

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY SUPPORT
MARK VANCOUVER OPERA'S 2010-2011 SEASON**

New combined facilities and increased community engagement to mark the year ahead

Vancouver, BC ~ A successful world premiere production, critical acclaim for artistic excitement, exceptional community support, and the securing of a new all-inclusive cost-saving headquarters were highlights of Vancouver Opera's 2010-2011 season reported at the company's Annual General Meeting, held August 25, 2011.

Opening the season – and concluding the company's Golden Anniversary celebrations – was the world premiere of *Lillian Alling*, by composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell. The new Canadian opera, commissioned by VO, was a critical and popular success. "There is an undeniable electricity in experiencing something this new, different, and ruggedly West Coast," raved Janet Smith in *The Georgia Straight*. "And just in case that's not enough of a selling point for *Lillian Alling*, consider this: we finally have an opera we can call our own."

Lillian Alling was followed by *Lucia di Lammermoor*, with world-renowned soprano Eglise Gutiérrez in the title role and fast-rising tenor Michael Fabiano as Edgardo; and by Mozart's lesser-known *La Clemenza di Tito*, a bold artistic choice that received critical acclaim. "Following a year of triumphant risk-taking, *La Clemenza di Tito* shows the depth of Vancouver Opera's vitality," praised David Gordon Duke in the *Vancouver Sun*. Closing the 2010-2011 season was Sir Jonathan Miller's beautiful production of *La Traviata*.

Near the end of the season, VO's artistic achievements were matched by two generous gifts from exemplary supporters of the arts, both of which will have a lasting impact on the company and the communities it serves. The family of Moh and Yulanda Faris made a \$1-million gift to the Vancouver Opera Foundation to support the new Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program, which will help prepare the country's most promising young professional singers for successful careers through rigorous training and performance opportunities. This program will operate out of VO's new consolidated facility – a leased older building in east Vancouver – The Michael & Inna O'Brian Centre for Vancouver Opera, which is named in honour of Michael and Inna O'Brian's gift of \$1-million toward the renovation, adaptation and operation of the premises.

Following the end of the 2010-2011 season, long-time VO supporter and patron of the arts Martha Lou Henley donated \$500,000 toward the company's campaign for the facility, a gift that has been recognized with the naming of the Martha Lou Henley Rehearsal Hall, at the O'Brian Centre.

Despite this generosity and commitment, and that of all of VO's many supporters, and despite artistic success and positive critical response throughout the season, the company experienced disappointing returns in both earned and contributed revenue and, consequently, a significant operating loss for the year. Audited financial statements presented at the Annual General Meeting reported that, after offsetting the loss with a working capital reserve that had been built up over more than a decade of strong performance, the company holds an accumulated deficit of \$831,000 on a budget of \$9.7-million.

"Last season was certainly not easy," said Bev Park, Chair of VO's Board of Directors. "Like many arts organizations, Vancouver Opera is feeling the lingering effects of the global recession, which exacerbated audience uncertainty over both unfamiliar and standard repertoire. The good news is that VO is a vibrant, creative and nimble organization with strong leadership, and is more than capable of adapting to external challenges like this. Already the signs are good for the future: season subscription sales are up and excitement is building for an exciting season of opera. The company is recognized for its high level of artistic achievement, and that is something that will not change. The support for the move to the O'Brian Centre has been overwhelmingly positive."

The O'Brian Centre will play a key role in VO's plan for a steady elimination of the accumulated deficit, and as a focal point for the company's key community engagement efforts. "Consolidating our operations is something we've been trying to do for several years and it comes at a good time," said VO's General Director, James W. Wright. "Bringing everyone together under one roof – performers, artisans, production personnel and administrative staff – not only increases efficiency and synergy, but also reduces operating costs. Equally important, The O'Brian Centre offers real potential for greatly enhanced community engagement, in both the Grandview-Woodland area where we are situated and beyond. We already have begun to forge new relationships with community partners, and I am very excited about what the future holds. We are also focused on making the strong artistic choices that our audiences expect, while presenting productions that appeal to a wide spectrum of the community."

The 2011-2012 season will open with a full-scale production – and the VO premiere – of *West Side Story*, Leonard Bernstein's masterpiece of musical theatre, followed by Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. VO will also present Rossini's beloved *The Barber of Seville*, and close the season with Verdi's grand opera *Aida*. A new production of Humperdinck's *Hansel & Gretel* will tour schools as part of the company's 39-year-old Vancouver Opera In Schools program.

The 2010-2011 season was sponsored by Goldcorp Inc. in the second of a three-season sponsorship, the first multi-season sponsorship in VO's history.

New Board Members

Three esteemed community leaders were elected to the VO Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on August 25, 2011:

Divyesh Gadhia is the President of Atiga Investment Inc., a private investment management company, and the Chairman and significant investor of SPUD.CA, the West Coast's largest organic home food delivery company. He is also the former CEO and Vice Chairman of Gateway Casinos & Entertainment Inc., a company he was with for 18 years, beginning with its inception in 1992.

Paul D. McEwen is a Partner in Ernst & Young's Transaction Advisory Services team and leads their Valuation and Business Modelling group. He has more than 20 years of experience advising clients on matters involving corporate transactions, disputes and reorganizations.

Jeffrey Wilhoit was appointed Vice President, Investor Relations for Goldcorp in 2007. He served as Director, Investor Relations for Glamis from 2005, and from 1996 to 2005 he served as Vice President of the Financial Relations Board (FRB), an investor-relations consulting company based in Chicago, Illinois.

Vancouver Opera Board of Directors, 2011-2012

Bev Park – Chair
Yuri Fulmer – Vice Chair
Mary Jordan - Treasurer
Lis Welch – Secretary

Directors

Doris Bradstreet Daughney
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Divyesh Gadhia
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Paul D. McEwen
Philippe Sarfati
David E. Scott

Manjy Sidoo
Susan Van der Flier
Inna Vlashev O'Brian
Jeffrey Wilhoit
Gwyneth Westwick – President, Vancouver Opera Guild
Arlene Gladstone – Chair, Vancouver Opera Foundation

Distinguished Honourary Members:

Yulanda M. Faris
Martha Lou Henley
Kenneth W. Mahon

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