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Media contact: Doug Tuck 604-331-4823  
dtuck@vancouveropera.ca

**Vancouver Opera announces 2008-2009 season**  
**Featuring a new production of *Eugene Onegin***  
**and acclaimed singers from around the world**

**Vancouver, BC** ~ A sumptuous new production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, a global array of internationally acclaimed singers, and ongoing progress with the much-anticipated renovations to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre are three of the highlights of Vancouver Opera's irresistible 2008-2009 season of musically superb and visually thrilling opera.

Impossible romance in Czarist Russia; deadly passion in Seville; treachery and tragedy in a twisted court; lust and prophecy in Judea. These are the truly operatic themes of the 2008-2009 season's four productions: Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (November 22-29, 2008); Bizet's *Carmen* (January 24 – February 5, 2009); Verdi's *Rigoletto* (March 7 - 17, 2009) and Richard Strauss's *Salome* (May 2 – 9, 2009).

**A NEW EUGENE ONEGIN**

Coming just two seasons after VO's ground-breaking new production of *The Magic Flute*, in 2006-2007, *Eugene Onegin* – last produced in 1985 - promises a visual feast to match Tchaikovsky's powerful music. The production will be designed by highly sought-after New York designer **Neil Patel** and will be directed by esteemed theatre and opera director **Pamela Berlin**, returning for the first time since 2002's *Of Mice and Men*.

"To be presenting our second new production in three seasons is very exciting for us," says VO's General Director **James W. Wright**. "It is a mark of the continuing artistic growth of the company that we can create what I know will be a gorgeous production of this masterpiece – a production that features four of Canada's 'now' generation of singers: Brett Polegato, Rhoslyn Jones, John Tessier and Allyson McHardy. And we will continue to grow: we are looking forward to creating new productions in each of the next two seasons."

**THE SEASON'S SINGERS**

The global roster of internationally acclaimed singers making their VO debuts in 2008-2009 include the exquisite young Cuban-American soprano **Eglise Gutierrez** as Gilda in *Rigoletto*, the rising Canadian soprano **Rhoslyn Jones** as Tatyana and Canadian mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy** as Olga in *Onegin*, and Russian dramatic soprano **Mlada Khudoley** as Salome.

The sizzling Israeli-born mezzo-soprano **Rinat Shaham** – currently one of the leading "Carmens" in opera – returns for the first time since her appearance as Cherubino in 1996's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

And those are just the women! Appearing at VO for the first time are tenor **Sean Pannikar** – an American of Sri Lankan heritage – as Narraboth in *Salome*, and the commanding American bass **Kirk Eichelberger** as the sinister Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*.

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Among the fine singers returning to VO are tenors **John Tessier** as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, **John Mac Master** as Herod in *Salome*, **David Pomeroy** as Don José in *Carmen* and **Bruce Sledge** as the Duke in *Rigoletto*; mezzo-sopranos **Judith Forst** as Herodias in *Salome*, and **Norine Burgess** as Madame Larina in *Onegin* and Maddalena in *Rigoletto*; baritones **Brett Polegato** as Onegin, **Donnie Ray Albert** as Rigoletto, **Greer Grimsley** as Jokanaan (John the Baptist) in *Salome*, and **Daniel Okulitch** as Escamillo in *Carmen*; soprano **Mariateresa Magisano** as Micaëla in *Carmen*; and bass **Peter Volpe** as Prince Gremin in *Onegin*.

### CONDUCTORS AND STAGE DIRECTORS

VO's Music Director, **Jonathan Darlington**, will conduct *Eugene Onegin* and *Salome*; VO's Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director **Leslie Dala** will conduct *Rigoletto*; and Australian-born **Antony Walker**, Music Director of Pittsburgh Opera, will conduct *Carmen*. In addition to Pamela Berlin, the stage directors include VO favourite **David Gately** (*Carmen*), respected Vancouver-based director **Glynis Leyshon** (*Rigoletto*), and veteran opera director **Joseph McClain** (*Salome*).

### THE "NEW" QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

Vancouver Opera is thrilled to be presenting its 2008-2009 season in the reconfigured Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Eagerly anticipated renovations to VO's home venue will result in major new seating configurations, improved acoustics and sightlines, and a more intimate atmosphere. A new dress circle balcony and three levels of boxes will be in place. The seating reconfiguration will be completed for the opening of the 2008-2009 season; lobby renovations and finishing work will be completed during the summer of 2009, in time for the opening of VO's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2009-2010 season.

"We are delighted by the upcoming transformation of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre into a European-style opera and ballet house," says **James W. Wright**. "We commend the City of Vancouver for investing in an important cultural resource that benefits the entire community. The improvements will greatly enhance the experience of opera-goers and will support the very high production standards that we set for all our operas."

