

News Release

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Minnesota Opera Rings in 2016 with Dvořák's Lush, Romantic *Rusalka*

Kelly Kaduce Returns to Her Signature Role as the Lovelorn Mermaid

MINNEAPOLIS (December 20, 2015) – The Minnesota Opera's 2015–2016 season continues at the Ordway Music Theater on January 23, 2016, with Antonin Dvořák's *Rusalka*, the tragic tale of a beautiful water nymph who falls in love with a prince and yearns to become human. The Czech composer, beloved for his "New World" symphony and "Slavonic Dances," suffuses *Rusalka* with a melancholy yet achingly beautiful sound that perfectly evokes Rusalka's fantastical realm and her doomed love affair; his lovely folk melodies and luminous arias, including Rusalka's heartbreaking "Song to the Moon," seamlessly depict the two worlds – mortal and mythical – Rusalka tries, and fails, to bridge. *Rusalka* stars soprano Kelly Kaduce, who was acclaimed for her first-ever *Rusalka* with Minnesota Opera in 2008 and has been in demand in the role ever since. Minnesota Opera's vibrant, evocative production has traveled around North America, and Kaduce has frequently been tapped to go with it, performing at Opera Colorado and Opéra de Montréal among other companies.

"Kelly has become the opera world's 'go-to' *Rusalka*, and it's no wonder," said Artistic Director Dale Johnson. "She's a superb and beautiful actress, and she deeply understands *Rusalka*'s beloved aria. The opera presents some interesting challenges, like learning the Czech libretto and navigating the constrictive costume that transforms her into *Rusalka*; she handles these effortlessly." A Minnesota native, St. Olaf graduate and winner of the 1999 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Kaduce has sung with Boston Lyric Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. She created the role of Rosasharn in *The Grapes of Wrath* here in 2007, and she will create the role of Wendy in the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Shining*, based on the classic thriller novel by Stephen King, at Minnesota Opera later this season.

Rusalka, a water nymph, is determined to become human and win the love of a prince who came to swim in her lake. She seeks out the witch, *Jezibaba*, who agrees to help her on the condition that she give up her ability to speak and that her lover remain true. But this is no Disney story. After agreeing to marry her, the prince rejects her. When he does return, repentant, to the lake, the two find they cannot escape the witch's curse.

Starring opposite Kaduce and making his American debut is young Russian tenor Khachatur Badalyan. Recent engagements include his North American debut (also opposite Kaduce) as the Prince in *Rusalka* with Opéra de Montréal – where he triumphed as a last-minute replacement – Don José in *Carmen* at the Opéra

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National de Paris; Rodolfo in *La bohème* at the Teatro La Fenice, and Alfredo in *La traviata* for Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Ben Wager returns to Minnesota Opera in the role of Vodnik, the water goblin. His previous appearances with the company have included three premieres: the North American premiere of Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* in 2008/2009; the first-ever full presentation of Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* in 2011; and the world premiere of *Silent Night*, also in 2011. Wager recently made his debut in Oslo with Den Norske Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*.

Marianne Cornetti, who played the witch last season in Minnesota Opera's *Hansel and Gretel*, will sing the role of *Ježibaba*. Cornetti is recognized internationally as one of the leading Verdi mezzo-sopranos in the world, and has appeared at theaters including the Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House – Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and Deutsche Oper Berlin and many others.

Rounding out the cast is Shannon Prickett as the Foreign Princess. Prickett is familiar to Minnesota Opera audiences from roles in *The Magic Flute*, *Arabella*, *Macbeth* and *The Dream of Valentino*. Last season she appeared in *Hansel and Gretel*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Carmen*. She will return later this season as Mrs. Massey in *The Shining*.

Stage director Eric Simonson, a member of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company and a 2006 Academy Award winner for best short-subject documentary, has directed *The Dream of Valentino*, *Silent Night* and *Wuthering Heights* for Minnesota Opera. His production of *The Song of Jacob Zulu* played on Broadway and was nominated for six Tony Awards including Best Director. Simonson holds the distinction of being one of only a handful of directors who has received Tony, Emmy and Oscar nominations.

Music Director Michael Christie will conduct the Minnesota Opera Orchestra. The company will again employ a troupe of local dancers (choreographed by Heidi Spesard-Noble) to portray the woodland sprites and water nymphs who inhabit *Rusalka*'s world.

What: Antonin Dvořák's [Rusalka](#)
Presented in co-production with Boston Lyric Opera
Sung in Czech with English translations projected above the stage

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

When: Saturday, January 23, 2016, at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 28, 2016, at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 30, 2016, at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 31, 2016, 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 [mnopera.org](#).

Media: Press information is available including [artist headshots](#) and [production photography](#). Check back for updated resources and information. Interview, photo and video opportunities also available during **the final dress rehearsal** at the Ordway Music Theater on **Thursday, January 21, 2016** at 7:30 p.m.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

ConductorMichael Christie

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| Stage Director | Eric Simonson |
| Choreographer | Heidi Spesard-Noble |
| Set Designer | Erhard Rom |
| Projection Designer | Wendall K. Harrington |
| Costume Designer | Kärin Kopischke |
| Lighting Designer | Robert Wierzel & Paul Heckenmueller |

THE CAST

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Rusalka | Kelly Kaduce |
| The Prince | Khachatur Badalyan*+ |
| <i>Jeziibaba</i> | Marianne Cornetti |
| Vodnik | Ben Wager |
| The Foreign Princess | Shannon Prickett |
| First Dryad | Siena Forest |
| Second Dryad | Bergen Baker |
| Third Dryad | Jennifer Panara |
| A Hunter | David Walton |

*Minnesota Opera Debut
+U.S. Debut

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