

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Daniel Zillmann, 612.342.1612 or dzillmann@mnopera.org

## Minnesota Opera presents the world premiere of *Silent Night*

First opera by award-winning composer Kevin Puts marks the first  
commission of the Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative

Academy Award-winning director Eric Simonson leads the production

**What:** World Premiere of *Silent Night*. Composed by Kevin Puts. Libretto by Mark Campbell. Based on the screenplay by Christian Carion for the motion picture *Joyeux Noël* produced by Nord-Ouest Production. Sung in English, German, French, Italian and Latin with English translations projected above the stage.

**Where:** Ordway, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102

**When:** Saturday, November 12, 7:30pm Tuesday, November 15, 7:30pm  
Thursday, November 17, 7:30pm Saturday, November 19, 7:30pm  
Sunday, November 20, 2pm

**Tickets:** \$20 – \$200. Call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612.333.6669, Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm, or purchase online at mnopera.org.

**Media:** An online press kit is available now at [mnopera.org/silentnightkit](http://mnopera.org/silentnightkit), which includes full bios, links to view design renderings and other useful resources.

Contact Communications Manager, Daniel Zillmann, to take advantage of the following interview, photo and video opportunities: **Tuesday, November 8, 7pm, Wednesday, November 9, 7:30pm, and Thursday, November 10, 7:30pm** (Dress Rehearsals at Ordway, 345 Washington Street, Saint Paul, MN)

Minneapolis—Described by *The New York Times* as “exhilarating and compelling”, the music of KEVIN PUTS has been commissioned and performed by leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists throughout North America, Europe and the Far East. Known for his distinctive and richly colored musical voice, Mr. Puts has received many of today’s most prestigious honors and awards for composition. *Silent Night* is his first opera.

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**The true story of Christmas Eve, 1914.** Based upon a fascinating true story, *Silent Night* recounts a miraculous moment of peace during one of the bloodiest wars in human history. On the western front of World War I, Scottish, French and German officers defy their superiors and negotiate a Christmas truce. Enemies become brothers as they come together to share Christmas and bury their dead.

*Silent Night* is the first commission and the fourth production of the company's ongoing **MINNESOTA OPERA NEW WORKS INITIATIVE**, a multi-year program designed to infuse the operatic art form with new commissions and revivals of contemporary American works. This world premiere also marks the return of Academy Award-winning director **ERIC SIMONSON** (*Wuthering Heights*, *The Grapes of Wrath*). Renowned tenor **WILLIAM BURDEN** (*Passion*) stars as the soldier whose voice inspires peace among adversaries. Soprano **KARIN WOLVERTON** (*La bohème*) is the Danish opera singer Anna Sørensen. The rest of the German contingent includes bass-baritone **CRAIG IRVIN** (debut) as Lieutenant Horstmayer and tenor **A.J. GLUECKERT** (debut) as the Kronprinz. The French contingent is made up of local favorite baritone **ANDREW WILKOWSKE** (*Cinderella*), who creates the role of Ponchel, bass **BEN WAGER** (*Wuthering Heights*) as The French General, baritone **LIAM BONNER** (debut) as Lieutenant Audebert and soprano **ANGELA MORTELLARO** (*Così fan tutte*) as his wife Madeleine. The Scottish contingent consists of baritones **TROY COOK** (*The Barber of Seville*) as Father Palmer and **MICHAEL NYBY** (*La traviata*) as William Dale, tenor **JOHN ROBERT LINDSEY** (debut) as Jonathan Dale, baritone **GABRIEL PREISSER** (debut) as Lieutenant Gordon and bass **JOSEPH BEUTEL** (debut) as The British Major. **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** returns after his highly praised debut last season conducting both *La traviata* and *Wuthering Heights*. **FRANCIS O'CONNOR** (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*) takes on the difficult task of creating the World War I front on the Ordway stage with costume designer **KÄRIN KOPISCHKE** (*The Grapes of Wrath*, *Rusalka*), lighting designer **MARCUS DILLIARD** (*Così fan tutte*) and projection designer **ANDRZEJ GOULDING** (debut).

#### THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Michael Christie
Stage Director	Eric Simonson
Set Designer	Francis O'Connor
Costume Designer	Kärin Kopischke
Lighting Designer	Marcus Dilliard
Projection Designer	Andrzej Goulding*

#### THE CAST

Nikolaus Sprink, <i>an opera singer</i>	William Burden
Anna Sørensen, <i>his lover</i>	Karin Wolverson
Lieutenant Horstmayer	Craig Irvin*
Kronprinz, <i>son of Kaiser Wilhelm II</i>	A.J. Glueckert*+
Jonathan Dale	John Robert Lindsey*+
William Dale, <i>his brother</i>	Michael Nyby
Father Palmer	Troy Cook
Lieutenant Gordon	Gabriel Preisser*+
The British Major	Joseph Beutel*+
Lieutenant Audebert	Liam Bonner*
Ponchel, <i>his aide-de-camp</i>	Andrew Wilkowske
The French General,	Ben Wager
Madeleine, <i>Lieutenant Audebert's wife</i>	Angela Mortellaro+

\*Minnesota Opera Debut, +Minnesota Opera Resident Artist

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## ***Silent Night* in HD**

Minnesota Opera will be recording the November 17 and 19 performances of *Silent Night* in HD for national and international release. The Opera is committed to the production and proliferation of new works and, through electronic distribution (a major focus of the **NEW WORKS INITIATIVE**), *Silent Night* will be given life well beyond its week onstage at Ordway.

