *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* (1976) and *Casanova's Homecoming* (1984), which Robert Jacobson of *Opera News* called "a masterpiece."

Dominick Argento received the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1975 for his song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1979 and in 1997 he was honored with the title of Composer Laureate to the Minnesota Orchestra, a lifetime appointment.

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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