

News Release

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Entering the next half century: Minnesota Opera announces its 2013–2014 season

James Valenti stars in major revival of Argento's *The Dream of Valentino*

Season to end with intriguing new look at Mozart's *The Magic Flute*

Other highlights include Kelly Kaduce in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*,
Jacquelyn Wagner in a stunning production of Strauss' *Arabella*
and Brenda Harris and Greer Grimsley in Verdi's *Macbeth*

Minneapolis—Minnesota Opera announces its 2013–2014 season, boasting three company premieres and five productions new to Minnesota audiences. Highlights include the return of James Valenti, who will star in the premiere of a revised *The Dream of Valentino* by Dominick Argento; an intriguing production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*; the return of two favorite sopranos in title roles – Kelly Kaduce in Puccini's soulful *Manon Lescaut* and Jacquelyn Wagner in a stunning production of Strauss' romantic comedy, *Arabella*; and Verdi's chilling take on the Shakespearean thriller, *Macbeth*, starring Brenda Harris and Greer Grimsley.

The season opens on September 21, 2013, with *Manon Lescaut*, which presents the first tragic heroine in a long list of Puccini favorites. **KELLY KADUCE** stars in the title role with tenor **DINYAR VANIA**, who makes his Minnesota Opera debut as her star-crossed lover, Chevalier des Grieux. Maestro **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** continues in his second season as Music Director conducting the Minnesota Opera Orchestra. In November, the Opera presents Richard Strauss' *Arabella*, with the return of soprano **JACQUELYN WAGNER** in a stylish co-production with Santa Fe Opera and Canadian Opera Company by scenic and costume designer **TOBIAS HOHEISEL**. In January, the season continues with Giuseppe Verdi's adaptation of a Shakespearean thriller, *Macbeth*. Bass-baritone **GREER GRIMSLEY** makes his long-awaited return to the Minnesota Opera stage as the ambitious and sinister King of Scotland with soprano **BRENDA HARRIS** as Lady Macbeth. In March, the sixth production of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE** – a major revival of Dominick Argento's *The Dream of Valentino* – stars internationally acclaimed tenor

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JAMES VALENTI as the 1920s film icon and sex symbol, Rudolph Valentino, with **BRENDA HARRIS** as June Mathis, the catalyst of his meteoric rise to fame. Directed by **ERIC SIMONSON**, Maestro **CHRISTOPH CAMPESTRINI** returns to conduct. The season concludes in April with an exciting production of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's beloved *The Magic Flute*.

"It seems a fitting tribute to the company's 50-year rich history of new work that we are staging three company premieres and a whole season of productions new to our audiences," said **PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR KEVIN RAMACH**. "Beyond our mainstage season at the Ordway, Minnesota Opera also provides educational programs that engage communities statewide with a unique depth of interaction. Through our New Works Initiative, we will be reaching a wider audience with a PBS broadcast of *Silent Night*. As we move into our next 50 years, those activities will grow as we find new ways to reach out to our community. None of this would be possible without the support of our patrons and donors, and our stewardship of their trust and resources is a primary value of this company. That is why last June Minnesota Opera reframed its mission statement to the following: '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.'"

"The 2013–2014 season is a wonderful mix of the old and the new," said **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON**. "*Manon Lescaut* is the opera that put Puccini on the map and made him a rising star in the Italian opera world. This emotionally charged and gorgeous opera will be sung by Kelly Kaduce in her role debut, and we welcome an exciting new tenor, Dinyar Vania, as Des Grieux. *Arabella* is a warmhearted comedy by the composer of *Der Rosenkavalier*, Richard Strauss. This splendid co-production with Santa Fe Opera and Canadian Opera Company is elegant, sophisticated and will be directed by Tim Albery. *Macbeth* returns to Minnesota Opera with a dynamic cast in which Greer Grimsley and Brenda Harris are the ambitious and tragic couple. *The Dream of Valentino*, the sixth installment of Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative, is an exciting debut for Minnesota Opera of legendary composer Dominick Argento's last major opera. We're excited to have James Valenti return as screen icon Rudolph Valentino and Brenda Harris as the Hollywood screen writer who discovers him. The season closes with a very special production of Mozart's beloved *The Magic Flute*. Prepare to be blown away by this exciting look at this delightful comedy. I look forward to sharing details with you in the coming months."

Manon Lescaut by Giacomo Puccini

September 21, 24, 26, 28 and 29, 2013

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

A Washington National Opera production.

You can't take it with you.

The irresistible lure of money seduces the beautiful Manon, triggering her downfall. But true love is her redemption in this soulful opera by the composer of *La bohème*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot*. *Manon Lescaut* was Puccini's third opera and arguably his first major success. Defending his work against another opera based on the 1731 novel by the Abbé Prévost, Puccini said, "Manon is a heroine I believe in, and therefore she cannot fail to win the hearts of the public. Why shouldn't there be two operas about Manon? A woman like Manon can have more than one lover." He added, "Massenet feels it as a Frenchman, with powder and minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with a desperate passion."

Soprano **KELLY KADUCE** (*Madame Butterfly*, *Turandot*) stars in the title role with tenor **DINYAR VANIA**, who makes his Minnesota Opera debut as her star-crossed lover, Chevalier des Grieux. Returning members of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S RESIDENT ARTIST PROGRAM**, baritone **MATTHEW OPITZ** (*Doubt*, *Turandot*) is Manon's brother and protector, Lescaut, and tenor **JOHN ROBERT LINDSEY** (*Nabucco*) is the student Edmondo. This Washington National Opera production, called "impassioned, sensual" by *The Baltimore Sun*, was designed by **JOHN PASCOE** (debut), and is conducted by Minnesota Opera Music Director **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** (*Anna Bolena*, *Turandot*).

