

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Minnesota Opera opens its 2015-2016 season with *Ariadne auf Naxos*

Fast-paced comedy boasts some of Strauss' most transcendently beautiful music
Rising star Amber Wagner makes her Minnesota Opera debut

Season celebration beings with opera gala and party

Festivities include gala dinner, opening-night performance and Bacchus Bash after party

MINNEAPOLIS (August 28, 2015) – The Minnesota Opera kicks off its 2015 – 2016 season at the Ordway Music Theater on September 26, 2015, with Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the company's first production of this meltingly beautiful — yet hilarious — work since 1987. *Ariadne auf Naxos* is both silly and sublime, and its two-and-a-half-hour running time (including intermission) makes it perfect for first-timers and opera buffs alike. Soprano Amber Wagner, acclaimed for her *Ariadne* at Chicago Lyric Opera, makes her Minnesota Opera debut. She is joined by Erin Morley as Zerbinetta, also making her company debut, and tenor Brian Jagde, who won raves here in 2013 as Matteo in Richard Strauss' *Arabella*.

“These fast-rising young American singers are destined for the world's great stages. All have made their Met debuts to great acclaim,” said Artistic Director Dale Johnson. “*Ariadne auf Naxos* has some of the finest music Richard Strauss ever wrote, but it's also a fun and funny show. I'm thrilled to welcome this world-class cast for what I know will be four supremely entertaining performances.”

When the wealthiest man in town double-books a group of pretentious opera singers and a band of bawdy comedians as dinner entertainment at his chic loft, something's gotta give. The Prima Donna (Wagner) and her fellow singers, who'd planned to perform their serious opera (based on the legend of *Ariadne*), must now include the saucy comedy troupe's antics in order to finish the show in time for the evening's fireworks display. Richard Strauss' look at art, fidelity and love is at once all-out comic and achingly tender, enchanting audiences from the first chord to the last note.

Acclaimed soprano Amber Wagner makes her long-awaited Minnesota Opera debut as *Ariadne*, one of her signature roles. A winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Finals and chosen by Opera News as one of 25 artists believed “to break out and become major forces in the field in the coming decade,” Wagner has been a resident artist at the Chicago Lyric Opera and a frequent performer at the Met. The Chicago Tribune compared her to “Jessye Norman in her prime,” and Opera News said, “When Amber Wagner sings, her voice pours out big, beautiful

arcs of sound, making the operas of Wagner, Verdi and Richard Strauss seem like a natural fit for her.”

Wagner stars opposite a Minnesota Opera favorite, tenor Brian Jagde, who will be making his role debut as the god Bacchus. Last season, in his house debut performance at the Royal Opera House, he was hailed as “the ideal Pinkerton” (What’s On Stage) in *Madama Butterfly*, and his Cavaradossi in Lyric Opera of Chicago’s *Tosca* was “a revelation” (Chicago Reader).

Erin Morley makes her Minnesota Opera debut as the spitfire Zerbinetta. She has brought what The New York Times called the “silken clarity of her voice and the needlepoint precision” of her coloratura to the Metropolitan Opera, the Vienna Staatsoper, Munich’s Bayerische Staatsoper, the Opéra National de Paris, the Palau de les Arts in Valencia (Spain) and the Santa Fe Opera.

Rounding out the cast is Polish mezzo-soprano Hanna Hipp, who has been described as a singer who “lights up the stage” (Opera Britannia). Hipp makes her company — as well as American — debut in the trouser role of The Composer. She made her house debut last season at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan as Mercédès in *Carmen* under Massimo Zanetti and is a regular at the Royal Opera House in London.

Music Director Michael Christie returns for his fourth season to conduct the Minnesota Opera Orchestra.

What: Richard Strauss’ *Ariadne auf Naxos*
Sung in German with English translations projected above the stage

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

When: Saturday, September 26, 2015, at 8 p.m.
Thursday, October 1, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 3, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, October 4, 2015 at 2 p.m.

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

Media: Interview, photo and video opportunities available during **final dress rehearsal: Thursday, September 24**, at 7:30 p.m.
Ordway Music Theater, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Michael Christie
Stage Director	Alan E. Hicks
Set Designer	Robert A. Dahlstrom
Costume Designer	Cynthia Savage
Lighting Designer	Robert Wierzel

THE CAST

The Prima Donna/Ariadne.	Amber Wagner*
The Tenor/Bacchus.	Brian Jagde
Zerbinetta	Erin Morley*
The Composer	Hannah Hipp*+
The Music Master.	Dale Travis

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Harlequin	Andrew Lovato
Truffaldino	Benjamin Sieverding*
Brighella	David Walton
The Dancing Master/ Scaramuccio	Brad Benoit
The Major-Domo	David Radamés Toro*
Naiad	Jeni Houser
Dryad	Helena Brown*
Echo	Siena Forest

*Minnesota Opera Debut
+U.S. Debut

Opening-night festivities include dinner and after party
Both Greek-themed events held at The Saint Paul Hotel

It wouldn't be opening night without a party or two. Join the Minnesota Opera for a Greek-inspired black tie dinner, followed by the opening-night performance of Strauss' comedic charmer, *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Where: The Saint Paul Hotel, 350 Market Street, St. Paul, MN 55102

When: Saturday, September 26, 2015

Schedule: 4:30 p.m., Valet Parking Begins
5 p.m., Social Hour (Black Tie)
5:45 p.m., Dinner and Fund-a-Dream / Live Auction
8 p.m., Curtain for *Ariadne auf Naxos*

Gala Tickets: \$375/person (\$180 tax deductible) includes social hour, dinner and Bacchus Bash after party

Immediately following the show, guests will gather at The Saint Paul Hotel to dance the night away. The Bacchus Bash, a big fat Greek after party co-presented with Minnesota Opera's young professionals group, Tempo, will feature fine wines, blissful bites, fun games and festivities, mixing and mingling, followed by a two-hour dance party hosted by DJ Jonathan Ackerman.

Bacchus Tickets: \$50 General Admission (\$25 tax-deductible)
\$35 Tempo Member (\$10 tax-deductible)

To purchase tickets to Minnesota Opera Gala or the Bacchus Bash, please contact Danielle Ricci at dricci@mnopera.org or call 612-342-9596.

Presenting Sponsor: Cargill, in memory of Heinz Hutter

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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.