

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

Project Opera Presents *The Nightingale* **Minnesota Opera's premiere vocal training program mounts a production** **based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale**

MINNEAPOLIS (January 6, 2017) – Project Opera's *The Nightingale*, by Imant Raminsh, premieres February 10, 2017 in a youth-performed, fully-staged production at The Lab Theater (700 1st St N, Minneapolis).

The Nightingale was composed by Imant Raminsh, a Latvia-born, Canadian composer known for beautiful choral and other vocal works. Based on the famous Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, it is the story of a Chinese emperor who prefers the tinkling of a bejeweled mechanical bird to the song of a real nightingale. When the mechanical bird breaks, the real nightingale sings to the emperor on his deathbed, saving his life while teaching him the values of friendship and humility. A parable of our time, this opera celebrates the natural over the artificial and the power of song over death.

The cast and orchestra of *The Nightingale* are entirely comprised of young people. "It is always such a privilege to conduct these kids every weekend," says Matthew Abernathy, Music Director of Project Opera. "They have an incredible and often overlooked ability to respond like mature musicians and create exemplary performances that are of the highest quality."

Project Opera, a vocal training program for students in grades 4-12, is the centerpiece of Minnesota Opera's expanding education program for young singers. Led by Music Director Matthew Abernathy, Project Opera teaches healthy vocal technique, exposes students to repertoire in the major operatic languages and instills the fundamentals of acting technique throughout the year-long program. Project Opera casts its youth participants in leading roles, and enlists young instrumentalists to serve in the opera orchestra. Founded in 2004, the group produces a fully-staged opera each year, as well as several other concerts.

"In addition to presenting a full opera every spring, we're proud to offer an intensive Apprenticeship class for our high school seniors," says Abernathy. "We work very hard to give them a head start on their undergraduate music studies by providing voice masterclasses, music theory training, and audition preparation. As a testament to its success, there have been several former participants who are now young artists at major opera companies, including two at Minnesota Opera this season!"

Project Opera has performed two world premiere commissions, *The Giver*, by Susan Kander and based on the novel by Lois Lowry, and *Memory Boy* with music by Reinaldo Moya and libretto by Mark Campbell. The program is an important part of Minnesota Opera's commitment to supporting young artists.

- What:** Project Opera's production of *The Nightingale*
Sung in English with English captions projected above the stage
- Where:** The Lab Theater, 700 1st St N, Minneapolis, MN 55401
- When:** Friday, February 10, 2017 at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Saturday, February 11, 2017 at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- Tickets:** \$15 for adults, \$5 for kids 18 and under. 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 at mnopera.org/press. Check back for updated resources and information.

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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.