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Arabella by Richard Strauss

November 9, 12, 14, 16 and 17, 2013

Sung in German with English translations projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera, Santa Fe Opera and Canadian Opera Company co-production.

For love or money?

Arabella wants to marry for love, but her parents need her to marry for money. When the man of her dreams appears, will their manipulations ruin her chance to find true happiness? Richard Strauss' sumptuous romantic comedy is set in Vienna's golden age. The composer's sixth and final operatic collaboration with librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal is as relevant today as at its 1933 premiere in Dresden during the American Great Depression and an impending second World War.

Soprano **JACQUELYN WAGNER**, heralded as "one of the great Fiordiligis of our time" by *MinnPost* at her Minnesota Opera debut in *Così fan tutte*, stars in the title role with bass-baritone **CRAIG IRVIN** (*Silent Night*) as the mysterious Croatian landowner Mandryka, who ultimately sweeps Arabella off her feet. Bass-baritone **DALE TRAVIS** (*The Barber of Seville*) alongside returning Minnesota Opera Resident Artist mezzo-soprano **VICTORIA VARGAS** (*Doubt*) as Arabella's parents, Count Waldner and Adelaide. The creative team that debuted this co-production in Santa Fe last summer brings it to Minnesota: stage director **TIM ALBERY** (*The Fortunes of King Croesus*), scenic and costume designer **TOBIAS HOHEISEL** (debut) and lighting designer **DAVID FINN** (debut). **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** conducts the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

Macbeth by Giuseppe Verdi

January 25, 28, 30, February 1 and 2, 2014

Sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera production.

Power corrupts.

Verdi's dark-hued *Macbeth* examines the corrosive consequences of tyranny. At the urging of his scheming wife, Macbeth murders the king to claim the crown. His desperate and deadly reign of terror devastates his country and hastens his doom in this masterwork based upon Shakespeare's classic thriller. Though the composer did not encounter the original work (in English) until after the first performance of the opera, it was the first of several Shakespeare plays he adapted for the operatic stage. Verdi noted in a 1865 letter: "He is one of my favorite poets. I have had him in my hands from my earliest youth."

Bass-baritone **GREER GRIMSLEY** (*The Flying Dutchman*) makes his long-awaited return as the ambitious and sinister King of Scotland with soprano **BRENDA HARRIS** (*Nabucco*) as his scheming wife, Lady Macbeth. Fast-rising American bass-baritone **ALFRED WALKER** (*The Magic Flute*) returns to Minnesota Opera as Banquo, the one-time ally Macbeth betrays in his lust for power. **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** conducts the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

The Dream of Valentino by Dominick Argento

March 1, 4, 6, 8 and 9, 2014

Sung in English with English captions projected above the stage.

A Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative production.

Fame is a dangerous dance.

A sultry young dancer is transformed from an unknown immigrant into a silent film sensation. Rudolph Valentino's stardom blazes across the silver screen but is quickly consumed by the same forces that ignited it. Seduction and scandal swirl in Dominick Argento's tango-tinged opera about an artist discovered and destroyed by Hollywood. Composed by Argento with a libretto by Charles Nolte as a joint commission between 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."

"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 stars and tosses them away when they are no longer convenient."

Internationally acclaimed tenor **JAMES VALENTI** (*Werther*) reimagines the role of the 1920s film icon and sex symbol, Rudolph Valentino. As the catalyst of his meteoric rise to fame, soprano **BRENDA HARRIS** sings the role of June Mathis, a screenwriter. Mezzo-soprano **EVE GIGLIOTTI** (debut) sings the role of Alla Nazimova, a celebrated movie star, and Minnesota Opera Resident Artists, mezzo-soprano **VICTORIA VARGAS** and tenor **JOHN ROBERT LINDSEY**, sing the roles of Natacha Rambova, a Hollywood director and designer, and Marvin Heeno, the studio mogul's nephew and assistant. **ERIC SIMONSON** (*The Grapes of Wrath*, *Silent Night*) directs and Maestro **CHRISTOPH CAMPESTRINI** (*Werther*) conducts this Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative production.

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 two world premieres, the Pulitzer Prize Award-winning *Silent Night* (Puts) and *Doubt*, composed by Douglas J. Cuomo with libretto by John Patrick Shanley. Following *The Dream of Valentino*, the world premiere of *The Manchurian Candidate*, with music by Kevin Puts and libretto by Mark Campbell, 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.

The Magic Flute by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

April 12, 13, 15, 17 and 19, 2014

Sung in German with English translations projected above the stage.

Production information forthcoming.

Light defeats darkness.

Experience Mozart's masterful comedy about love, truth and the pursuit of enlightenment like never before. Connecting the tale's enduring meaning with modern metaphor, this extraordinary production draws you into the opera's surreal magic, odd characters and crazy love.

Mainstage Season Information

All productions will be staged at Ordway, 345 Washington Street, St. Paul. Sunday matinee performances begin at 2pm. All other performances begin at 7:30pm, with the exception of Opening Night on September 21, 2013 (Opera Gala 2013), and February 1, 2014 (Winter Carnival Torchlight Parade), which begin at 8pm.

Season tickets are now on sale and may be ordered by calling 612-333-6669 or online at mnopera.org. Full-season subscription packages range in price from \$80-\$800, with three- and four-opera packages starting as low as \$50. Single tickets ranging from \$20-\$200 per ticket will be on sale to the general public for all shows on July 22.

For ticketing services, education programming and other company information, please visit mnopera.org. Season-related background notes, synopses, casting updates, artist biographies and videos will be posted as available.

The 2013–2014 Minnesota Opera season is sponsored by Ascent Private Capital Management of U. S. Bank.

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