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Vancouver Opera announces 2007-2008 season

Season features long-awaited productions and the return of Canadian tenor Richard Margison

Vancouver, BC ~ Three operas that have not been seen in Vancouver for decades, superb singing marked by the return of star Canadian tenor Richard Margison, and a stunning contemporary production originating at the National Theatre of Serbia are just three of the highlights of Vancouver Opera's visually exciting, musically thrilling 2007-2008 season.

The season will comprise four productions: Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* & Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* (November 10-17, 2007); Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (January 26 - February 2, 2008); Beethoven's *Fidelio* (March 22-29, 2008) and Puccini's *La bohème* (April 26-May 8, 2008).

Long-awaited productions

Fidelio will be presented for the first time in 23 years. *Cavalleria rusticana* and *I pagliacci* were last produced in 1979. *The Italian Girl in Algiers* has not been seen in Vancouver since 1965. In announcing the season's repertoire, VO's General Director, **James W. Wright**, said, "I have wanted to produce each of these wonderful operas for some time and have been waiting until just the right singers and physical productions were available, to give Vancouver audiences the best possible experiences in the theatre. I am very happy that everything has lined up, and finally we can present all three of them - in a single season!"

Richard Margison

Tenor Richard Margison, who last appeared in 1997's *Il trovatore*, returns to sing Florestan in *Fidelio*, a role he performed to critical acclaim last season at The Metropolitan Opera. Writing about that production in the *New York Times*, Anthony Tommasini praised Mr. Margison's lyrical singing and his "dignified and moving portrayal." In announcing casting for 2007-2008, **James Wright** said, "We are delighted that Richard Margison will be returning to Vancouver Opera in a role to which his voice is so wonderfully suited. He will be joining an outstanding cast that includes bass John Cheek, baritone Tom Fox, and soprano Carol Wilson, as Leonore, who was so thrilling in 2004 as the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* and in 2006 as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*. This cast is matched in stature and strength by all the other casts next season. "

A Contemporary *Fidelio*

Fidelio will be set in a clandestine prison in eastern Europe at the height of the Cold War. It will be directed by the production's originator, **Dejan Milandinovic**, Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Serbia. After seeing the production recently in its first incarnation, in Milwaukee, James Wright knew immediately that he wanted to bring it to Vancouver. "The contemporary feel of the production, with its resonant connection to recent and current international politics and to universal human themes, is extremely effective when combined with Beethoven's exalted score. I cannot think of a time when I was more emotionally caught up in an opera, or more deeply moved. I am excited to share it with Vancouver audiences."

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Details of the Season

The season launches in November, 2007 with an evocative traditional production of two famous shorter operas that are classics in the Italian *verismo* (realistic) style: Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic chivalry*) and Ruggero Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* (*The Clowns*). Music Director **Jonathan Darlington** conducts the VO Orchestra and Chorus. Passionate melodic music, beautiful dramatic singing, and vividly realistic performances from exceptional casts, led by sopranos **Lori Phillips** and **Sally Dibblee**, tenors **Steven Harrison** and **John Mac Master**, and baritones **Gregory Dahl**, **John Fanning**, and **Etienne Dupuis**, will provide an unforgettable opera experience.

In late January and early February, 2008, VO presents Gioachino Rossini's madcap comedy *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, updated in jaunty fashion to the 1930s. The sensational Canadian mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy** makes her VO debut as the charismatic and clever Isabella in an irresistibly ingenious and colourful production, from Santa Fe Opera, which literally unfolds before your eyes. Her love-interest in the suitably silly story, Lindoro, will be sung by popular lyric tenor **John Tessier**. Also featured are basses **Randall Jakobsh** and **Hugh Russell** and soprano **Sookhyung Park** (Elvira). **Robert Wood** conducts.

In March, 2008, VO presents Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*. Jonathan Darlington conducts. (Details above.)

In late April and early May, VO presents a powerful classic production of Puccini's *La bohème*. Soprano **Liping Zhang**, who gave thrilling performances as Cio-Cio-San in 2004's *Madama Butterfly*, returns as Mimì. Sensational Chinese tenor **Yu Quang Dai** sings Rodolfo. The international cast also includes baritone **Aaron St. Clair-Nicholson**, soprano **Monica Huisman**, and baritones **Alexander Dobson** and **Daniel Okulitch**. Esteemed Canadian conductor **Jacques Lacombe** conducts. Stage direction is by **Henry Akina**, General Director of Hawaii Opera Theatre.

DATES, STORIES, CASTING DETAILS

Cavalleria rusticana & *I pagliacci*

Sponsored by Pacific International Securities Inc.

