

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VANCOUVER OPERA ANNOUNCES 2012-2013 SEASON

Season opens with universally loved *La Bohème*  
Christopher Gaze and Judith Forst star in *The Pirates of Penzance*, conducted by  
Jonathan Darlington  
VO's acclaimed First Nations-inspired *The Magic Flute* returns  
Canadian premiere of Tan Dun's *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*

Vancouver, BC ~ A visually striking production of a beloved classic, two legendary performers in a hilarious masterpiece of satire, the return of one of the most distinctive productions in Canadian opera history, and an extraordinary fusion of western opera and eastern myth are just some of the highlights of Vancouver Opera's 2012-2013 season.

In order of presentation, VO's 53rd season will include Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème* (October 20 - 28, 2012), Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* (December 1 - 9, 2012), VO's First Nations-inspired production of W.A. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (March 9 - 17, 2013) and the Canadian premiere of Academy Award®-winning composer Tan Dun's *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* (May 4 - 11, 2013). Three of the four productions will include matinée performances.

**Christopher Gaze** will play Major-General Stanley and **Judith Forst** will sing Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Mr. Gaze will also stage-direct the production, with assistance from associate director and choreographer **Allison Grant**. "The piece is a jewel in Gilbert and Sullivan's crown and in the right hands, the wit in both the libretto and the music can still bring the house down," says **Jonathan Darlington**, Vancouver Opera's music director, who will conduct both *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*. "VO has assembled a great team of personalities who have contributed so much over the years to Vancouver's cultural life and I'm sure the end result will be a riot."

In announcing the season, VO's General Director, **James W. Wright**, said, "We are proud to present four productions of great variety, excitement and surprise. The strong receptions for our recent productions of *West Side Story*, *Lillian Alling* and *Nixon in China* have shown us that our audiences want compelling, innovative options along with traditional operas. I believe that the 2012-2013 offerings will display Vancouver Opera's versatility, our artistic strengths, and our ability to connect widely and deeply with our community."

Commenting on individual productions, Wright said, "We are thrilled to collaborate with Christopher Gaze on *The Pirates of Penzance* – one of the funniest and cleverest comic operas ever written – and to present the remarkable Judith Forst in her debut as Ruth. I know that in the hands of these wonderful artists and Music Director Jonathan Darlington, *Pirates* will be a hugely entertaining experience, something to warm the soul in early December!

"A great many people have been asking us to remount our highly successful 2007 production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. We are delighted to be working again with our First Nations partners – with whom we created the original production during a three-year collaborative process – in presenting this effective combination of European tradition and ancient west coast mythology and imagery, in a production that is truly "of this place".

"I am particularly excited about *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*, which I think it could prove to be the hit of the season. This is an opera that will appeal to everyone. Tan Dun's intriguing music is entirely accessible and very haunting. Our production, originally presented at Santa Fe Opera, is visually stunning. And we all can relate to the story, which, at its heart, is about the search for meaning in life."

## SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

### LA BOHÈME

"The world's most popular love story" - *The New York Times*

VO's 2012-2013 season will open with the glorious music, pathos and humour of Giacomo Puccini's beloved *La Bohème*, performed by a young, fresh cast.

Canadian soprano **Marianne Fiset** will sing Mimi in her Vancouver Opera debut. "Her clear, soaring voice and beautiful legato gave goosebump moments," praised the *Montreal Gazette*. Ms. Fiset has appeared on several recordings, including the Juno Award-nominated *Melodiya*. She won the 2008 "New Artist of the Year" Opus Prize and was awarded several top prizes in the 2007 Montreal International Music Competition.

Fast-rising Texas tenor **Jason Slayden** will sing Rodolfo. As an apprentice, Mr. Slayden was awarded a Richard Tucker grant. He is also a Metropolitan Opera National Council Semi-Finalist and a Gerda Lissner Foundation First Prize winner. This will be Mr. Slayden's Vancouver Opera debut.

Musetta will be sung by Hungarian-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó**, last heard on the VO stage as Sesto in 2011's *La clemenza di Tito*. "She handles the part with exceptional ability, combining refined work with the technique required to do justice to an exceptional part," praised the

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*Vancouver Sun*. Ms. Szabó has appeared in CBC's *Opening Night* in concert with the Canadian Opera Company and performs frequently throughout Europe, the United States and Canada.