## **Community Events Surrounding *Silent Night***

Minnesota Opera has created a number of events in partnership with other arts and cultural organizations that will explore the themes, the music and the sources for the highly anticipated world premiere of *Silent Night*. Complete details can be found online at [mnopera.org/silentnightevents](http://mnopera.org/silentnightevents). Please consider the opportunities listed below:

### ***Silent Night: The Story of the Opera and the Truce***

Join Minnesota Opera Head of Music **MARY DIBBERN** for an engaging look at *Silent Night* and the history surrounding this incredible story on **Wednesday, October 12, 1pm** at Veterans Administration, 6636 Cedar Avenue South in Richfield. Call 612.342.9573 for more information.

### **Opera Up Close: *Silent Night***

This Opera Up Close will be held on **Monday, October 24, 7pm** at the Minnesota Opera Center, 620 North First Street in the Minneapolis North Loop. Hosted by Minnesota Opera President and General Director **ALLAN NAPLAN**, special guests will include composer **KEVIN PUTS**, librettist **MARK CAMPBELL**, conductor **MICHAEL CHRISTIE** and Minnesota Opera Artistic Director **DALE JOHNSON**. Visit [mnopera.org/silentnightevents](http://mnopera.org/silentnightevents) to purchase tickets or call the Minnesota Opera Ticket Office at 612.333.6669, Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm.

### **Dissent in a Time of War**

Art and policy intersect again as Minnesota Opera and the **UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S HUMPHREY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS** convene a public conversation on **Wednesday, October 26, 7pm** at the Humphrey School, 301 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South in Minneapolis. Exploring the opera's themes of war, dissent and discipline during WWI, panelists will tackle contemporary issues of military policy. Composer **KEVIN PUTS** and cast members of *Silent Night* will present musical selections. Admission is free but seating is limited. R.S.V.P. online to reserve a seat at [silent-night.eventbrite.com](http://silent-night.eventbrite.com). For information about the Tempo pre-reception, visit [mnopera.org/tempo](http://mnopera.org/tempo).

### **Minnesota Opera at Alliance Française**

Join **ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE** for a sneak peek at *Silent Night, en français*, on **Thursday, October 27, 6pm** at Alliance Française, 113 North First Street in the Minneapolis North Loop. Minnesota Opera Head of Music and AF member **MARY DIBBERN** traveled to northern France and Belgium to walk the site of the 1914 Christmas truce and interview the people who are keeping its memory alive. Admission is free for AF members (\$10/non-members). Call 612.332.0436 or visit [afmsp.org](http://afmsp.org) for information.

### **Opera in the Trenches**

Join **MARY DIBBERN**, Minnesota Opera's Head of Music, for an engaging look at *Silent Night* and the history surrounding this incredible story on **Sunday, October 30, 3pm** at the Germanic-American Institute, 301 Summit Avenue in Saint Paul. This presentation, presented in English and co-hosted by University of Minnesota Professor **HANS-OLAF PFANNKUCH**, will be similar to the Alliance Française program on October 27. Admission is free but seating is limited. Call 651.222.7027 for information or R.S.V.P. online at [mnopera.org/silentnightevents](http://mnopera.org/silentnightevents).

### ***Joyeux Noël* at The Trylon**

From **Friday, November 4 through Sunday, November 6**, in conjunction with the world premiere of *Silent Night*, **TAKE-UP PRODUCTIONS** will present *Joyeux Noël* by Christian Carion, the motion picture that inspired this moving opera. Check show times and purchase tickets online at [take-up.org/buy/347](http://take-up.org/buy/347) or call 612.424.5468.



Set design by Francis O'Connor

### To learn more about *Silent Night* ...

Please visit our website at [mnopera.org/season](http://mnopera.org/season). On it you will find casting updates, artist biographies, synopses, background notes, education program information, audio and video clips, suggestions for further reading and listening, ticketing services and other company information.

### Opera Insights

One hour before show time, Minnesota Opera Head of Music **MARY DIBBERN** and artistic staff members present Opera Insights – free, fun and informative 30-minute sessions held prior to each performance in Ordway's Marzitelli Foyer.

### *Silent Night* sponsors and co-producers

*Silent Night* is underwritten by Margaret and Angus Wurtele.

Additional major support provided by OPERA America, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Ruth Easton Fund of The Edelstein Family Foundation.

The 2011–2012 Minnesota Opera season is sponsored by The Private Client Reserve at U.S. Bank.

*Silent Night* is a new Minnesota Opera co-production with Opera Company of Philadelphia.

The Minnesota Opera's mission is to produce opera and opera education programs  
at the highest artistic level that inspire and entertain our audiences  
and enrich the cultural life of our community.

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