

Michael Christie

Conductor

Grammy award-winning conductor 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, he 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*).

Michael 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) – from staples of the repertory such as *La Traviata*, *Nabucco*, *Macbeth*, *La Boheme*, *Fanciulla del West*, *Arabella*, and *Das Rheingold* to performances of 20th and 21st century operas via Minnesota Opera’s New Works Initiative, including Bernard Herrmann’s only opera *Wuthering Heights*, the world premiere of Kevin Puts’ *Silent Night* which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2012, the world premiere of Kevin Puts’ *The Manchurian Candidate*, and the world premiere of Paul Moravec’s *The Shining*.

In the 2019-2020 season, Christie leads performances of Mason Bates’ *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* with San Francisco Opera; Mozart’s *The*

Abduction from the Seraglio with Lyric Opera of Kansas City; and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicci* with Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theater. In his first full season as Music Director of the New West Symphony, Christie celebrates the orchestra's 25th anniversary with a year of symphonic masterworks and world class soloists, including pianist Olga Kern, violinist Sarah Chang, guitarist Jason Vieaux, and bandoneónist Julien Labro. Christie also introduces two new audience engagement opportunities: *Intermission Insights*, ten-minute onstage interviews with the musicians; and *Entr'Acte*, a newer work performed during intermission.

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 "with impressive precision," as praised by *Dallas Morning News*. *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."

Other recent highlights include Christie's San Francisco Opera debut in the world premiere performances of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and the world premiere of *Twenty-Seven*, a new opera by Ricky Ian Gordon commissioned by Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Notable past performances include highly praised productions of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and the North American premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland*, all with Opera Theatre of St. Louis; the European premieres of *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Wexford Festival Opera; as well as various performances at Opernhaus Zürich, Finnish National Opera, Scottish Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago. In addition to premiering Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* with Minnesota Opera, he also led performances by Opera Company of Philadelphia, Wexford Festival Opera in Ireland, and Opéra de Montréal.

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.

Christie's New York Philharmonic debut came in 2007 when he stepped in on short notice for an ailing Riccardo Muti, and his Carnegie Hall debut came in 2014 when he led the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the Spring for Music festival. Christie also served as the Music Director of the Colorado Music Festival from 2000-2013, where he was highly praised for his innovative programming and where audiences are now at an all-time high, resulting in him being named "Musician of the Year" by *The Denver Post* in 2010.

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.

Acclaim

“A champion of fresh work” – *The Denver Post*

“Michael Christie conducted with remarkable precision and flair.” –
Chicago Tribune

“Conductor Michael Christie led the orchestra in a quintessential performance of Puccini’s beautiful music. [*La Bohème*]” – *Schmopera*

“Michael Christie, in his Lyric debut as conductor, drew poetic commentary from the Lyric Opera Orchestra [*La Traviata*]” – *Chicago Tribune*

“A top notch conductor of new works” – *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

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

“His conducting...revealed total emotional conviction, natural long-line phrasing, and mastery of orchestral color.” – *Musical America*

“Michael Christie conducted with splendid brio and welcome crispness.” –
Opera News

“Michael Christie is a director open to adventure and challenge” – *The New York Times*

“If Michael Christie represents the future of music in this country, the future looks promising indeed.” – *Cincinnati Enquirer*

“[Christie] brings his expertise in new music to bear on this classic score, leading the LOC orchestra with urgency and dramatic sensitivity. [Verdi’s *La Traviata*]” – *Schmopera*

“Conductor Michael Christie, who has made recent marks bringing new American opera to the stage ... did excellent work. He encouraged the singers to indulge in their rattled characters’ most intimate reflections without losing grip of the music’s exciting forward motion. [Verdi’s *La Traviata*]” – *Chicago Sun Times*

“And in an impressive Lyric Opera debut, conductor Michael Christie led the Lyric orchestra in the life-affirming energy of the opera’s grand waltzes and familiar ‘brindisi’ drinking song, and in the pathos of love and intimations of death. Viva Verdi. [*La Traviata*]” – *WWTW Chicago*

“From the opera’s fragile prelude to the Champagne brilliance of the soiree that first fills the stage to the last strains that accompany Violetta’s death, Verdi’s dramatic tapestry flowed from the Lyric Opera Orchestra. Christie led with a consummate sense of both the opera’s instrumental voice and its interplay with the characters before him. [*La Traviata*]” – *Chicago on the Aisle*

“This year’s specialties were Octavio Cardenas’ winning production of *La Bohème*...conducted with brisk mastery by the great Michael Christie.” – *The Independent (Kansas City)*

“And Bates’ score, led with suave assurance by conductor Michael Christie, constantly finds ways to encapsulate a character or a dramatic situation that are accessible but rarely obvious.” – *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Wei Wu sings well as Jobs’s Buddhist mentor Köbun, whose wisecracks undermine his supposed function, Jessica E. Jones sings exquisitely as the mother of Jobs’s child, and Michael Christie presides over an expertly executed performance. Santa Fe Opera has a hit on its hands.” – *Financial Times*

“Michael Christie, Minnesota Opera’s music director and chief conductor, presided in the pit last Saturday night, giving careful guidance to the

pulsating yet delicate electro-acoustic score by 40-year-old Mason Bates, recently named the most-performed composer of his generation.” – *Minnesota Post*

“Michael Christie conducted with precision and pizzazz, and a couple of orchestral interludes truly got the adrenaline pumping. One of them, at about the opera’s one-hour mark, accompanies projected images charting the meteoric rise of the company and its growing complication as a corporate organism. I wouldn’t be surprised if it were extracted to stand as a frenetic orchestral showpiece in its own right.” – *Santa Fe New Mexican*

"Michael Christie, music director of Minnesota Opera, had a strong debut at the podium, conducting [*Dead Man Walking*] with authority." – *Washington Classical Review*

"Yet the highest praise should be reserved for those given the tallest task: conductor Michael Christie and the orchestra. From the hypnotic, slow-building opening to the final triumphal entry into Valhalla, they offer non-stop transportation to a magical world." – *Pioneer Press*

“The true star of the opera in my book, however, was undeniably Maestro Michael Christie, who, like an elite athlete, exerted just enough energy to convey exactly what he wanted from his orchestra, one of the best in the business in my book.” – *Opera Sense*

“Both the subtle colorings and pummeling intensity came through in the compelling performance the conductor Michael Christie drew from the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.” - *The New York Times*

“Conductor Michael Christie, who has shown great skill and sensitivity in the past with everything from Puccini to John Adams, once again directs the orchestra...in a persuasive performance.” - *KDHX*

“Conductor Michael Christie drew crisp, idiomatic playing from the orchestra” - *Star Tribune*

“Christie...shows why he’s an outstanding conductor in the pit.” - *Post-Bulletin*

"Conducting with restraint and precision, Christie captured the American spirit — its determination, resourcefulness and optimism — with a steady rhythmic pulse." - *The Press Democrat*

“Christie...is an elegant conductor with balletic arm movements and a firm grasp of rhythm. He is at once restrained and expressive, an expert at using his undulating arms to lead the orchestra in thunderous crescendos and whispering diminuendos.” - *San Francisco Classical Voice*

“Minnesota Opera has put together an excellent ensemble, while conductor Michael Christie and the orchestra do fine things with the score [for Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*].” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

“The work's virtues [Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*]...are made abundantly clear in this thoughtful, often gripping, production [with] deft pacing by conductor Michael Christie.” *Star Tribune*

"the results were close to perfection ... [Christie] has crafted a smart, cohesive, and accessible playlist of mostly Italian masters, and in the process, has presented the RPO in a new, refreshing light." - *Rochester City Newspaper*

““Figaro” is a long show that flies by, thanks to crisp conducting by Michael Christie, fast-paced direction by Lawless and a versatile scenic design by Leslie Travers.” - *Post-Bulletin*

“Michael Christie and the MN Opera Orchestra delivered a fine performance, and the house (which was unsurprisingly full) was energized and engaged throughout.” - *Life in Revue*