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VO's 2011-2012 Season reaches spectacular conclusion with opulent production of an opera not performed in Vancouver in a decade

AIDA

Vancouver, BC ~ *Aida* returns to Vancouver after 10 years in a stunning grand production of opulent costumes, sumptuous sets, and a massive cast and orchestra. This lavish production will be the last of VO's 2011-2012 mainstage season.

This not-to-be-missed *Aida* is on stage for six performances only, April 21 - May 3, 2012 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Opening night is **Saturday, April 21, 2012** with subsequent performances **Tuesday, April 24; Thursday, April 26; Saturday, April 28; Tuesday, May 1 and Thursday, May 3.**

In addition to a dozen dancers and eight principal singers, VO's massive production will include 35 supernumeraries (extras), 60 choristers, and an orchestra of 64.

All performances take place at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. and begin at 7:30pm. Tickets are available exclusively through the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at www.vancouveropera.ca or by telephone (604-683-0222). See complete ticket information below.

Cast & Creative Team

Chan Hon Goh, former Principal Dancer with the National Ballet of Canada and director of all aspects of operations for the Goh Ballet, will choreograph an army of 12 handpicked dancers from as far away as Brazil and Japan, as well as local Canadian talent. "It's really wonderful to have the opportunity to put my vision of dance into such a renowned opera," comments Ms. Goh. "Ever since I was a teenager, I've been fascinated with Egypt and its rituals, myths and stories. During the creation process, I felt all this coming to the surface in my interpretation."

Soprano **Mlada Khudoley**, last seen on the VO stage in the title role of 2009's *Salome*, sings *Aida*. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world," raved the *Vancouver Sun* for that performance. The *New York Times* has praised her "lush, sizeable and luminous voice." Her 2006 Covent Garden debut as Liza in *Queen of Spades* brought immense praise for her "lacerating power and seemingly inexhaustible angst." (*London Times*).

Louisiana mezzo-soprano **Daveda Karanas** is a winner of the 2008 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, an Adler Fellow at San Francisco Opera, the recipient of encouragement awards from the George London Foundation and Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition, and grand prizewinner of the 2005 Arizona Opera League Competition. "As Amneris, Greek-American mezzo Daveda Karanas possesses a tightly focused, slightly steely voice that easily penetrated the orchestra - rather in the mold of Fiorenza Cossotto. Her interpretation is that of a mature artist, and she is a compelling actress," praised *Opera Today* of her recent performance with Arizona Opera.

Tenor **Arnold Rawls** sings *Radames*, in his VO debut. Mr. Rawls made his Metropolitan Opera debut during the 2010-2011 season in another Verdi opera: *Il Trovatore*. "Young tenor Arnold Rawls is physically perfect for the victorious hero, *Radames*. He's certainly a triumph for Florida Grand Opera management...His tone, at times, is reminiscent of the young Pavarotti. It has a nice 'ring' to it with a lot of heft," praised the *Coral Gables Gazette*.

Baritone **Quinn Kelsey** sings *Amonasro*. Mr. Kelsey has sung the role in San Francisco to great acclaim: "Kelsey's singing is capacious and weighty, with effortless power and plenty of vibrant color. But once again, he deployed those resources with wondrous agility, turning the performance into something both authoritative and tonally light-footed; the Act 3 duet with *Aida* was emotionally devastating." (*The San Francisco Chronicle*)

Bass **Morris Robinson** sings *Ramfis*, High Priest of *Isis*. Mr. Robinson graduated from the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and has sung on the Met stage several times since. He has also sung with Dallas Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Wolf Trap and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Mr. Robinson is a graduate of The Citadel military college, which he attended on a football scholarship before turning to opera.

Also appearing are Russian bass **Ilya Bannik** as *The King of Egypt*; soprano **Sheila Christie** as the High Priestess; and tenor **John Arsenault** as the Messenger.

VO's Music Director **Jonathan Darlington** will conduct the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and the Vancouver Opera Chorus (**Leslie Dala**, Associate Conductor and Chorus Director).

The production will be directed by **David Gately**, who staged VO's box-office-record-breaking production of *Carmen* in 2009. "Direction by David Gately is elegant, realistic and almost balletically integrated with the music," praises the *Montreal Gazette*.

The Story, in Brief

Set in ancient Egypt, *Aida* is a passionate drama of love across enemy lines. When an enslaved Ethiopian princess and her captor fall in love, their loyalties are tested by fierce patriotism and a powerful priesthood.

Read a full synopsis at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Background

Aida was first performed at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo on Christmas Eve, 1871. The libretto was by Antonio Ghislanzoni, based on a story by French Egyptologist August Mariette. Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, had commissioned Verdi to write the opera earlier that year, but the premiere had been delayed because of the Franco-Prussian War.

The premiere of *Aida* was well received. Verdi didn't attend, nor was he much involved in the production. He was upset to hear that the audience consisted of dignitaries, politicians and critics - no members of the general public were invited.

The next production of *Aida* was the European premiere at La Scala in February 1872. Verdi worked closely on this production, which allowed a wider audience into the house. He thereafter considered this the *real* premiere of *Aida*.

Full Ticket Information

Single tickets 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.

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VO's 2011-2012 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp.