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VANCOUVER OPERA ANNOUNCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2009-2010 INCLUDE A NEW VO PRODUCTION AND CANADIAN PREMIERE, A STUNNINGLY FRESH *MADAMA BUTTERFLY* AND CELEBRATED CONDUCTOR RICHARD BONYNGE

Vancouver, BC ~ The Canadian premiere of a contemporary masterpiece, the artful staging of a beloved classic, and the return of an opera not seen in Vancouver for two decades, conducted by a living legend of the opera podium, are just three of the highlights of Vancouver Opera's milestone 50th Anniversary season, in 2009-2010.

This special season will include productions of Bellini's long-awaited *Norma* (November 28 – December 5, 2009), conducted by Richard Bonyngé; John Adams's stunning 1987 opera *Nixon in China* (March 13 – 20, 2010); Mozart's beloved *The Marriage of Figaro* (April 24 – May 4, 2010); and a dramatic primary-colours staging of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (May 29 – June 10, 2010), designed by internationally known Japanese-born visual artist Jun Kaneko.

A **50th Anniversary Gala Concert** on November 6, 2009, conducted by VO's esteemed music director, Jonathan Darlington, will launch the season. Mr. Darlington will also conduct *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Madama Butterfly*.

"This season, we look ahead to the company's future while honouring fifty years of presenting opera to our community. We will pay tribute to the illustrious past with *Norma*, one of the first productions to put VO on the international map and last performed in Vancouver almost 20 years ago," said **James W. Wright**, General Director of Vancouver Opera. "We'll celebrate the future with a new VO production – and the Canadian première – of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, an important work that is taking its rightful place alongside the greatest operas of the 20th century. And we'll continue to use the energy and excitement of this company to embrace new audiences, through our community programs and online initiatives."

CANADIAN PREMIÈRE

Never before seen in Canada, VO will present its new production of *Nixon in China* with Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad. With a pulsing post-minimalist score by **John Adams** and a highly literate libretto by American poet **Alice Goodman**, VO's production will be designed by the gifted American scenic designer **Erhard Rom**, directed by the esteemed Toronto-based stage director **Michael Cavanagh**, and choreographed by the prominent Vancouver choreographer **Wen Wei Wang**, who, as a child, witnessed Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing. The conductor will be **John DeMain**, who conducted the world première production of *Nixon in China* at Houston Grand Opera, in 1987.

"I believe that Vancouver audiences of all ages and all levels of opera-going experience will appreciate this work and connect with it on many levels," said **James W. Wright**. "The cultural and political significance of Nixon's historic visit still resonates with Canadian audiences, especially here in Vancouver."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERIES BEFORE *NIXON IN CHINA*

Leading up to the production of *Nixon in China*, and in keeping with Vancouver Opera's recent history of producing significant community-engagement events, the company will collaborate with other arts, cultural, and social organizations to present a major series of events that will focus on the themes and issues arising out of the opera. Details will be announced later.

RETURN OF A CLASSIC: *NORMA*

Armenian soprano **Hasmik Papian**, who has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera and in leading houses around the world, is sure to impress with raw emotion and vocal fireworks as she takes on one of the most difficult roles ever written. *Norma* was first staged by Vancouver Opera in 1963 under Founding Artistic Director **Irving Guttman**, with rising young stars **Joan Sutherland** and **Marilyn Horne**. Since then, this challenging opera has been staged by VO only twice, the last time being almost 20 years ago. For this production, original conductor **Richard Bonyngé** is back 46 years later, ready to lead this tender and intense opera. Celebrated Canadian tenor **Richard Margison** will sing the Roman General, Pollione.

A MASTERPIECE OF INNOVATION: *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*

Renowned Japanese sculptor **Jun Kaneko** breathes new life into a beloved classic with a dramatic redesigning of *Madama Butterfly*. "The *Butterfly* production ... grafted Mr.

Kaneko's sculptural sensibility and vivid, distinct palette of patterns and colors into a vibrantly visual experience of the opera, at the same time modern and timeless," raved the *Wall Street Journal* about Omaha Opera's première of this inventive staging.

Mr. Kaneko has reworked each visual aspect of Puccini's gorgeous opera, including the stage, lighting, costumes and even the opening curtain. *Madama Butterfly* never fails to give audiences a deep emotional experience; this stunning new production is no exception. The sensational Japanese soprano **Mihoko Kinoshita** will sing the title role.

CANADIANS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Canadians sparkle in a delightful traditional production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Local rising star soprano **Rhoslyn Jones** is back as Countess Almaviva after an acclaimed performance in last season's *Eugene Onegin*; bass-baritone **Daniel Okulitch** returns after a strong showing as Escamillo in *Carmen* to sing Figaro; and baritone **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson**, who shone as Marcello in 2008's *La bohème*, returns as the Count.

Bass **Alain Colombe**, also seen this season as Zuniga in *Carmen*, will appear with tenor **Richard Margison**, singing Oroveso in *Norma*. In *Nixon in China*, soprano **Sally Dibblee** will return to the VO stage to sing Pat Nixon, along with coloratura soprano **Tracy Dahl** as Chiang Ch'ing. Baritone **John Fanning** will appear as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*.

DATES, STORIES, CASTING DETAILS

Norma by Vincenzo Bellini

Sponsored by Mission Hill Family Estate

In Italian with English SURTITLES™

November 28, December 1, 3, 5, 2009. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Passion leads to death with *Norma*, a powerful Druid priestess, has a secret affair – and two children – with Pollione, the commander of the occupying Roman army. When she discovers that Pollione has seduced a young acolyte, *Norma* admits her own terrible guilt and offers herself in sacrifice to the gods. She and Pollione die, engulfed in flames.

Principal Cast

Norma:	Hasmik Papian
Pollione:	Richard Margison
Adalgisa:	Kate Aldrich
Oroveso:	Alain Colombe

Conducted by Richard Bonyngé

Nixon in China by John Adams

Presented with Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad

In English with SURTITLES™

Canadian Première!

March 13, 16, 18, 20, 2010. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

In 1972, Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Tse-tung shook hands and changed the course of human events. West and East looked into each others' eyes and discovered a vast mystery of differences and desires. Henry Kissinger, Chou En-lai, Pat Nixon and Madame Mao all play pivotal roles in this fascinating drama of psychology and global politics.

John Adams' richly textured and lyrical score pulses with rhythm and Alice Hoffman's literate libretto resonates with poetry. *Nixon in China* is irresistible and gripping from beginning to end.

Principal Cast

Richard Nixon:	Robert Orth
Mao Tse-tung:	Alan Woodrow
Henry Kissinger:	Thomas Hammons
Pat Nixon:	Sally Dibblee
Chou En-Lai:	Chen-Ye Yuan
Chiang Ch'ing:	Tracy Dahl
Conducted by	John DeMain

The Marriage of Figaro by W.A. Mozart

Sponsored by Erato

In Italian with SURTITLES™

April 24, 27, 29, May 1, 4, 2010. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Figaro and Susanna are to be married. But their master, the Count, is enamoured of the bride and Figaro is being eyed by a much older woman. Also a reckless young man is in love with the Countess, who longs for her husband's embrace. And that's not the half of it.

The Marriage of Figaro is an unmatched opera that combines comedy, social commentary and heart-breaking tenderness. The plot is deliriously twisty and the characters are deeply sympathetic. Mozart's masterful music connects to our lives with humanity and compassion.

Principal Cast

Figaro: Daniel Okulitch
Countess: Rhoslyn Jones
Susanna: Nikki Einfeld
Count: Aaron St.Clair Nicholson
Conducted by Jonathan Darlington

Madama Butterfly by Giacomo Puccini

Sponsored by Yoshiko Karasawa and Michael Audain

In Italian with English SURTITLES™

May 29, June 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 2010. All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

In Nagasaki, a pleasure-seeking American naval officer leases a house and weds a young geisha. He is briefly enchanted with his "Butterfly", but she gives herself wholly to the marriage. When he abandons her and then returns to claim their child, Butterfly is devastated and dishonoured. In a supreme act of devotion to her ancestors, she ends her life.

Puccini's incomparably gorgeous opera never fails to give audiences a deep emotional experience.

Principal Cast

Cio-Cio-San: Mihoko Kinoshita
Pinkerton: James Valenti
Suzuki: Zheng Cao
Sharpless: John Fanning
Conducted by Jonathan Darlington

SUBSCRIPTIONS & TICKETS

Subscriptions, starting at \$99, for Vancouver Opera's 2009-2010 season, are now on sale at the VO Ticket Centre, 604-683-0222. Renewing subscribers can renew online or by

mail, fax, telephone or in person.

Non-subscription tickets to all performances of the four mainstage productions go on sale September 1, 2009 . Visit www.vancouveropera.ca or call 604-683-0222.

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