

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### Minnesota Opera Presents the World Premiere of *Dinner at Eight*

#### Kaufman and Ferber’s dark comedy comes to life in a new opera by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer William Bolcom and librettist Mark Campbell

**MINNEAPOLIS (February 24, 2017)** - *Dinner at Eight*, a new comic opera by composer William Bolcom and librettist Mark Campbell based on the play by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, premieres on Saturday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m. at the Music Theater at the Ordway.

*Dinner at Eight* is a Depression-era comedy of manners in which the wife of a once-affluent shipping magnate plans a society dinner for an assortment of wealthy or well-born acquaintances. Eventually, the guests’ tangled and intimate connections to one another are revealed. The original play opened in 1932 on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre, and inspired a star-studded film adaptation the following year. It has enjoyed two Broadway revivals; the opera will be its first musical adaptation.

“It is tremendously gratifying to present a comic opera, particularly by an American legend like William Bolcom,” said Artistic Director Dale Johnson. “The Great Depression provided fodder for a multitude of artistic masterpieces, and *Dinner at Eight* by Kaufman and Ferber belongs in that category. The play is an ensemble piece, fast-paced and brilliantly witty, filled with extraordinary characters. These are ideal elements for an opera. Both William Bolcom and Mark Campbell straddle the classical and American popular styles, and I can’t think of a better combination to bring this sparkling comedy, with its rapid-fire dialogue and hilarious situations, to the opera stage.”

Pulitzer Prize- and Grammy Award-winning composer William Bolcom, whose music *The New York Times* described as moving with “a suave assurance that serves comic and dramatic impulses equally well,” said, “What I’ve always loved about the play is its ability to merge humor and emotional depth. The opera has been high-wire balancing act for both Mark and me—we worked hard to find just the right tone. I think we’ve come up with something audiences will love.”

“*Dinner at Eight* features marital infidelity, financial ruin, social opportunism, a fatal disease and a suicide. Naturally, it’s a comedy,” said librettist Mark Campbell, who says he is thrilled to be working with Minnesota Opera on this, his fifth commission with the company (*Silent Night*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Memory Boy* and *The Shining* are others). “It’s also an incisive exploration into the impact of economically compromised times on the American class system—which is very much a part of the New Works Initiative’s goals in exploring distinctly American themes. With *Dinner at Eight*, Bill and I have fused the best traditions of musical theater with those of opera to create a contemporary work that brings out both the light and the dark in the brilliant Kaufman/Ferber play.”

American soprano Mary Dunleavy, Minnesota Opera favorite Brenda Harris (*The Manchurian Candidate*, *Macbeth*) and Stephen Powell star in this fast-paced and brilliantly funny ensemble piece.

**What:** *Dinner at Eight*  
Music by William Bolcom  
Libretto by Mark Campbell  
Based on the play by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber

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

- When:** Saturday, March 11, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, March 18, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, March 19, 2017 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](http://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	David Agler
Stage Director	Tomer Zvulun
Set Design	Alexander Dodge
Costume Design	Victoria Tzykun
Lighting Design	Robert Wierzel
Sound Design	Kevin Springer
Wig and Make-Up Design	David Zimmerman

#### The Cast

Millicent Jordan	Mary Dunleavy
Oliver Jordan	Stephen Powell
Paula Jordan	Siena Forest*
Dan Packard	Craig Irvin**
Kitty Packard	Susannah Biller
Joseph Talbot	Andrew Garland
Lucy Talbot	Adriana Zabala**
Carlotta Vance	Brenda Harris
Larry Renault	Richard Troxell
Max Kane	Benjamin Sieverding*
Gustave	Thomas Glass
Tina	Nadia Fayad
Miss Alden	Alexandra Razskazoff*
Miss Copeland	Mary Evelyn Hangley*
Mr. Hatfield	William Bryan Lee*
Eddie	Tom Ringberg
Zoltán	Andy Stein

- \*Minnesota Opera Resident Artist  
\*\*Minnesota Opera Resident Artist Alumni

To learn more about *Dinner at Eight*, please visit [mnoopera.org/dinner-at-eight](http://mnoopera.org/dinner-at-eight). There you will find a full synopsis, artist biographies, audio clips, set and costume renderings, ticketing services and other company information.

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