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## Grammy-winning Conductor Michael Christie

### Makes Debut with Michigan Opera Theatre leading Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath*

Saturday, May 11, 2019 at 7:30pm  
Wednesday, May 15, 2019 at 7:30pm  
Friday, May 17, 2019 at 7:30pm  
Sunday, May 19, 2019 at 2:30pm

Detroit Opera House | 1526 Broadway Street | Detroit, MI  
Tickets (\$39 - \$160) and more information: [www.michiganopera.org](http://www.michiganopera.org)

“Conductor Michael Christie melds fire and ice.” – *Star Tribune*

[www.michaelchristieonline.com](http://www.michaelchristieonline.com)

Detroit, MI — Grammy-winning conductor **Michael Christie** makes his **Michigan Opera Theatre** debut with performances running **May 11 – 19, 2019** at the **Detroit Opera House** (1526 Broadway Street). Christie leads **Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath*** (2007), an opera in two acts with libretto by Michael Korie.

This heart-wrenching opera, based on the classic novel by John Steinbeck, tells the story of the Joad family on their quest for survival during the 1930s Dust Bowl. Featuring folk and jazz-inspired music by Ricky Ian Gordon, *The Grapes of Wrath* has been called “the great American opera” by *Musical America*.

Michael Christie echoes, “*The Grapes of Wrath* is one of the most significant American novels and has been set in such a beautiful and provocative way by Ricky Ian Gordon and Michael Korie to be considered one of the most significant American operas. Every page of the score calls out with obvious American inspiration.”

This is a co-production with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, directed by James Robinson. The cast features Katharine Goeldner as Ma Joad; Tobias Greenhalgh as Tom Joad; Deanna Breiwick as Rosasharn; Deborah Nansteel as Granma; Geoffrey Agpalo as Jim Casy; Michael Day as Al Joad; Dennis Petersen as Grampa, Muley, Endicotts, and Patrol Guard; and Jeff Mattsey as Uncle John.

**Michael Christie** is a thoughtfully innovative conductor, equally at home in the symphonic and opera worlds, who is focused on making the audience experience at his performances entertaining, enlightening, and enriching. He is the newly appointed Music Director of the New West Symphony, serving the greater Los Angeles area in Thousand Oaks and Oxnard, California. *The New York Times* reports, “Michael Christie is a director open to adventure and challenge,” and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* declares, “If Michael Christie represents the future of music in this country, the future looks promising indeed.”

Christie won a 2019 Grammy Award (Best Opera Recording) for the world premiere recording of Mason Bates' *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* with The Santa Fe Opera (PENTATONE). In 2017, Christie led the world premiere performances at The Santa Fe Opera, “with suave assurance” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), with “precision and pizzazz” (*Santa Fe New Mexican*), and “preside[d] over an expertly executed performance” (*The Financial Times*).

Christie was featured in *Opera News* in August 2012 as one of 25 people believed to “break out and become major forces in the field in the coming decade.” At Minnesota Opera, Christie led 24 productions over eight years, six seasons as its first-ever Music Director (2012-2018). Highlights for Christie’s 2018-2019 season include engagements with Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theater, Opéra de Montréal, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, and Michigan Opera Theatre. 2019-2020 will be Christie’s first full season as Music Director of the New West Symphony, and he will lead operas with San Francisco Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

Deeply committed to bringing new works to life, Michael Christie has championed commissions by leading and emerging composers alike, including Mark Adamo, Mason Bates, Michael Daugherty, Osvaldo Golijov, Mark Grey, Daron Hagen, Huang Ruo, Matthew Hindson, Marjan Mozetich, Stephen Paulus, Kevin Puts, and more. In 2018, he led the world premiere of *An American Soldier*, a two-act opera by Huang Ruo, with Opera Theatre of St. Louis. *The New York Times* reported, “Both the subtle colorings and pummeling intensity came through in the compelling performance the conductor Michael Christie drew from the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.”

Christie’s conducting career, spanning more than 20 years, has included serving as Music Director of the Phoenix Symphony (2005-2013) and Brooklyn Philharmonic (2005-2010), and as Chief Conductor of the Queensland Orchestra (2001-2004) in Australia, as well as guest appearances leading the Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, and the Symphonies of Dallas, St. Louis, Atlanta, Houston, Minnesota, Oregon, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Santa Rosa. Christie’s many European engagements have included leading the Rotterdam Philharmonic, DSO Berlin, Orchestre National de Lille, Swedish and Netherlands Radio Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, NDR Hannover Orchestra and the Czech Philharmonic. In addition, Christie enjoys a strong profile in Australia, where he has conducted the Sydney Symphony, Tasmanian Symphony, Opera Queensland, and the Western Australian Symphony in Perth.

Michael Christie first came to international attention in 1995 when he was awarded a special prize for “Outstanding Potential” at the First International Sibelius Conductors’ Competition in Helsinki. Following the competition, he was invited to become an apprentice conductor with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra where he subsequently worked with Daniel Barenboim as well as at the Berlin State Opera during the 1996-1997 season. Christie graduated from the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music with a bachelor's degree in trumpet performance.

Christie lives in the Twin Cities with his wife, Alexis, a physician, and their two children.

For more information, visit [www.michaelchristieonline.com](http://www.michaelchristieonline.com).

### **About Michigan Opera Theatre**

Michigan Opera Theatre, 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 by Dr. David DiChiera, the company’s mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. The organization is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown, Principal Conductor Stephen Lord and Chairman of the Board Rick Williams. Visit the website at [www.michiganopera.org](http://www.michiganopera.org).

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