

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Minnesota Opera appoints Michael Christie as Music Director

Minneapolis—Minnesota Opera announced today the appointment of Michael Christie as Music Director, a new strategic role for the company. Maestro Christie is charged with enhancing the company's artistic product through his work with the Minnesota Opera Orchestra, as well as providing leadership by conducting a majority of each season's operas, beginning with the 2012–2013 season (details of the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season to be announced on January 28).

“On behalf of myself, Artistic Director Dale Johnson and Minnesota Opera's staff and our Board of Directors, I'm pleased to welcome Michael Christie to our team,” said **PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR ALLAN NAPLAN**. “His orchestra-building success leading The Phoenix Symphony and Colorado Music Festival, his championing of new works and his excellent musical leadership of our productions of *La traviata*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Silent Night*, confirmed for us that he is the right person to fill this exciting new role.”

Christie has enjoyed a successful orchestral and operatic career both nationally and internationally. His role as Music Director of the Colorado Music Festival in Boulder, Colorado began in 2000, and his contract there has recently been extended to 2017. He will conclude his tenure as the Virginia G. Piper Music Director of The Phoenix Symphony, which began in 2005, in June 2013.

Christie's opera presence in the U.S. began in 2009 with the acclaimed revival of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis (OTSL). The opera was also presented at the Aspen Music Festival in 2010. The OTSL production won the *Irish Times* “Opera of the Year” honors at Wexford Festival Opera in Ireland. His work in both Aspen and Boulder contributed to his being named “Musician of the Year” by the *Denver Post* in 2010. He returned to St. Louis in 2011 for a dynamic and well-received production of John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and he will lead the North American premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* there in June 2012. He will also conduct the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* at San Francisco Opera.

Previously, Christie was Chief Conductor of the Queensland Orchestra (2000–2004) and the Brooklyn Philharmonic (2005–2010). He has won numerous ASCAP awards for Adventurous Programming with each of his American orchestras and has developed a reputation for diverse, interdisciplinary programming and audience-building initiatives.

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He began his formal operatic training as an Assistant Conductor at the Opernhaus Zürich in the late 1990s after winning the prize for Outstanding Potential at the First International Sibelius Conductor's Competition in Helsinki, Finland at the age of 21.

"I'm immensely excited to be joining the Minnesota Opera team," said CHRISTIE. "Finding a company and community that are both so closely aligned with my own artistic beliefs and goals is tremendous. I look forward to being a steward of the company's New Works Initiative while bringing dedication and enthusiasm to opera's greatest known masterpieces."

"Michael rose to the top of our list after an extensive, multi-season search process, and the Minnesota Opera Orchestra really responded to his leadership in the pit," said ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON. "His impact has been noticeable to the audience and critics alike, and his manner and approach with the musicians has fostered the start of what we know will be a very fruitful partnership for seasons to come."

Christie's wife, Alexis, will continue her medical career at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota as a fellow of Intensive Care. The Christie family will move to Rochester in July 2012.

"I look forward to this new role at Minnesota Opera and to becoming a contributing member of the cultural life of this incredible community," CHRISTIE said.

## **Michael Christie's Biography**

Michael Christie became the Virginia G. Piper Music Director of The Phoenix Symphony in 2005, and served as Music Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic from 2005–2010. He also serves as Music Director of the Colorado Music Festival, where he has been praised for innovative programming and audience development success since his inaugural season in 2001.

Christie has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra and the Cincinnati Symphony, among many others. He has also conducted extensively in Europe, including operas and ballet performances at the Opernhaus Zürich and John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Wexford Festival Opera in Ireland. He made his U.S. operatic conducting debut at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis (2009) and the Aspen Music Festival (2010), also conducting *Ghosts*. In 2011, he made his debut with Minnesota Opera where he conducted Verdi's *La traviata*, Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* and the world premiere of Kevin Puts' *Silent Night*. His upcoming projects include Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* at Minnesota Opera as well as the world premieres of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* at San Francisco Opera.

Michael Christie is known for ambitious projects that focus on interdisciplinary collaborations with visual artists, dance companies and theater groups, as well as with contemporary composers such as Gorecki, Ligeti, Adams, Golijov, Higdon and Tan Dun.

**"Michael Christie is a director open to adventure and challenge ... his programming is fresh and adventurous, and he has made himself as accessible as can be."** (*The New York Times*)

Please visit Michael Christie's website at [michaelchristieonline.com](http://michaelchristieonline.com), where you will find his full biography, concert schedule, news and reviews, photos and other information.

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.