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Michigan Opera Theatre to Present Pulitzer Prize-Winning *Silent Night* Based on Christmas Truce of World War I

Opera complemented by period concert, film screening and history lecture

Nov. 12-20 at the Detroit Opera House

Detroit, Nov. 2, 2016 – Michigan Opera Theatre’s 2016-17 season, celebrating founder David DiChiera’s legacy, continues with American Composer Kevin Puts’s Pulitzer Prize-winning contemporary opera, *Silent Night*. Based on the 2005 French film *Joyeux Noël*, the opera tells the story of actual events from World War I when a Christmas carol unites opposing soldiers for a spontaneous ceasefire on Christmas Eve.

The two-act opera explores the unsustainability of war when enemies come to know each other as friends. On the border of no man’s land on Christmas Eve, warring soldiers join to swap gifts and stories. The one-night ceasefire is not well-received by the soldiers’ superiors, who face individual, sometimes tragic, consequences, further exploring ideas of the futility of war and responding to the call of duty.

“As we celebrate Veterans Day and enter in to the holiday season, we are extremely proud to offer this touching opera on what it means to be human, especially against the contrasting backdrops of wartime and Christmas,” said **DiChiera**. “We invite the public to join us for an incredible experience of beautiful music and a moving story.”

Muskegon native **Chad Johnson** makes his Michigan debut in a leading opera role. The Western Michigan University alumnus will play Nikolaus Sprink, a German opera singer called to the line of duty to perform for the crown prince of Germany on the battlefield whose singing helps to establish the truce. The cast also includes **Erin Wall** (Anna Sorensen), **Phillip Addis** (Lt. Audebert), **Kristopher Irmiter** (Lt. Horstmayer), **Gabriel Preisser** (Lt. Gordon), **John Robert Lindsey** (Jonathan Dale), **Joseph Michael Brent** (Kronprinz) and **Daniel Belcher** (Fr. Palmer). For complete casting information, please visit michiganopera.org.

The opera is directed by **Eric Simonson** and conducted by **David Charles Abell**. It is made possible by **Ford Motor Company** with additional support from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**.

The opera will include four performances Nov. 12-20 at the Detroit Opera House as well as a Student Dress Rehearsal on Nov. 11th with discounted tickets for school groups. An opera talk will be given one hour before each performance.

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The opera is sung in German, French, English, Latin and Italian, with English supertitles projected above the stage.

Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$152. Tickets may be purchased online at www.MichiganOpera.org, by calling (313) 237-7464 or in person at the Detroit Opera House (1526 Broadway, Detroit). Tickets may also be purchased at Ticketmaster.com, at any Ticketmaster outlet, or by calling (800) 745-3000.

To accompany the production, Michigan Opera Theatre is hosting several community events with various community partners:

Music from the Trenches: Scarab Club, 217 Farnsworth, Detroit

- Chamber music concert featuring music from World War 1 as well as additional works from Puts
- Nov. 4, 7:30 p.m., Nov. 6, 7 p.m.
- General admission - \$25, Students - \$10

Film Screening: *Joyeux Noël*: Detroit Yacht Club, 1 Riverbank Dr., Detroit

- Screening of the film upon which *Silent Night* is based
- Nov. 10, 7:30 p.m.
- Free, RSVP required: <http://www.michiganopera.org/special-event/film-screening-joyeux-noel/>

Lecture: “The Great War in Song and on the Stage”: Schaeffer Music Recital Hall, Old Main, 480 Hancock St., Detroit

- Lecture on the intersection of music and history during World War I and in *Silent Night*
- Nov. 11, 11:45 a.m.
- Free

Michigan Opera Theatre is also partnering with the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine for a medical student program exploring the themes of *Silent Night* from a healthcare perspective. The program will focus on aspects of the opera such as decision-making, role conflicts and patient relationship-building during intense periods that often have life-or-death consequences.

Additional information about the community events is available at <http://www.michiganopera.org/opera/silent-night/>.

Silent Night

Music by Kevin Puts

Friday, Nov. 11 11 a.m. (Student Dress Rehearsal)

Saturday, Nov. 12 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 16 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 19 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 20 2:30 p.m.

At the Detroit Opera House

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MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded in 1971, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.