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**\$1-MILLION GIFT SUPPORTS VANCOUVER OPERA'S
NEW YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM**

Family of Yulanda Faris makes monumental contribution to future of opera in Western Canada

Vancouver, BC ~ To honour her outstanding service to opera in Vancouver, the family of Yulanda Faris has made a \$1-million contribution to the Vancouver Opera Foundation. This gift will support Vancouver Opera's new **Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program**, slated to begin during the 2012-2013 season.

The Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program will serve as a bridge between university training and a professional career. National auditions will be held this fall for suitable Canadian singers to take part in the program. Participants will reside in Vancouver during their tenure and will receive advanced training and coaching from VO's music staff, as well as performance opportunities in the community and on the mainstage.

A previous contribution from Moh and Yulanda Faris established the Young Artist Coaching Intensive, an annual week-long workshop for promising young Canadian singers. Created with the guidance of internationally-lauded Canadian mezzo-soprano Judith Forst, The Young Artist Coaching Intensive has firmly established itself as a unique national opportunity for emerging singers, and will continue as an important part of the new program.

"Yulanda Faris truly believes in the value of arts to our lives and has done so much to nurture the future of arts in Canada," says **James W. Wright**, General Director of Vancouver Opera. "This important gift to the performing arts is the perfect way to honour her passion and commitment. We are thrilled to be part of this lasting legacy and to join the ranks of major opera companies in establishing a formal training program. We congratulate and thank the Faris family."

Arlene Gladstone, Chair of the Vancouver Opera Foundation, said, "This is such a wonderful and thoughtful gift. I express heartfelt appreciation to the Faris family on behalf of the Vancouver Opera Association, the Vancouver Opera Foundation and especially the young artists who will benefit greatly by this generous training program for many generations to come."

The Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program's activities will take place largely at the Vancouver Opera Centre, the new home of VO, opening this summer near Commercial Drive in Vancouver. The Opera Centre's rehearsal spaces, coaching room, music library and other resources will greatly enhance the experience and learning of program participants.

“My family has always believed in following one’s passion, giving back to one’s community and creating a legacy for future generations,” said **Yulanda Faris**. “I have long admired Vancouver Opera’s commitment to the education of young people and to the artistic growth of young singers, and I am very pleased that the company will now be able to expand and deepen that commitment. I am honoured by my family’s unwavering support for my passion and for the great work that Vancouver Opera will undertake with young singers.”

“Yulanda has worked tirelessly to help the Vancouver Opera Foundation sustain and grow future generations of opera lovers,” said **Moh Faris**. “This is an effective way to acknowledge her efforts, and we are very pleased to do so.”

Active in the Vancouver arts community for close to 40 years, Mr. and Mrs. Faris have generously donated time and financial support to several organizations, including Vancouver Opera and its Foundation, the Scotiabank Dance Centre and the Dance Foundation, Judith Marcuse Projects, Vancouver International Writers Festival, Bard on the Beach, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Symphony, Vancouver Children's Festival, and many others.

Yulanda Faris is past chair of Vancouver Opera and of the Vancouver Opera Foundation. She and Mr. Faris were recipients of the 2010 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, one of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards.

The Faris’ gift is the third \$1-million commitment to Vancouver Opera in the past decade.