

Face Time: New Minnesota Opera President Ryan Taylor

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WHY ARE SMALL AND MID-SIZED BUSINESS OWNERS IMPORTANT IN THE UPCOMING ELECTION? [Download the Free Report](#)

Though historic in its origins, opera is an art form that's especially needed in the modern age of the digital screen, according to [Minnesota Opera's](#) new president and general director, [Ryan Taylor](#). Opera provides a space where people can connect in a way that's more real than communication through social media or text messages.

Taylor began his work building that type of kinship here in May, when he took his new post after leaving a similar position with the Arizona Opera. That same month, the Minnesota Opera gave world premiere performances of "The Shining," a work based on the horror novel by Stephen King.



Ryan Taylor is the Minnesota Opera's new president.

NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

What follows is a transcript, edited for length and clarity, of a recent Business Journal interview with Taylor.

Can you talk about what you were doing before, in Arizona? I had gone into that organization as the director of artistic administration, and after about a year and three months, the board decided [it] wanted to make a change in [the] leadership structure. [It] offered me the title of general director and to take over the company, which I was extremely hesitant to do. ... It may have been the biggest challenge that I think I've had to face in my administrative career, but I loved it.

What's your vision or plan for Minnesota Opera now? This organization was built on new work, innovation – creating pieces of art that are now part of the public consciousness throughout the country. I think our next question is: What next? Why? Why is it important that we keep doing this?

What's the story with "The Shining"? For a while, this company was one of the only ones that was really devoted to creating new opera. Our art form is hundreds of years old, was begun in Italy, and many people view it as an old, European art form. I think the industry as a whole realized maybe about 20 years ago that if we did nothing but continue to perform old, European art, our audience would sort of shrink over time. I think [the artistic team] took a big risk in saying, "OK, we'll try it."

What sort of ties does the Minnesota Opera have to the business community? We have a board of about 30 members, many of whom serve in some of the big corporations around town. We are exceptionally well-funded and well-sponsored by the community in the Twin Cities. I think, as we continue to develop as an organization, we will look at creative ways that the Opera can give back to the corporations.

Anything else you'd like to add? This coming year we have a world premiere called "Dinner at Eight." This is a Depression-era story about a group of social folks in New York City who are going to put on a dinner party for all of their very elegant, elite friends. They have all lost all of their money in the Depression, and they're just keeping up face.

Ryan Taylor

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