

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VO warms hearts this winter with Charles Gounod's

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

French opera at its most romantic

**Vancouver, BC** ~ Graceful melodies, heart-stirring choruses and a deeply emotional, timeless story combine in Charles Gounod's exquisite version of Shakespeare's tragic *Roméo et Juliette*, on stage for four performances only, November 26 - December 3, 2011 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

Opening night is **Saturday, November 26, 2011**, with subsequent performances **Tuesday, November 29; Thursday, December 1** and **Saturday, December 3**. All performances take place at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. and begin at 7:30pm. Tickets are available exclusively through the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or by telephone (604-683-0222). See complete ticket information below.

Famous for its love duets, exuberant party scene and beautiful portrayal of the play's most iconic elements - the balcony scene, Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech and others - *Roméo et Juliette* is a tender, tragic and emotional adaptation of Shakespeare's beloved story.

Making her role début as Juliette will be Metropolitan Opera audition-winner **Simone Osborne**. Ms. Osborne's soprano has been acclaimed for its "sweet and clear sound, sensitive phrasing and gleaming sustained high notes" (*New York Times*). Audiences have been "struck by the beauty of her voice, her innate musicality, and particularly the maturity and poise that belied her age" (*La Scena Musicale*). This will be Ms. Osborne's Vancouver Opera début.

Dashing tenor **Gordon Gietz**, last seen on the VO stage in 1996's *Jenufa*, will sing Roméo. Mr. Gietz has been described as "splendid, with a beautiful, sturdy tenor voice touched by the heroic" (*Edmonton Sun*). "Young and idealistic, Gordon Gietz seems a perfect Hoffman, coping with all the heroic, poetic and bitter aspects of his music with radiant tone and excellent French...a full audience rapturously greeted this glorious production: *opéra fantastique* indeed." (*The Sunday Telegraph*). Mr. Gietz appeared to acclaim on the Metropolitan Opera stage in last year's production of *The Nose*.

Baritone **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson**, last seen on the VO stage in the world premiere of *Lillian Alling* in 2010, will sing Mercutio. Stéphano will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Julie Boulianne**, who delighted crowds with her portrayal of Cherubino in 2010's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Bass **Peter Volpe** will sing Frère Laurent and baritone **John Avey** will sing Capulet. Bass-baritone **Chad Louwerse** will sing Le Duc and tenor **Antoine Bélanger** will sing Tybalt.

The director is **Allison Grant**, most recently the Artistic Director at Theatre Athena in Waterloo, Ontario. Ms. Grant has directed or choreographed numerous plays, operas and musicals, including VO's 2009 production of *Eugene Onegin*. **Jacques Lacombe** will conduct the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and the Vancouver Opera Chorus (**Leslie Dala**, Associate Conductor and Chorus Director.)

### The Story, in Brief

Shakespeare's classic tale of star-crossed lovers is transported to new realms with Gounod's graceful melodies, emotional singing and stirring choruses. Young lovers Roméo and Juliette defy the wishes of their feuding families - until fate intervenes with heart-wrenching results.

Read a full synopsis at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca).

### Background

Following the great response to the tender music in his adaptation of *Faust* (1859), a romantic opera seemed a logical next project for Charles Gounod, then France's leading composer.

Gounod's setting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* held true to the original with a few exceptions: some episodes in the play that do not focus directly on the lovers were cut, resulting in a story more closely centered on the star-crossed couple. Shakespeare's original also had Romeo die before Juliet stirs, whereas Gounod's version has Juliette regain consciousness in time to sing a final duet with him.

*Roméo et Juliette* was first performed at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris on April 27, 1867. It is most loved for its duets for the main characters and the waltz "Je veux vivre" for Juliette, written at the request of the soprano who would sing the role at the début.

The opera was a major success, so much so that a parody even appeared at the Théâtre Déjazet, entitled *Rhum et eau en juillet* (*Rum and water in July*).

Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* premiered in London in July 1867 and in New York in November that same year.

## Full Ticket Information

Tickets are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca), or by phone at 604-683-0222. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted.

**Groups:** For special pricing for groups of ten or more, call 604-683-0222.

## Learn More - Community Events

### Romeo + Juliet Film Screening Wednesday, November 2, 2011

Vancity Theatre, Vancouver International Film Centre  
1181 Seymour Street (at Davie)  
Doors: 6:30pm • Introduction and Screening: 7:00pm

Regular admission: \$11/\$9 senior or student (includes \$2 Vancity Film Centre membership).

Baz Luhrmann relocates the Montagues and Capulets to modern-day Verona Beach in this stylish update of Shakespeare's play. Cast: Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, Pete Postlethwaite, John Leguizamo, Paul Rudd, Paul Sorvino, Harold Perrineau, Miriam Margolyes.

"Bravely (but sensibly) sticking with the original dialogue, Luhrmann makes the central element of his audacious adaptation visual: as the camera races wildly around, or rests on luminous close-ups and ornate tableaux, the striking sets, costumes, characters, the colours and compositions serve perfectly to evoke the forces of wealth and poverty, love and hate, power and pride, prejudice and superstition that infest the chaotically sprawling post-punk, post-industrial, multi-ethnic world of millennial Verona Beach (Mexico City and Vera Cruz, heavily made over)." - *Time Out*

This special screening will feature an introduction by UBC lecturer, **Julie Sutherland**.

Julie Sutherland (PhD Durham, UK) specialises in English Renaissance Drama and teaches in the English department at the University of British Columbia. She has published on several Jacobean plays, as well as contributed in the area of the Renaissance to a number of reference books and encyclopedias. She has also worked in theatre production and administration both professionally and in community drama. Her theatre affiliations include Thynke Byggly Productions (Oxford, UK), Festival by the Marsh (New Brunswick), and Pacific Theatre (Vancouver). She is also founding producer of

Doktor Luke Productions in Vancouver.

Seating is limited. This special event continues a series of co-presentations between Vancouver Opera and the Vancity Theatre.

**Opera Speaks @ VPL: Morphing Shakespeare: The Bard in Other Forms**  
**Tuesday, November 8, 2011**

Vancouver Public Library Central Branch, Alice MacKay Room

7:00pm – 9:00pm

Free admission • Limited seating

Explore the many ways in which Shakespeare has been interpreted, presented, and transformed - in opera, film, ballet and other forms. Hear live performance and see film excerpts! Panelists include SFU Shakespeare professor **Paul Budra**, opera and literature scholar **Graham Forst**, and Vancity Theatre film historian **Tom Charity**.

This will be a fascinating evening of music, film and live performance.

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VO's 2011-2012 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp