

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Eric Broker, Communications Manager, 612-342-1612, ebroker@mnopera.org

Minnesota Opera Presents *Das Rheingold*, the Epic Opening of Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*

International cast stars Greer Grimsley, the definitive Wotan of our age, as the king of the gods, and features operatic superstar Denyce Graves in her first Wagnerian role

MINNEAPOLIS (October 20, 2016) - Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*, the opening of one of the most monumental works of art ever created, comes to Minnesota Opera for the first time on November 12, 2016. The first installment of Wagner’s four-evening, 16-hour *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelungen*) – widely considered the greatest and most ambitious work ever conceived for the lyric stage – features Wagner’s narrative of gods, mortals, corruption and redemption. This new production is reimagined with innovative video and staging and showcases the Minnesota Opera Orchestra on stage as a dramatic central character.

“The sheer size and scope of *Das Rheingold* presents a massive challenge for any opera company,” said President and General Director Ryan Taylor. “We’re lucky to have an ideal team to lead it – Music Director Michael Christie on the podium and Brian Staufenbiel as director. Our production brings together a cast made up of familiar and unfamiliar singers, all of whom will bring extraordinary artistry to Wagner’s masterwork.”

Scorned by three beautiful Rhinemaidens, the dwarf Alberich renounces love and steals the Rhine’s magical gold to forge a ring granting its bearer absolute power. Alberich’s theft precipitates a legendary struggle as Wotan, king of the gods, vies with the dwarf for supreme rule. Wagner’s masterpiece explores philosophical themes still relevant today: capitalism and the exploitation of nature, Jungian archetypes and the collective unconscious, and the interrelation of law and power.

Minnesota Opera Music Director Michael Christie, heralded as “a director open to adventure and challenge” by *The New York Times*, conducts *Das Rheingold*. “In the history of music, there are only a handful of composers that have irrevocably changed the course of music that followed. Wagner is among the most important of this elite group,” said Christie. “*Das Rheingold* is an epic musical narrative leading performers and audience alike in a highly descriptive and bold journey. The music of *Das Rheingold* is sometimes dark-toned and gruff, but always amazingly beautiful. I couldn’t be more excited to conduct this work.”

Das Rheingold marks Stage Director Brian Staufenbiel’s company debut. “Wagner’s world of flawed gods, aspiring demi-gods and power-mad dwarves presents a formidable challenge for modern sensibilities,” said Staufenbiel. “So in mounting this production of *Das Rheingold*, I sought to connect Wagner’s mythical realm with the mysterious complexities of our technological era. The action takes place in a future where science and technology have caught up with nature, where the organic, the mechanical and the digital have started to fuse.”

Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley stars in *Das Rheingold* as Wotan. Last seen at Minnesota Opera in 2014’s *La fanciulla del West*, Mr. Grimsley has been described by the *Star Tribune* as “a force of nature.” He is internationally recognized as an outstanding singing actor and one of the most prominent Wagnerian singers of our day. He last sang the eminent role of Wotan for the Metropolitan Opera’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, directly followed by a full production of the cycle for Seattle Opera. His interpretation of Wotan has also brought him to multiple esteemed international opera houses; highlights of this include his portrayal of the role in its entirety in Berlin, Bologna, Barcelona and Tokyo.

Grimsley is joined by Katharine Goeldner (*Hamlet*, 2013) as Fricka and Karin Wolverson (*Silent Night*, 2011) as Freia. Richard Cox and Nathan Berg make their Minnesota Opera debuts as Loge and Alberich, respectively. Mezzo-soprano superstar Denyce Graves (*Doubt*, 2013) returns to Minnesota Opera in her first Wagnerian role, Erda.

- What:** Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*
Sung in German with English translations projected above the stage
- Where:** Ordway Music Theater, 345 Washington St., Saint Paul, MN 55102
- When:** Saturday, November 12, 2016, at 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, November 15, 2016, at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, November 17, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, November 19, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, November 20, 2016 at 2 p.m.
- Tickets:** \$25-\$200. Call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612-333-6669, Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., or purchase online at mnoopera.org.
- Media:** Press information and digital assets are available at our [Online Press Room](#). Check back for updated resources and information.

The Creative Team

Conductor	Michael Christie
Stage Director	Brian Staufenbiel
Production Concept	Brian Staufenbiel
Projections and Video Design	David Murakami
Costume Design	Matthew LeFebvre
Lighting Design	Nicole Pearce
Wig and Make-Up Design	David Zimmerman

The Cast

Wotan	Greer Grimsley
Alberich	Nathan Berg
Erda	Denyce Graves
Fricka	Katharine Goeldner
Freia	Karin Wolverson
Mime	Dennis Petersen
Loge	Richard Cox
Donner	Kyle Albertson
Fafner	Julian Close
Fasolt	Jeremy Galyon
Froh	Christopher Colmenero+
Woglinde	Mary Evelyn Hangley+
Wellgunde	Alexandra Razskazoff+
Flosshilde	Nadia Fayad+

+Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

To learn more about *Das Rheingold*, please visit mnoopera.org/das-rheingold. There you will find a full synopsis, artist biographies, audio clips, set and costume renderings, ticketing services and other company information.

Media Sponsor
TwinCities
PIONEER PRESS

###

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.