

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VANCOUVER OPERA ANNOUNCES 2011-2012 SEASON

Not-to-be-missed season kicks off with a full-out production of *West Side Story*

Vancouver, BC ~ The monumental company première of a masterpiece of music theatre, Met audition-winner Simone Osborne in a role début, an inventive new *Barber of Seville* and the grandest of grand operas are just four highlights of Vancouver Opera's 52nd season.

VO's 2011-2012 season will include Leonard Bernstein's beloved ***West Side Story*** (October 22 – 29, 2011), Charles Gounod's romantic ***Roméo et Juliette*** (November 26 – December 3, 2011), Gioachino Rossini's rollicking and effervescent ***The Barber of Seville*** (March 17 – 25, 2012) and Giuseppe Verdi's triumphant ***Aida*** (April 28 – May 10, 2012).

"I am very excited about our lineup for the 2011-2012 season," said VO General Director **James W. Wright**. "Each production will showcase the high musical and production standards that our audiences demand, and will convey the heightened emotion that makes opera such a compelling and versatile art form."

Added Wright, "I am especially excited to be bringing *West Side Story* to Vancouver audiences. It has been staged by several opera companies throughout the world but to my knowledge, never by a Canadian opera company. Our production will be big and bold and new, using the original Jerome Robbins choreography that we all love, colourful sets and costumes, and a thirty-piece orchestra, all in service of Bernstein's timeless and riveting music."

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

WEST SIDE STORY

A masterpiece of music theatre

VO's 2011-2012 Season will open with a treat for Vancouver audiences: ***West Side Story*** the way it was meant to be seen, in a full-scale, Broadway-style production that takes full advantage of the large Queen Elizabeth Theatre and the highly-skilled VO Orchestra.

The cast of VO's *West Side Story* includes some of Canada's most talented triple threats - young stars who can sing, dance and act to the highest musical and theatrical standards.

28-year-old Italian-Canadian soprano **Lucia Cesaroni** sings Maria. Her voice has been described as "thrilling...replete with a seductive vibrato throughout" (Classical 96.3FM). Tenor **Colin Ainsworth**, last seen on the VO stage in the world première of *Lillian Alling*, sings Tony. Mr. Ainsworth has been praised by the *Toronto Star* for his "magnetic stage presence that [is] the ideal embodiment of a romantic lead".

Ontario native **Cleopatra Williams**, who recently performed in Toronto productions of *We Will Rock You* and *Jersey Boys*, sings Anita. **Dani Jazzar** sings Bernardo, a favourite role of the many he has performed. "Dani Jazzar as the Sharks' fiery, possessive captain Bernardo, hostile recipient of a thousand sneers, is excellent, effortlessly stylish" praised the *Edmonton Journal*. Mr. Jazzar has danced for the Europe MTV Video Music Awards, performed in several stage productions, and acted in several commercials. **Scott Augustine**, last seen on the VO stage in the Canadian première of *Nixon in China*, sings Riff.

Associate Conductor and Chorus Director **Leslie Dala** will conduct the VO Orchestra in this colourful new expanded co-production with Central City Opera.

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

French opera at its most romantic

Canadian soprano **Simone Osborne** makes her company and role début as Juliette in Gounod's romantic *Roméo et Juliette*. A winner of the Metropolitan National Council Auditions and the Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition in 2008, she has been praised for her "sweet and clear sound, sensitive phrasing and gleaming sustained high notes" (*New York Times*).

Singing alongside her will be dashing Canadian tenor **Gordon Gietz** as Roméo. "Gordon Gietz has one of the most gorgeous tenor voices heard in some time, as full as it was sweet," raves the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*.

Montreal mezzo-soprano **Julie Boulianne**, who charmed VO audiences as Cherubino in 2010's *The Marriage of Figaro* will sing Stéphano. "Her voice has both sweetness and bite, with hints of darker and deeper notes to come, all boding well for meatier roles down the line," praises the *Globe and Mail*.

Jacques Lacombe returns to VO to conduct this emotional and exquisite production.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

The greatest comic opera of them all

Rossini's irresistible masterpiece of comedy returns to VO in a brand-new incarnation. In a 1940s Seville movie backlot, starlet Rosina must fend off slimy agent and studio owner Bartolo and find a way to hook up with star-struck nobleman Almoviva. With the help of studio hairstylist Figaro, this delightful production injects new sparkle into a beloved classic.

Boston-native mezzo-soprano **Sandra Piques Eddy** sings Rosina. Ms. Eddy was highly praised in VO's acclaimed *The Italian Girl in Algiers*: "Blessed with physical beauty and a luxurious voice...[Ms. Eddy] was completely believable as a woman who could tame a mob of testosterone-rich men with a single glance," raved *The Georgia Straight*. *The New York Times* has also praised this "... swan-necked mezzo with fine technique, a range of colors from honeyed to bright and charm to burn."

Baritone **Joshua Hopkins** sings Figaro, a role that has won him acclaim as "an authoritative barber who sang with robust sounds and had both vocal and stage tricks up his sleeve." (*Opera Today*)

Robert Tweten conducts the VO Orchestra, returning for the first time since 2007's *Tosca*.

AIDA

The grandest of grand operas

Verdi's masterpiece returns to the VO stage after 10 years. Visually stunning and musically magnificent, this exciting production exudes the grandeur that characterizes Verdi's monumental work.

Mlada Khudoley returns to the VO stage to sing Aida. Ms. Khudoley sang the title role in 2009's *Salome* to great acclaim: "Russian soprano Mlada Khudoley's voice is big and compelling, her performance style all-or-nothing intensity," raved the *Vancouver Sun*.

