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Vancouver Opera Awarded \$10,000 Commissioning Grant

New opera for children tackles environmental themes through fresh, innovative music and libretto by Veda Hille

Vancouver, BC ~ Vancouver Opera has been awarded a \$10,000 grant through the Canada Council for the Arts' Commissioning of Canadian Compositions program for VO's original production of **Jack Pine**, a specially commissioned new opera for young people.

The libretto and music, based on the children's poem and illustrated book of the same name by Canadian author **Christopher Patton**, are created by renowned Canadian indie singer-songwriter **Veda Hille**. Written especially for elementary school children, the 45-minute opera will be touring B.C. from February 2009 through the Spring of 2010 as part of the **Vancouver Opera In Schools** program and will reach almost 50,000 young people.

"We're thrilled," says **James Wright**, General Director of Vancouver Opera. "This grant allows us to work with stellar Canadian talent such as Veda Hille to create fresh, contemporary productions that resonate with kids today. The support of the Canada Council helps VOIS bring the power, beauty and sheer fun of opera to children all over the province who may otherwise never get to experience it."

Jack Pine is the musical story of three children who, with the help of an enthusiastic botanist, discover the secrets of the trees that surround them. Through exploring the myths, legends and fascinating facts of Canada's vast forests, they learn about their own growth and potential.

Veda Hille's fresh music and libretto are a perfect match for this original new production. Although sophisticated and engaging enough for all elementary-aged children, those aged K-4 will be particularly charmed by the zany energy and full-throated singing of the talented young cast: tenor **Adam Fisher** (Jackson/Jack Pine), mezzo-soprano **Rose-Ellen Nichols** (Rebecca/Red Pine), soprano **Hiather Darnel-Kadonaga** (Piper/Pitch Pine) and baritone **Michael MacKinnon** (The Botanist/White Pine/The Farmer).

Musical accompaniment is by pianist **Andrea Wood** and the touring stage manager is **Rebecca Craster**. The set is designed by **Drew Facey**, based on original illustrations by **Cybele Young**. The costumes are designed by **John Powell**.

Vancouver Opera In Schools is the largest touring program of its kind in Canada. In its 36 years, it has enthralled more than 1.5 million elementary school children and their families in communities throughout BC and beyond. From cultural themes (*The Magic Flute*, adapted to incorporate First

Nations mythology) to historical (*The Barber of Barkerville*, a re-telling of Rossini's classic, *The Barber of Seville*, set in Gold Rush-era BC), and now environmental, VOIS demonstrates the relevance and power of a classic art to new generations.

The Commissioning of Canadian Compositions program encourages the creation of new works by Canadian composers, through commissions. It fosters partnerships and collaborations among professional arts organizations, performers and Canadian creators, while offering Canadian and foreign audiences greater access to Canadian works.

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Touring Sponsor - Vancouver Airport Authority