

## A Note from the Creators of *Silent Night*

When Minnesota Opera approached us to create an opera based on the 2005 movie, *Joyeux Noël*, we both quickly (though singly at that point) said, “yes” without knowing what we were really getting into. We were both unfamiliar with each other, unfamiliar with the movie, had never worked before at Minnesota Opera and one of us was entirely new to the form. Our collaboration was very much an “arranged marriage” and our child – the project – had already been chosen for us from the orphanage of ideas.

Collaborations between composers and librettists are notoriously ... well ... operatic. Stories persist (many of them true) about how neither collaborator budes in his or her music or words, and both let fly accusations of who destroyed the other’s work more. However, composers and librettists may suddenly scream very harmoniously at directors, conductors, producing organizations and even wigmakers when they feel their work has been compromised slightly (and therefore utterly ruined).

We have no such stories to report.

We got along instantly – and still do. From the start, we found our political views very much aligned and, as we began to work, became increasingly moved by the message this story conveys, the way it conveys it ... and how sadly relevant it still is.

Along the way, and through three invaluable workshops, we were guided expertly by our director Eric Simonson and conductor Michael Christie, artistic director Dale Johnson (who was both matchmaker and surrogate parent) and former president Kevin Smith. Mary Dibbern, Bill Murray and Clinton Smith also made considerable contributions to the growing of this opera, as well as the casts in our workshops – many of whom we’re grateful are still with the production.

If something felt too long, we trimmed it; if something felt “less than ...” dramatically, we made it “more than ...” If a note made a singer uncomfortable, it was adjusted. If the bagpipe was playing too loudly in the violist’s ear, it was moved (along with the piper) to the other room – away from any potential otic damage. So, along the way, revisions were made. And more – though we hope less substantial – will be made during rehearsal.

Of all the performing arts, opera is the most collaborative. It demands that everyone involved have a shared vision and that all opinions are respected and heard, whether those opinions are eventually heeded or discarded. Whatever the outcome of *Silent Night*, how-ever it may succeed in making its message resonate with the public, we will cherish the collaborative experience Minnesota Opera has given us our entire lives.