

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The grandest of grand operas returns to Vancouver after 10 years

AIDA

Goh Ballet's Chan Hon Goh debuts as choreographer

Vancouver, BC ~ VO closes its 52nd season with a masterpiece not seen in Vancouver in a decade: the grandest of grand operas, *Aida*. Giuseppe Verdi's *tour de force* of heart-stirring arias and thundering choruses is on stage at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre for six performances only, April 21 - May 3, 2012.

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**. 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.

Visually stunning and musically magnificent, Vancouver Opera's massive and opulent production features dazzling sets, sumptuous costumes, an orchestra of 65, a chorus of 40, a dozen dancers, 8 principal singers and more than 30 non-singing performers playing soldiers and prisoners.

Internationally revered dancer **Chan Hon Goh**, Director of the Goh Ballet Academy and Youth Company and former Principal Dancer with the National Ballet of Canada, makes her choreographic debut with the gorgeous ballet sequences in the production. Ms. Goh will oversee twelve hand-picked dancers.

Soprano **Mlada Khudoley**, last seen on the VO stage in the title role of 2009's *Salome*, sings Aida. "Russian soprano Mlada Khudoley's voice is big and compelling, her performance style all-or-nothing intensity," raved the *Vancouver Sun* for that performance. The *Globe and Mail* agreed, declaring her voice "ripe and dark in the low range, rich and glowing as it climbs, never short of power, silky when needed."

Fresh from the completion of her first Ring Cycle, with San Francisco Opera, Louisiana mezzo-soprano **Daveda Karanas** sings Amneris. She has previously sung the role as an Adler Fellow at SFO. "She boasts a large, brawny instrument with more than a touch of steel," reports the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Ms. Karanas is a winner of the 2008 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

Tenor **Arnold Rawls** sings Radames. Mr. Rawls made his Metropolitan Opera debut during the 2010-2011 season in another Verdi opera: *Il Trovatore*. He is praised for his "firm, pliant lyric tenor with ringing high notes that easily dominated the ensembles." (*Entertainment News & Views*).

Baritone **Quinn Kelsey** sings Amonasro. 2012 marks the Hawaii native's 21st year in opera, having begun his career with Hawaii Opera Theatre. "What a voice! He has beauty of tone, ample dramatic intensity, volume without resorting to pushing, youthful timbre, and most of all, his is an authentic Verdi baritone, a rare breed... Voices like that don't grow on trees," praised *La Scena Musicale*.

Also appearing are bass **Ilya Bannick** 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 directed 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*.

Chan Hon Goh will choreograph the dance sequences. In her 20-year stage career as Principal Dancer of the National Ballet of Canada, Ms. Goh has employed her delicate lyricism and emotional depth to personify the essence of several lead roles. Since retiring from the stage, Ms. Goh directs all aspects of operations for the Goh Ballet and plays the key role of Executive Producer for the Goh Ballet's critically acclaimed production of *The Nutcracker*.

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.

The Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre is sponsored by Mission Hill Family Estate.

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