### DATES, STORIES, CASTING DETAILS

#### **Eugene Onegin**, by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Sponsored by Mission Hill Family Estate

NEW PRODUCTION

In Russian with English SurTitles™

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

A sumptuous ball in St. Petersburg. A dusty farmers' dance in the Russian countryside. Joyous raptures of love. A deadly duel. Stark opposites frame Tchaikovsky's visually magnificent and profoundly emotional drama. Tatyana is a shy young country woman who soars when she meets the man of her romantic dreams. Eugene Onegin is the urban aristocrat who rejects her. But Onegin's callousness twists on him and leaves him filled with regret and despair. Based on Pushkin's epic poem, Tchaikovsky's deeply sensitive portrayal of the tumultuous inner worlds of his characters is a supreme achievement, matched by his superb orchestral score and his gorgeous music for both soloists and chorus.

#### **Principal Cast**

Onegin:	Brett Polegato	Conductor:	Jonathan Darlington
Tatyana:	Rhoslyn Jones	Stage Director:	Pamela Berlin
Lensky:	John Tessier		
Olga:	Allyson McHardy		

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**Carmen**, by Georges Bizet

Sponsored by PI Financial.

In French with English SurTitles™

January 24, 27, 29, 31, February 3, 5, 2009

All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

Uninhibited dancing in a smoke-filled tavern. Songs pulsing with erotic power. Sinister felonies in a mountain pass. Murder outside a bullring. *Carmen* is justly revered for its thrilling drama and its irresistible music. Carmen is a fiery factory worker arrested for assault. Don José is her dutiful guard. But Carmen casts her gypsy spell, ignites Don José's passion, and starts his tragic descent. He deserts the army, abandons his family for a life of crime, and, when Carmen discards him for a bullfighter, erupts with jealous rage to commit a shocking act of revenge. *Carmen* is unforgettable opera, so rich in energy and passion that it lives with audiences forever. VO presents a **visually splendid traditional production** of Bizet's masterpiece.

**Principal Cast**

Carmen:	Rinat Shaham	Conductor:	Antony Walker
Don José	David Pomeroy	Stage Director:	David Gately
Micaëla:	Mariateresa Magisano		
Escamillo:	Daniel Okulitch		

**Rigoletto**, by Giuseppe Verdi

In Italian with English SurTitles™

March 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 2009

All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

A hired assassin. A pious and vulnerable girl. A predatory duke. A father's curse. Terrible things are bound to happen in Verdi's masterful tragedy. Rigoletto is a misshapen jester whose biting barbs enrage his superiors and induce an ominous curse. Gilda is his adored daughter who becomes the innocent victim of their revenge. Seduced by the philandering Duke, Gilda sacrifices her life to save his. Rigoletto is left broken and alone, his only light in life extinguished. In Verdi's genius hands, the grotesque clown with a hidden heart, and his exquisite daughter, are Shakespearean in their expressive range, from darkly ominous to achingly tender. The drama is as sharp as steel and the music is powerful and melodic. Vancouver Opera presents a **bold and imaginative production** directed by Glynis Leyshon.

**Principal Cast**

Rigoletto:	Donnie Ray Albert	Conductor:	Leslie Dala
Gilda:	Eglise Gutierrez	Stage Director:	Glynis Leyshon
Duke of Mantua:	Bruce Sledge		
Maddalena:	Norine Burgess		
Sparafucile:	Kirk Eichelberger		

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**Salome**, by Richard Strauss

In German with English SurTitles™

May 2, 5, 7, 9, 2009

All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

A decadent kingdom. A holy prophet. Wild infatuation. Extreme emotion. Biblical history and 20<sup>th</sup>-century psychology merge in Strauss's unforgettable drama. Salome is a Judean princess, step-daughter of King Herod. Jokanaan (John the Baptist) is the prophet imprisoned for denouncing Herod's depravity. Salome becomes obsessed with Jokanaan and when Herod, himself fixated on Salome, asks her to dance for him, Salome demands Jokanaan's head as her price. Based on Oscar Wilde's tragedy, Strauss's study of obsession under a strange moon is a giant and haunting work, intense and gripping from beginning to end. This is music and drama for those who like their opera strong, realized in a **vividly modern production**.

**Principal Cast**

Salome:	Mlada Khudoley	Conductor:	Jonathan Darlington
Jokanaan:	Greer Grimsley	Stage Director:	Joseph McClain
Herod:	John Mac Master		
Herodias:	Judith Forst		
Narraboth:	Sean Pannikar		

**SUBSCRIPTIONS & TICKETS**

**Subscriptions**, starting at \$199, for Vancouver Opera's 2008-2009 season, are now on sale at the VO Ticket Centre, 604-683-0222. Renewing subscribers can renew by mail, fax, telephone or in person.

**Non-subscription tickets to all performances of the four mainstage productions** go on sale September 2, 2008 . Visit [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or call 604-683-0222.