



Work with me: Kathryn Smith

The Madison Opera newcomer is ready to run the show

Though it was singing with a children's chorus that first drew Kathryn Smith to the world of opera, it was her high school office job with the Seattle Opera that had her fall in love with it in an entirely different way.

"I was goddess of the copy machine," she jokes. "[But] by the time I graduated from high school, it seemed perfectly reasonable to want to run an opera company when I grew up."

After graduating from Harvard, where she was involved in theatre and opera productions, Smith began working at opera companies around the country. With roles at several organizations—from New York City's Metropolitan Opera to, most recently, her role as director of Washington's Tacoma Opera—under her belt, the 38-year-old Seattle native is now settling into the position of director of the Madison Opera.

Smith officially joins the nonprofit this month as it prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary season.

"Madison Opera is in great shape," she remarks, noting subtle plans to grow and strengthen the organization in different ways while also getting to know her new hometown. There may be no better occasion to meet Madison than at Opera in the Park, the annual free showcase in Garner Park this month. And no one is looking forward to a perfect opera night more than Smith.

"There aren't many [events] where you're likely to see an 18-year-old and an 80-year-old ... enjoying the same show," she says. "When you [create an] experience that is magical for the people in the audience [and] for the people backstage and onstage, it's like nothing else in the world." —Kailey Bender

Kathryn's tips

For attending the annual Opera in the Park on July 16

Arrive early

"The park opens at 7 a.m. and 14,000 people will be trying to park and settle in."

Pack a picnic

"Opera is always better with snacks."

Get in on the fun

"When the Maestro asks, make sure you conduct with your light sticks."