

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Minnesota Opera concludes the 2014–2015 season with Bizet’s iconic *Carmen*

**Set designer Erhard Rom invokes 1970s post-Franco Spain in a new production
starring mezzo-soprano Nora Sourouzian in her American debut**

MINNEAPOLIS (April 6, 2015) –In a grand finale to its 2014–2015 season, Minnesota Opera unveils a vivid new production of Bizet’s iconic *Carmen*, April 25 through May 10, 2015, at the Ordway Music Theater in St. Paul. With an internationally acclaimed cast, Minnesota Opera’s first *Carmen* in ten years combines a stunning set with Bizet’s compelling score, transporting audiences to the dynamic and dangerous world of 1970s Seville.

One of the most popular operas in history, *Carmen* teems with passion, jealousy, and ultimately, tragedy. Boasting two of the most famous and recognizable arias in all of opera, “Habanera” and “Toreador Song,” *Carmen*’s legendary tale of lost love and newfound freedom remains relevant in today’s society and continues to permeate pop-culture.

“We remember the heart of the sexual revolution taking place in the mid-1970s, when women all over the western world were embracing their romantic freedoms,” said stage director Michael Cavanagh, “but Spain was still very much stuck in an era of repressive misogyny, so Carmen herself perfectly personifies the new modern woman, determined to live and love on her own terms.”

French-Canadian mezzo-soprano Nora Sourouzian, critically praised for her portrayals of Carmen in Canada, Japan, and across Europe, makes her American debut in the title role. *Le Temps* (Switzerland) hailed her as “... magnificent in the title role, displaying a very physical interpretation and a rich timbre, brazenly youthful.” Alternating as the fiery gypsy is former Minnesota Opera resident artist, mezzo-soprano Victoria Vargas.

Internationally sought-after artist Rafael Davila returns to the Minnesota Opera stage, creating the role of corporal Don José, the man intent on possessing the free-spirited Carmen. Davila was applauded by the *Star Tribune* earlier this season for “... his big rich tenor ...” vocals in *La fanciulla del West*.

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Carmen, p. 2

Bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen, who calls Wisconsin home, is widely acclaimed for his trademark role of the swaggering toreador, Escamillo. *Opera News* described his performance as “... first-rate, beautifully sung and vividly depicted.”

Norwegian soprano and recording artist Marita Sølberg, winner of the Music Critics Prize in Norway, makes her company debut as the peasant girl Micaëla. She was celebrated by *Opera Now* for her “... brilliant, sparkling voice and a prepossessing stage presence.”

The production’s creative team features noted stage director Michael Cavanagh, celebrated costume designer Jessica Jahn, and renowned theater- and opera-set designer Erhard Rom. Rom has created atmospheric sets for numerous Minnesota Opera productions over the years, most recently for *Rusalka* (2008) and *The Dream of Valentino* (2014).

“As one of history’s most beloved operas, *Carmen* is an exciting season finale,” said General Director Nina Archabal. “It is a love letter to all. Who can resist a story of passionate emotions—jealously, sensuality, tragedy—all of this plus Bizet’s beautiful music and the vibrant colors of our new production set in sultry Spain. *Carmen* is truly irresistible.”

Music Director Michael Christie leads the Minnesota Opera Orchestra in performances April 25–May 3, 2015, with Aaron Breid, in his fourth season as Assistant Conductor for Minnesota Opera, conducting May 7–10, 2015. Visit mnop.co/carmen to find creative team and artist biographies, video clips, show synopses and background notes.

What: *Carmen* by composer Georges Bizet.
Sung in French with English translations projected above the stage.
A new Minnesota Opera production.

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

When: Saturday, April 25, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 30, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 1, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 2, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 3, 2:00 p.m. Thursday, May 7, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 8, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 9, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 10, 2:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$25 – \$200. Call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612-333-6669, Monday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., or purchase online at mnopera.org.

Media: An online press room (available at mnop.co/dropbox) includes artist headshots, costume sketches, set models and artwork. Check back for updated resources.

Contact Communications Manager Julie Behr to take advantage of interview, photo and video opportunities for both casts at *Carmen* orchestra dress rehearsals:

Thursday, April 23, 7:30 p.m. and **Wednesday, April 29, 11:00 a.m.** at Ordway Music Theater. Please note: the matinee is a student-attended rehearsal.

Preview: Minnesota Opera hosts a **Social Media Preview Night** for press members, bloggers and tweeters to attend rehearsal on **Thursday, April 23, 7:30 p.m.** The evening begins with refreshments, a cash bar and a pre-rehearsal discussion with Minnesota Opera artistic staff beginning at 6:30 p.m. R.S.V.P. by April 21 at mnop.co/preview.

The Creative Team

Conductor.....Michael Christie (conducts April 25, 30; May 1, 2, 3)
Stage Director Michael Cavanagh
Assistant Conductor Aaron Breid (conducts May 7, 8, 9, 10)
Set Designer Erhard Rom
Costume Designer.....Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer..... Mark McCullough

The Cast

Carmen.....Nora Sourouzian* (performs April 25, 30; May 2, 7, 10)
.....Victoria Vargas (performs May 1, 3, 8, 9)
Don José..... Rafael Davila (performs April 25, 30; May 2, 7, 10)
..... Cooper Nolan+ (performs May 1, 3, 8, 9)
Escamillo Kyle Ketelsen (performs April 25, 30; May 2, 7, 10)
..... Richard Ollarsaba (performs May 1, 3, 8, 9)
MicaëlaMarita K. Sølberg** (performs April 25, 30; May 2, 7, 10)
..... Shannon Prickett+ (performs May 1, 3, 8, 9)
Mercédès.....Bergen Baker
FrasquitaSiena Forest+
Zuniga Christian Zaremba+
Dancaïre.....Andrew Lovato+
Remendado Brad Benoit
Moralès..... Gerard Michael D’Emilio+

*American Debut

**Minnesota Opera Debut

+Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

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.