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Vancouver Opera announces another new production **Early in its second half-century, the company will present a new** **co-production of John Corigliano's *Ghosts of Versailles***

Vancouver, BC ~ In a further expansion of its forward-looking plans for opera creation and new productions, Vancouver Opera will present the Canadian and North American west coast premiere of **John Corigliano's** monumental 1991 opera *Ghosts of Versailles* in the 2011-2012 season.

Ghosts of Versailles will be part of an extended – and unprecedented – period of creative output that reaches particular intensity during Vancouver Opera's 50th anniversary celebrations, in 2009-2010.

The production will come on the heels of the world premiere, in the fall of 2010, of VO's new commissioned opera *Lillian Alling*, by composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell; the company's recently-announced new production, in March 2010, of John Adams' *Nixon in China* (also a Canadian premiere); a new production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, in 2008-2009; and the creation of *Jack Pine*, a new opera for young audiences by Vancouver composer Veda Hille, which will begin touring British Columbia in February, 2009.

Ghosts of Versailles, with libretto in English by **William M. Hoffman**, is a delightful fantasy, both hilarious and touching, which is based in historical fact. In the ghostly afterlife of the Court of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette – unhappy about the loss of her empire and her head - cheers up when the poet Beaumarchais arrives to rescue her and reverse the course of history by staging a new opera using characters from his Figaro plays. Count Almaviva, in Paris as the Ambassador from Spain, employs his servant Figaro to sell Marie's jewels and secure her escape to the new world. After many merry manoeuvres and machinations, Marie resolves to accept her fate and face execution. She and her beloved Beaumarchais are united in Eternity.

The opera has been described by composer Corigliano as a "grand opera buffa" because it combines the large choruses and theatrical effects of grand opera with the comedy of *opera buffa*. Critical praise and sold-out houses greeted *Ghosts of Versailles* in 1991 at The Metropolitan Opera, with an original cast that included Canadians Teresa Stratas, Gino Quilico and Tracy Dahl, along with Renée Fleming, Håken Hagegård, Graham Clark and Marilyn Horne. The production was revived in 1994-1995, followed by a production at Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1995-1996.

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Vancouver Opera announces *Ghosts of Versailles* (Cont'd)

Originally written for the vastness of the Met stage and its accompanying technical resources, *Ghosts of Versailles* has not been presented outside of New York and Chicago. Recently, composer John Corigliano devised a performing version – still large in scale and artistic vision - that will allow opera goers outside those two cities to experience the work. The new production, to be co-produced by Vancouver Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Wexford Festival (Republic of Ireland) will feature designs by James Schuette (costumes), as well as Tony-nominated designers Allen Moyer (sets) and Wendall Harrington (video).

Casting will be announced in the future. The production will be directed by James Robinson, Artistic Director Designate of the Opera Theatre of St. Louis.

In announcing the production, VO's General Director, **James W. Wright**, said, "I am delighted to be presenting *Ghosts of Versailles* for the first time in Canada and on the west coast. Vancouver Opera has reached the high level of artistic capacity in all areas that makes productions of this size and scope possible. I think Vancouver audiences will be thrilled and delighted by this wonderfully comic and grandly conceived opera. Our production will offer lots to sink your teeth into: lavish costumes, an evocative set, and exceptional musical values." Added Wright, "*Ghosts of Versailles* is just one of many exciting projects that we have in store. Vancouver audiences should stay tuned for further announcements that will keep Vancouver Opera prominent on the world stage."

Composer & Librettist

John Corigliano (b. 1938) is a highly regarded and much-honoured American composer whose career spans several decades. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for his *Symphony No. 2 for String Orchestra*. In 1981 his score for the film *Altered States* was nominated for an Academy Award, and in 2000 he won the Oscar for his original score for *The Red Violin*. He has also won an Emmy, a Genie, a Jutra, and a British Film Institute Award. From 1987 to 1990 he was Composer in Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

William M. Hoffman (b. 1939) is a respected playwright, editor and educator who rose to prominence with his Drama Desk Award-winning, Tony-nominated 1985 play *As Is*, one of the first plays to deal with the AIDS crisis in North America. The recipient of numerous awards and honours, he currently is an Associate Professor of Journalism, Communications, and Theatre at City University of New York.