In Italian with English SurTitles™

November 10, 13, 15, 17, 2007. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Scandal and murder rock quiet Italian villages, in two intense dramas. In *Cavalleria rusticana*, powerful emotions erupt when Turiddu, a swaggering villager, shames young Santuzza, casts her aside, and resumes his illicit affair with Lola. Enraged, Santuzza tells Lola's husband Alfio everything. Seeking vengeance, Alfio viciously kills Turiddu before the horrified villagers. Santuzza is left to grieve, and the town to mourn, torn apart by callous hearts and fatal passions. In *I pagliacci*, make-believe leads to murder when a troupe of traveling clowns stops in rural Calabria. The restless Nedda, stifled in marriage and trapped by endless touring, seeks solace in an affair with Silvio, a local villager. During the performance, her enraged husband Canio disintegrates behind his clown mask, and then, unable to separate the play from reality, he stabs Nedda. When Silvio rushes the stage, Canio impales him too. The comedy is ended and the heart of a man is laid bare.

Cavalleria rusticana cast

Santuzza:	Lori Phillips	Conductor:	Jonathan Darlington
Turiddu:	Steven Harrison	Stage Director:	Joe McClain
Lola	Majorie Poirier		
Alfio:	Gregory Dahl		
Mama Lucia:	Marcia Swanston		

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I pagliacci cast

Canio: John Mac Master
Nedda: Sally Dibblee
Silvio: Etienne Dupuis
Tonio: John Fanning

The Italian Girl in Algiers

Sponsored by Mission Hill Family Estate

In Italian with English SurTitles™

January 26, 29, 31, February 2, 2008. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Marvelous madcap comedy in a riotous harem where the music and mayhem are as bracing as a bobsled ride. Intrepid Isabella crash-lands her plane in Algeria while searching for her lost lover, Lindoro, who languishes locally in the labour force of Governor Mustaphà. Using her astonishing charisma, clever calculation, and an elaborate sham, she manipulates the hopelessly smitten Mustaphà into releasing her from his amorous intentions and freeing Lindoro. Think Amelia Earhart meets the Marx Brothers in *A Night in Casablanca*, and you'll get the picture of a colourful production that literally opens up before your eyes. Rossini, the master of merriment, has created a delicious blend of buffoonery, elegance and virtuosity. The music is infectious, the comedy is non-stop.

Isabella:	Allyson McHardy	Conductor:	Robert Wood
Lindoro:	John Tessier	Stage Director:	Michael Cavanagh
Mustaphà:	Randall Jakobsh		
Elvira:	Sookhyung Park		
Taddeo:	Hugh Russell		
Haly:	Brian McIntosh		

Fidelio

In German with English SurTitles™

March 22, 25, 27, 29, 2008. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Pure love saves a condemned political prisoner in Beethoven's exalted music drama. In a dark dungeon deep within a state prison, Florestan is slowly nearing death, the innocent victim of his political enemy, governor Pizarro. Above ground, his loyal wife, Leonore, alone in believing him to be alive, is disguised as "Fidelio" and working for Rocco, the jailer. With heroic courage, compassion and love, Leonore navigates the infatuation of Rocco's daughter and gains access to Florestan's cell. Risking her life, Leonore stands up to Pizarro, frees her husband, and liberates the entire prison. With achingly beautiful arias and thrilling choruses of both lament and liberation, underscored with passages of lightness and lyricism, *Fidelio* will hit you right in the heart.

Florestan:	Richard Margison	Conductor:	Jonathan Darlington
Leonore:	Carol Wilson	Stage Director:	Dejan Milandinovic
Rocco:	John Cheek		
Marzelline:	Robyn Driedger-Klassen		
Pizarro:	Tom Fox		
Jaquino:	Colin Ainsworth		
Don Fernando:	Alain Coulombe		

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La bohème

Sponsored by Mercedes Benz

In Italian with English SurTitles™

April 26, 29, May 1, 3, 6, 8, 2008. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Love and youthful exuberance lead to heartbreak in 19th century Paris in Puccini's unparalleled masterpiece. On Christmas Eve, frail Mimì and young Rodolfo find love in the impoverished, lively Latin Quarter of Paris. Surrounded by art, music, philosophy and good friends, the lovers enjoy a few months of bliss before Mimì's deteriorating health tears them apart. They are reunited, joyfully, as Spring blossoms, but by then it is too late. Mimì passes away, leaving her Rodolfo and her dear friends devastated. *La bohème* is one of the most revered operas in the repertoire. With boisterous humour and real pathos, an inspired score and indelible characters, Puccini's lovely opera will sweep you away with romance, joy, and sheer beauty.

Mimì:	Liping Zhang	Conductor:	Jacques Lacombe
Rodolfo:	Yu Quang Dai	Stage Director:	Henry Akina
Marcello:	Aaron St. Clair-Nicholson		
Musetta:	Monica Huisman		
Schaunard:	Alexander Dobson		
Colline:	Daniel Okulitch		

SUBSCRIPTION AND SINGLE TICKETS

Subscriptions, starting at \$99, for Vancouver Opera's 2007-2008 season are now on sale at the VO Ticket Centre, 604-683-0222. Renewing subscribers can renew through VO's secure online renewal service at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Non-subscription tickets, starting at \$29, to all performances go on sale August 7, 2007. Visit www.vancouveropera.ca or call 604-683-0222.

For all tickets, Visa, Mastercard and American Express are accepted.