VO's Associate Conductor and Chorus Director **Leslie Dala** will conduct this emotional and charming production. **Nancy Hermiston**, Director of the Voice and Opera Division at the UBC School of Music will be the stage director.

## THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Laugh-out-loud comedy and quick-witted cleverness

VO's production of Gilbert & Sullivan's sharp, smart satire features two stellar Canadian performers: Bard on the Beach Artistic Director **Christopher Gaze** as the Major-General, and Officer of the Order of Canada mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst** as Ruth. As is customary in productions of *Pirates*, sections of the dialogue will be specially updated to reflect local and current events.

**Christopher Gaze** is best known as the founding Artistic Director of the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival. He is also a director, public speaker and a character actor in film and radio. As well as performing as the Major-General, Mr. Gaze will direct the production, along with Associate Director and Choreographer **Allison Grant**, who appeared with VO this season as the director and choreographer of *Roméo et Juliette*.

"I'm thrilled to be involved in *Pirates*. In fact, I spent the New Year in Penzance! I love the effervescent music and the wonderfully witty words of this masterpiece. The gaiety of Gilbert and Sullivan spans the ages," says **Christopher Gaze**. "It's great to be able to leave a performance of *Pirates* with the tunes resonating in your head and humming them as you tuck yourself into bed with a big smile on your face. We have a fantastic cast and it'll be a great show, tremendous fun!"

Legendary mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst** will perform Ruth (a practical Maid of all work). Ms. Forst's reputation in the opera world is unparalleled. She last appeared on the VO stage in the world premiere of *Lillian Alling*, creating the role of Irene.

## THE MAGIC FLUTE

"An opulent theatrical experience... a shining and original *Magic Flute*" - *The Vancouver Sun*

Back by popular demand, and enhanced with new design elements, VO's breathtaking First Nations-inspired production transports the action to a timeless Coast Salish realm.

Director **Robert McQueen**'s English libretto includes words from the Halq'emeylem language of the Musqueam nation. This original production was conceived with the guidance of the First Peoples'

Heritage, Language and Culture Council – which will continue to advise VO on this remounting – and with an advisory group of First Nations artists.

Tamino will be sung by Juno Award-winning tenor, and frequent VO artist, **John Tessier**. "Tessier has an international reputation as the perfect light lyric tenor," praised *The Globe and Mail*. "He has beautiful clarity of tone and hits seemingly effortless high notes, and over the years he has grown into a terrific actor to boot." Mr. Tessier has worked with Plácido Domingo, Itzhak Perlman, Dame Gwyneth Jones and several other notable musicians and has sung internationally.

BC soprano **Layla Claire** will make her Canadian début in the role of Pamina. Praised for her "penetrating purity" (*New York Times*), Ms. Claire is a member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at The Metropolitan Opera, has taken prizes at the Palm Beach Opera competition and the George London Foundation Competition, and was recently featured in documentaries for PBS and the BBC.

Baritone **Joshua Hopkins** will sing Papageno. Winner of the 2006 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and the Verbier Festival Academy's 2008 Prix d'Honneur, Joshua Hopkins has been hailed for his "gorgeous voice, a voice with gold in it. I am not talking about its bankability, but rather its tone...this young Hopkins is one of those golden singers, and he filled the Koch Theater with this gold, this glow." (*The New Criterion*).

Mezzo-soprano **Sylvia Szadovszki** will sing Papagena. Ms. Szadovszki is a graduate of the University of British Columbia and the Manhattan School of Music. She has performed with the European Music Academy (Czech Republic), Mountain View Festival of Song (Alberta), Artistic Repertory Theater (Florida), Spoleto Vocal Arts Symposium and International Lyric Academy of Rome.

The Queen of the Night will be sung by Canadian lyric coloratura soprano **Teiya Kasahara**. Ms. Kasahara is becoming known to audiences for her "flair for drama and blazing high notes" (*La Scena Musicale*). She is quickly rising as a versatile artist in the world of opera, oratorio and art song with her "brilliant coloratura voice" (*Opera Canada*).

## TEA: A MIRROR OF SOUL

### Canadian Premiere!

**An extraordinary fusion of western opera and eastern myth from the Academy Award®-winning composer of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon***

Tan Dun's haunting and beautiful opera makes its Canadian premiere on the VO stage. Most well-known for his soundtrack to the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Mr. Dun is also the composer of five operas and three other film soundtracks. Mr. Dun studied composition at Columbia University, where he discovered the music of Philip Glass.

*Tea: A Mirror of Soul* makes use of Western and traditional Chinese instruments, as well as paper (in large panels that are "played"), ceramic bowls (that sound like gamelan bells) and stones. Even orchestra members "play" paper, by rhythmically flipping the pages of their scores. The result is an extremely innovative, moving opera.

"A few years ago I had the immense pleasure of working with Tan Dun when I conducted his symphony *Heaven, Earth and Mankind* for the opening of the new concert hall in Duisburg," comments **Jonathan Darlington**, Vancouver Opera's music director. "Some time later I attended the world-premiere opening night of *Tea* in Amsterdam with the composer himself conducting. So to be able to conduct the Canadian premiere here in Vancouver is not just a privilege but also in a sense another link in what has become a rather intriguing chain. The piece is full of wonderful, enchanting sounds that I found on first hearing entrancing and compelling. It is definitely not to be missed."

Baritone **Chen-Ye Yuan** will sing Seikyo, a prince by birth whose search for the fabled *Book of Tea* has led him to become a monk. Mr. Yuan was last seen on the VO stage as Chou En-lai in 2010's *Nixon in China*. "Baritone Chen-Ye Yuan's Chou En-lai was remarkable for both the gravity of his portrayal and the voluptuous beauty of his singing," praised the *Globe and Mail*. Mr. Yuan has performed all over the world and is critically acclaimed for his *Rigoletto*. He is a member of the Houston Grand Opera, has had performances broadcast live on PBS and the BBC and has also performed with Plácido Domingo.

Tenor **Roger Honeywell** will sing the Prince. Mr. Honeywell last sang with VO alongside Judith Forst as Jimmy in 2010's world premiere of *Lillian Alling*. "Honeywell [brought] humour and warmth to Jimmy," praised the *Georgia Straight*.

Bass **Kirk Eichelberger** will sing the Emperor. His past roles include the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* for Opera Memphis and Méphistophélès in *Faust* for Opera San Jose and Opera Grand Rapids. Mr. Eichelberger was last seen on the VO stage as Sparafucile in 2009's *Rigoletto*.

## DATES, STORIES, CASTING DETAILS

### LA BOHÈME

by Giacomo Puccini

Production sponsored by Mission Hill Family Estate

In Italian with English SURTITLES™

October 20, 23, 25, 27, 28 (matinée), 2012

All evening performances 7:30pm • Matinee performance 1:30pm. All performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

19th century Paris. The Latin Quarter is impoverished, yet it pulses with the energy and passion of young artists. On Christmas Eve, Mimi and Rodolfo meet and fall deeply in love. Their happiness is cut short as Mimi's worsening health drives them apart. When they are reunited in the warmth of spring, it is too late. Mimi dies in Rodolfo's arms, with their dear friends close by.

Glorious music, a heartbreaking love story, and the perfect combination of pathos and humour make Puccini's peerless masterpiece irresistible. Whether it's your first time or your fiftieth, *La Bohème* will remind you what it means to be alive and in love.

**Principal Cast**

Mimi: **Marianne Fiset**  
Rodolfo: **Jason Slayden**  
Musetta: **Krisztina Szabó**  
Marcello: **Étienne Dupuis**  
Colline: **Stephen Hegedus**  
Conducted by: **Leslie Dala**  
Directed by: **Nancy Hermiston**

**THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE**

Composed by Arthur Sullivan • Libretto by W. S. Gilbert

Performed In English

December 1, 2 (matinée), 4, 6, 8, 9 (matinée), 2012

All evening performances 7:30pm • Matinee performances 1:30pm. All performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

A tropical coastline. Frederic has turned 21 and has reached the end of his apprenticeship to a band of hopelessly inept pirates. But wait: he was born on February 29 in Leap Year, so in fact he's only five! Bound by his principles, he must remain indentured and forfeit both his new-found love for Mabel and his plan to lead a squeamish squad of police against the pirates. It all works out, though. Frederic is freed and the pirates are revealed as noblemen and therefore suitable husbands for Mabel's sisters.