Amneris will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Daveda Karanas**, a winner of the 2008 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Ms. Karanas has been praised for her "capacious power" and "a voice lustrous and exciting" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Bass **Burak Bilgili** returns to VO to sing Ramfis, following his impressive performances as Raimondo in 2010's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Bass **Ilya Bannick** sings the King of Egypt.

VO Music Director **Jonathan Darlington** conducts the VO Orchestra.

DATES, STORIES, CASTING DETAILS

WEST SIDE STORY

VO *Première*

Based on a Conception of JEROME ROBBINS

Book by ARTHUR LAURENTS Music by LEONARD BERNSTEIN Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Entire Original Production Directed
and Choreographed by JEROME ROBBINS

Originally Produced on Broadway by Robert E. Griffith and Harold S. Prince
By Arrangement with Roger L. Stevens

Sponsored by Mission Hill

In English with SURTITLES™

October 22, 23 (matinée), 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 (evening and matinée), 2011

All evening performances 7:30 pm • Matinée performances 2:00 pm. All performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

*"Tonight, tonight
It all began tonight.
I saw you and the world went away."*

Leonard Bernstein's popular 1950s-era classic features his most thrilling orchestral music and his most memorable melodies ("Maria", "Tonight", "Gee, Officer Krupke"). Pulsing with jazz rhythms and expressed through Stephen Sondheim's inspired lyrics, *West Side Story* is one of the great theatrical and musical works of the 20th century.

VO presents the full-scale Broadway show with original high-energy Jerome Robbins choreography, a 30-piece orchestra, and a cast of fresh young singers and dancers in a colourful new co-production that will knock your socks off!

Principal Cast

Maria:	Lucia Cesaroni
Tony:	Colin Ainsworth
Anita:	Cleopatra Williams

Bernardo: **Dani Jazzar**
Riff: **Scott Augustine**
Conducted by: **Leslie Dala**
Directed by: **Ken Cazan**
Choreographed by: **Tracey Flye**
New co-production with Central City Opera designed by **Cameron Anderson**
Costumes designed by: **Alison Bristow**

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE
by Charles Gonoud

In French with English SURTITLES™
November 26, 29, December 1 & 3, 2011.
All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

*"O sweet night of love!
Destiny binds me to you forever.
Beneath your ardent kisses
Heaven is radiant within me."*

Gounod's gorgeous version of Shakespeare's tragic story is graceful, dramatic, and supremely melodic.

Famous for its deeply emotional love duets, exquisite orchestral colours and heart-stirring choruses, *Roméo et Juliette* beautifully portrays the most iconic elements of the play – the passionate balcony scene, Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech, the disastrous duel, and the sublimely spiritual final scene.

VO introduces Metropolitan Opera audition-winner Simone Osborne as Juliette, in her role début, with the dashing tenor Gordon Gietz as Roméo.

Principal Cast

Roméo: **Gordon Gietz**
Juliette: **Simone Osborne**
Stéphano: **Julie Boulianne**
Capulet: **John Avey**
Conducted by: **Jacques Lacombe**
Directed by: **Allison Grant**

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

by Gioachino Rossini

In Italian with English SURTITLES™

March 17, 20, 22, 24, 25 (matinée), 2012.

All evening performances 7:30 pm • Matinée performances 2:00 pm. All performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

*“What on earth is all this love
Which makes everyone go mad?
It is a universal evil.
It is a mania and an itch,
A thing which tickles and torments you...”*

An abundance of fun, and filled with effervescent melodies and inventive orchestrations, *The Barber of Seville* is absurd, touching, witty, hilarious and irresistible.

VO's inventive new production takes the action to a movie backlot in Seville in the 1940s. Rosina is the starlet, Bartolo is the studio owner (and Rosina's slimy agent), Almaviva is a star-struck nobleman, and Figaro is the studio hairstylist with a flair for finagling and tomfoolery!

Principal Cast

Figaro:	Joshua Hopkins
Rosina:	Sandra Piques Eddy
Almaviva:	René Barbera
Bartolo:	Thomas Hammons
Basilio:	Thomas Goerz
Conducted by:	Robert Tweten
Directed by:	Dennis Garnhum

AIDA

by Giuseppe Verdi

Sponsored by BMO Financial Group

In Italian with English SURTITLES™

April 28, May 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 2012

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

*“Return victorious!...that I may see him...welcomed in triumph by Egypt!
And behind his chariot, a King, my father, in chains!”*

Set amidst the monumental opulence of ancient Egypt, Verdi’s famous opera is visually stunning and musically magnificent. Against the sweeping background of warring nations, fierce patriotism and the mysteries of a powerful priesthood is a passionate drama of loyalty and love across enemy lines that will reach deep into your heart.

From the first delicate strains of the overture, which rise like mist from the banks of the River Nile, to the showpiece arias ‘Celeste Aida’, ‘Ritorna vincitor’ and ‘O patria mia’ and the deeply moving final duet, Verdi’s masterful music and majestic artistry work their magic

Principal Cast

Aida:	Mlada Khudoley
Amneris:	Daveda Karanas
Ramfis:	Burak Bilgili
King of Egypt:	Ilya Bannik
Conducted by:	Jonathan Darlington

SUBSCRIPTIONS & TICKETS

Subscriptions for Vancouver Opera’s 2011-2012 Season are now on sale at the VO Ticket Centre, 604-683-0222. Renewing subscribers can renew by mail, fax, telephone or in person.

The on-sale for non-subscription tickets to all performances of the four mainstage productions will be announced soon. Visit www.vancouveropera.ca or call 604-683-0222.

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Vancouver Opera’s 2011-2012 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp