

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE November 17, 2015
CONTACT Selina Rajani, 604-331-4824
srajani@vancouveropera.ca

Excitement building for Canadian Premiere of

DARK SISTERS

Four performances almost sold out!

Vancouver, BC ~ Excitement is building for the much-anticipated Canadian premiere of Nico Muhly's **Dark Sisters**, onstage at the Vancouver Playhouse from November 26 - December 12, 2015. Four of the nine performances are already sold out or nearly sold out.

The lives of six women living in a fundamentalist community, surrounded by religious and political tension and media hysteria are the heart of this astounding work by the composer of the much acclaimed *Two Boys*. The libretto is by the Pulitzer Prize shortlisted playwright and screenwriter Stephen Karam.

Vancouver Opera's **Dark Sisters** will be onstage at the Vancouver Playhouse for 9 performances, November 26 - December 12, 2015.

Thursday, November 26 • 7:30pm • opening night

Friday, November 27 • 7:30pm

Saturday, November 28 • 7:30pm

Thursday, December 3 • 7:30pm

Friday, December 4 • 7:30pm

Saturday, December 5 • 7:30pm

Sunday, December 6 • 2:00pm

Thursday, December 10 • 7:30pm

Saturday, December 12 • 7:30pm • closing night

All performances take place at the Vancouver Playhouse, corner of Dunsmuir and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C.

Dark Sisters will be sung in English with SURTITLES™ projected above the stage. Approximate running time: 2 hours, including 1 intermission.

Tickets are available exclusively through the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre: 604-683-0222 or www.vancouveropera.ca. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted. Special pricing for groups of 10 or more is available by phone.

Follow Vancouver Opera on Twitter and Facebook for exclusive offers such as VO's Get O.U.T (Opera Under 35) program, with **\$35 tickets for patrons aged under 35**.

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Conducted by	Kinza Tyrrell
Directed by	Amiel Gladstone
Prophet / Larry King	Thomas Goerz
Zina, fourth wife	Eve-Lyn de la Haye
Eliza, fifth wife	Melanie Krueger
Ruth, second wife	Megan Latham
Presendia, first wife	Heather Pawsey
Lucinda, Eliza's daughter	Eden Tremayne *
Almera, third wife	Karen Ydenberg
Assistant Conductor / Principal Répétiteur	Tina Chang
Scenic Designer	Pam Johnson
Costume Designer	Parvin Mirhady
Lighting Designer	Gerald King
Projection Designer	Jamie Nesbitt
Wig Designer	Stacey Butterworth
Associate Wig Designer	Susan Manning
Musical Preparation	Kimberley-Ann Bartczak *
Stage Manager	Melissa Rood
Assistant Director	Brenna Corner *

* Member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program

ABOUT THE COMPOSER AND LIBRETTIST

Born in 1981, **Nico Muhly** is a composer of chamber music, orchestral music, sacred music, opera, ballet, and music for collaborators across a variety of fields. The Metropolitan Opera recently commissioned him to compose *Marnie* for its 2019-2020 season, based on Winston Graham's 1961 novel that was adapted into an Alfred Hitchcock movie.

Mr. Muhly has scored ballets for choreographer Benjamin Millepied and films including *The Reader*, *Kill Your Darlings*, and *Me, Earl And The Dying Girl*, in addition to arranging music by Antony & the Johnsons and the National. His debut CD *Speak Volumes* (2007) was the first of many collaborations with the artists of Reykjavik's Bedroom Community label, and with singer/songwriter Thomas Bartlett (Doveman), he is half of the gamelan-inspired song project *Peter Pears*. He lives in New York City.

"This is a very complicated sort of modern freedom of religion issue. The idea that a government would break into a community and say, 'You can't live your life this way,' is very radical. Yet this happened twice to the same community. To me, this is sort of a very interesting breakdown of the way we normally talk about people interacting with each other and interacting with their faith." - *Nico Muhly on Dark Sisters*

Stephen Karam is the author of *The Humans and Sons of the Prophet*, a finalist for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and the recipient of the 2012 Drama Critics Circle, Outer Critics Circle, Lucille Lortel and Hull-Warriner Awards for Best Play. Other plays include *Speech & Debate*, the inaugural production of *Roundabout Underground*, and *columbinus* (New York Theatre Workshop).

Mr. Karam has written screenplay adaptations of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and *Speech & Debate*, both scheduled for release in 2016. He is a MacDowell Colony fellow, and the recipient of the inaugural Sam Norkin Off-Broadway Drama Desk Award and teaches playwriting at The New School.

"For me, it's all just the human dynamics: a mother's love for her daughter, the quest for personal identity and self-discovery. I feel like everybody has a story of self-discovery. There's the family you're born into and the family you establish for yourself as you grow up, the people you decided to stay close to and new friends and lovers. This is the ultimate version of that story. It seems like such an exciting narrative period for entertainment purposes, but at the same time, the emotional core of the story is deeply personal in terms of these women's hopes and fears and struggles with loss and grief." - *Stephen Karam on Dark Sisters*

THE SINGERS

Bass-baritone **Thomas Goerz** sings the roles of The Prophet and Larry King. Noted for his dramatic integrity and vocal clarity, Mr. Goerz has appeared frequently with VO, most recently in 2013's *Tosca* and 2014's *Carmen*.

Soprano **Eve-Lyn de la Haye** sings Zina. Her performances as Nannetta in Calgary Opera's *Falstaff* have placed her in the front ranks of the lyric coloraturas of her generation. Accomplished across a range of musical genres, her recent appearances include Yum Yum in *The Mikado* for Calgary Opera, *Elijah* for the Vancouver Bach Choir, soloist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and *Messiah* for the Victoria Symphony. This will be her Vancouver Opera debut.

Soprano **Melanie Krueger** sings Eliza. Ms. Krueger has been hailed by *La Scena Musicale* Magazine as having "a voice that simply soars over the orchestra". She has appeared on concert and opera stages throughout Canada and Europe and has been identified as a "show stopper" by the *Vancouver Sun*. Ms. Krueger last appeared on the VO stage in 2013's *Albert Herring*, and in 2012's *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham** sings Ruth. Raised in Abbotsford, BC, Ms. Latham has been recognized for her opera, oratorio, and recital performances. She last performed with VO to great acclaim as the Grandmother in the 2014 world premiere of *Stickboy*.

Soprano **Heather Pawsey** sings Presendia. Acclaimed for her "gorgeous operatic power" (Vancouver Sun), Ms. Pawsey is a first-prize winner of the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition. In 2009, she was named an ambassador of the Canadian Music Centre. Equally at home in 18th and 19th century repertoire, she is particularly skilled in the music of our time, with a number of world premieres to her credit, and in a broad spectrum of the world's languages.

Soprano **Eden Tremayne** sings Lucinda, Eliza's daughter. Ms. Tremayne is a member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program and will be singing Kate Pinkerton in VO's upcoming production of *Madama Butterfly*.

Soprano **Karen Ydenberg** sings Almera. Ms. Ydenberg has performed with Vancouver Opera several times, most recently in 2015's *Sweeney Todd* and 2009's *Carmen*, as well as with several Canadian opera companies. She is co-creator of the Classical Comedy Duo Leave It to Diva, which has created and performed several staged concerts at Festival Vancouver, the Vancouver Fringe Festival and the Nelson Summer Songfest.

VO's Principal Répétiteur and Assistant Chorus Director **Kinza Tyrrell** will conduct. Dr. Tyrrell is also Music Director of Vancouver Opera In Schools and Head Coach of VO's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program, and guest faculty at the Canadian Opera Company and Opera Nuova.

Playwright and stage director **Amiel Gladstone** will direct. Mr. Gladstone's plays have been produced across Canada and have toured internationally. His collection of plays, *Hippies and Bolsheviks* was published by Coach House Press and he has won Jessie Richardson Awards for Best Original Script and Body of Work. Most recently, Mr. Gladstone directed *Are We Cool Now?* at Western Canada Theatre and the Cultch, and the National Arts Centre tour of *Do you want what I have got? A Craigslist Cantata*.

THE STORY IN BRIEF

In a renegade Mormon community of the American southwest, brave Eliza attempts to escape her life as one of five “sister wives” in a polygamous marriage and save her daughter from the same fate. The women’s children have been removed by state authorities and their husband, known as the Prophet, has retreated to the desert, seeking divine guidance. In desperation, the women subject themselves to the glare of the media. While the world watches on television, Eliza bares her heart, unleashes her condemnation of the community's patriarchy, and pleads with her sister wives to break free.

Read a full synopsis at www.vancouveropera.ca.

FULL TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for **Dark Sisters** 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 10 or more, call 604-683-0222.