*The Pirates of Penzance* is a wonderfully witty satire of cherished institutions and attitudes. Bumbling police, a pompous military and slavish devotion to duty are all skewered with rapier wit by Gilbert and Sullivan. VO brings together two legendary performers – Christopher Gaze and Judith Forst - in this uproarious, absurd, and hugely pleasing comic opera.

**Principal Cast**

Frederic: **Roger Honeywell**  
Mabel: **Rachel Fenlon**

The Major-General: **Christopher Gaze**  
Pirate King: **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson**  
Ruth: **Judith Forst**  
Conducted by: **Jonathan Darlington**  
Directed by: **Christopher Gaze**  
Associate Director/Choreographer: **Allison Grant**

### THE MAGIC FLUTE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Production sponsored by YVR

In English with SURTITLES™

March 9, 10 (matinée), 12, 14, 16, 17 (matinée) 2013

All evening performances 7:30pm • Matinee performances 1:30pm. All performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

The timeless Coast Salish realm. On a quest for love and enlightenment, young Tamino finds himself at the centre of a battle between the forces of light and darkness. Accompanied by an absurdly lovelorn bird catcher, Papageno, and protected by his spirit-guide, Sarastro, Tamino confronts the formidable Queen of the Night, bravely endures terrifying trials, and is finally united in love with his beloved Pamina.

Set on the rocky shores and in the ancient rainforests of the Pacific Coast, VO's highly praised 2007 production, with new design elements, artfully blends Mozart's beguiling music with indigenous mythology and visually stunning design. The eternal story of humankind's search for spiritual harmony will move you; the human characters, spirit-animals and supernatural creatures will delight you.

Original production conceived with the guidance of First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council and an advisory group of First Nations artists.

### Principal Cast

Tamino: **John Tessier**  
Pamina: **Layla Claire**  
Papageno: **Joshua Hopkins**  
Queen of the Night: **Teiya Kasahara**  
Conducted by: **Leslie Dala**  
Directed by: **Robert McQueen**

Creative Team:

Scenery Design by: **Kevin McAllister**  
Scenery Design Consultant: **Carey Newman**  
Costume Design by: **Christine Reimer and John Powell**  
Lighting Design by: **Alan Brodie**  
Projection Design by: **Sean Nieuwenhuis**

**TEA: A Mirror of Soul**

Tan Dun

Production sponsored by BMO

In English with SURTITLES™

May 4, 7, 9, 11, 2013

All performances 7:30 pm at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

Ancient Japan. Seikyo, a prince by birth, tells his fellow monks the story of how he came to the temple: Years earlier, in China, seeking to marry Princess Lan, Seikyo confronts her jealous brother, the Prince, and must answer his challenge: find The Book of Tea and reveal its secret wisdom. In the distant south, Lu, daughter of the Tea Sage, relinquishes the book on condition that Seikyo and Lan vow to spread its truth throughout the world. Before they can read it, the Prince attacks Seikyo, and Lan is killed when she intervenes. The grief-stricken Prince offers himself in sacrifice, but Seikyo declines, choosing instead to cut off his own hair and take a monk's vow.

Combining sounds of water, paper, ceramic and stone with a traditional western orchestra, Tan Dun's haunting score is trance-like and beautiful. *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* is highly theatrical, visually stunning, and charged with eroticism, ritual and poetry. This will be an extraordinary and deeply rewarding opera experience.

Principal Cast

Seikyo: **Chen-Ye Yuan**  
Prince: **Roger Honeywell**  
Emperor: **Kirk Eichelberger**  
Conducted by: **Jonathan Darlington**  
Directed by: **Paul Peers**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS & TICKETS**

Subscriptions for Vancouver Opera's 2012-2013 Season will be on sale in mid-February at the VO Ticket Centre, 604-683-0222. Renewing subscribers can renew online, by mail, fax, telephone or in

person.

The on-sale date for non-subscription tickets to all performances of the four mainstage productions will be announced soon. Visit [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or call 604-683-0222.

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VO's 2012-2013 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp