

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Canadian Premiere of John Adams's Minimalist Masterpiece
NIXON IN CHINA
Features Brand-New Production Created by Vancouver Opera

Vancouver, BC ~ Vancouverites will be the first in the country to experience John Adams's gripping masterpiece in Vancouver Opera's national premiere of *Nixon in China*, March 13th -20th, 2010. This minimalist tour-de-force by one of the world's leading composers will be performed for the first time in Canada in a brand-new production commissioned as part of VO's Golden Anniversary Season.

This milestone production is accompanied by a major series of free and ticketed community-engagement events through March, 2010 that explore the historic 1972 meeting between Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong, the opera it inspired and the establishment of the Chinese community in Vancouver. Journalist **Alexandre Trudeau**, historian **Margaret MacMillan** and architect **Bing Thom** are among the esteemed speakers. Details are set out below and are available at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Opening night of *Nixon in China* is **Saturday, March 13th, 2010**, with subsequent performances **Tuesday, March 16th, Thursday, March 18th and Saturday, March 20th**. All performances take place at the **Queen Elizabeth Theatre**, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver B.C. and begin at **7:30 p.m.** Tickets starting at \$29 are available exclusively at the **Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre**, online at www.vancouveropera.ca or by telephone (**604-683-0222**). See complete ticket information below.

Singing the role of Richard Nixon will be leading baritone **Robert Orth**. Internationally-acclaimed baritone **Chen-ye Yuan** will sing Chou En-Lai, and heldentenor **Alan Woodrow** will sing Mao Tse-tung. Canadian sopranos **Sally Dibblee** and **Tracy Dahl** will sing Pat Nixon and Chiang Ch'ing, and bass-baritone **Thomas Hammons** will sing Henry Kissinger.

Zheng Cao, who was to make her role debut as Nancy T'ang, has withdrawn for health reasons. Replacing Ms. Cao will be mezzo-soprano **Melissa Malde**, who has previously sung the role for Colorado Opera.

Exhilarating and driving, challenging and accessible, John Adams's richly textured and lyrical score pulses with rhythm. **John DeMain**, who conducted the world première production of *Nixon in China* at Houston Grand Opera in 1987, will conduct the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and Chorus.

Esteemed Toronto-based stage director **Michael Cavanagh** will direct the new production. It will be choreographed by the prominent Vancouver choreographer **Wen Wei Wang**, who, as a child, witnessed Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing. Video design is by **Sean Nieuwenhuis**.

This brand-new, innovative production is designed by the gifted American scenic designer **Erhard Rom** and will include a scale replica of *The Spirit of '76*, from which the Nixons will emerge at the start of the opera. A film crew will follow the action on-stage, recording and replaying it throughout the performance.

The Story In Brief

In 1972, Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong shook hands and changed the course of human events. West and East looked into each others eyes and discovered a vast mystery of differences and desires. Henry Kissinger, Chou En-lai, Pat Nixon and Chiang Ch'ing all play pivotal roles in this fascinating drama of psychology and global politics.

Background

Nixon in China was written during the period 1985 to 1987 and is considered by many to be a modern masterpiece and one of the cornerstones of American minimalist music. Composed by **John Adams** to a libretto by poet and scholar **Alice Goodman**, the opera tells the story of U.S. President Richard Nixon's momentous trip to China in 1972, when he met Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong and opened the political door to the Far East.

John Adams is part of a contemporary movement to create opera that explores current events. This movement includes Stewart Wallace and Anthony Davis, the composers of 1995's *Milk* and 1986's *X*, about Henry Milk and Malcolm X, respectively.

Both the music and libretto are admired for their sophistication and accessibility, and *Nixon in China* is acclaimed as one of the few late-20th-century English-language operas

that will likely attain a prominent place in the canon for decades to come.

Full Ticket Information

Single tickets starting at \$29 (plus handling fee) are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at 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

Music tracks, podcasts, a full synopsis and extensive background information are available at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Community-Engagement Series: Details

Vancouver Opera has collaborated with other arts, cultural and social organizations to present a major series of community-engagement events around the Canadian premiere of *Nixon in China*. For up-to-the-minute details, visit www.nixoninchinaopera.blogspot.com

Turning Point Ensemble – John Adams’s “Son of Chamber Symphony”

Wednesday, February 24th, 8:00pm

Vancouver Playhouse, Dunsmuir Street & Hamilton Street, Vancouver

Tickets from \$20 through Ticketmaster: 604-280-4444 or www.ticketmaster.ca

<http://www.turningpointensemble.ca/events.htm>

The Canadian premiere of John Adams's newly completed chamber piece plus Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony Op. 9* and the world premiere of a new chamber concerto by John Oliver. This concert is co-presented with Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad.

Inside the Music of John Adams

Tuesday, March 2nd, 7:00pm

Vancouver Academy of Music, 1270 Chestnut Street, Vancouver

Free Admission

An exploration of the music and career of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Adams. Presenters include writer and educator **Thomas May**, editor of *The John Adams Reader*; conductor **John DeMain**; and Vancouver composer/conductor **Owen Underhill**.

Opera Speaks @ VPL - Chinese Vancouver Then & Now: 1972-2010

Tuesday, March 9th, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Vancouver Public Library – Central Branch, Alice MacKay Room

Free Admission – seating is limited

Explore the history of the Chinese in Vancouver, with emphasis on the Chinese communities' emergence and development since 1972, the year of Nixon's momentous trip to China. Moderated by China scholar **Dr. Jan Walls**. Speakers include architect **Bing Thom**, UBC historian **Henry Yu**, and filmmaker **Colleen Leung**. Presented in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library.

Opera Speaks @ VPL is sponsored by Omni BC Diversity Television.

In China: Comparing the Nixon, Trudeau and Harper Visits

Friday, March 12th, 4:00pm – 5:30pm

Choi Building Conference Room, 1855 West Mall, UBC

Free Admission

A panel discussion exploring the past and future of Canada-China Relations to close the two day colloquium hosted by the Institute of Asian Research. For more information see www.iar.ubc.ca. Presented in partnership with the Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia.

Literary Lunch with Margaret MacMillan and Alexandre Trudeau

Tuesday, March 16th, 12:30pm – 2:30pm

Seasons at Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver

Tickets: \$50 through the VO Box Office: 604-683-0222.

An intimate encounter with acclaimed Canadian historian **Margaret MacMillan** and journalist and filmmaker **Alexandre Trudeau** (son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau) as they take us behind the headlines of history. Hosted by **Hal Wake**, Artistic Director of Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival.

Presented in partnership with Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival.

Margaret MacMillan in conversation with Eleanor Wachtel

Wednesday, March 17th, 7:30pm

Granville Island Stage

Tickets: \$18 through VancouverTix: 604-629-8849. www.vancouveritix.com

Margaret MacMillan talks with celebrated interviewer **Eleanor Wachtel**, host of CBC Radio's "Writers and Company" about her most recent book "The Uses and Abuses of

History" and her earlier chronicle "Nixon in China: The Week that Changed the World".
Presented in partnership with Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival.

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This production is presented with Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad.

Major support has been provided by Martha Lou Henley.

The Golden Anniversary Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp, Inc.