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VO's General Director James W. Wright extends contract one year,
will retire at end of 2015-2016 season

Vancouver, BC ~ Vancouver Opera's board of directors has extended the contract of general director James W. Wright by one year. Wright, whose contract was to have expired in June, 2015, will retire at the end of the 2015-16 season, after 17 years with the company.

The process of identifying Wright's successor has begun, using the consultative services of international search firm Korn Ferry, through its Vancouver office.

James Wright joined VO in July, 1999, having led the opera companies of Charlotte, North Carolina and Anchorage, Alaska and having held senior positions at several other opera companies. Since then, he has overseen VO's steady artistic growth and its increased influence in the community, marked by several milestones, including the commissioning of four new operas: *Naomi's Road* and *Jack Pine*, for young audiences; *Lillian Alling*, by John Estacio and John Murrell, which premiered in 2010; and, most recently, *Stickboy*, by Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan, which had its highly successful world premiere in October/November, 2014.

Under Wright's leadership, VO has brought new work to the community, including the Canadian premieres of *Nixon in China* (2010) and *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* (2013), and company premieres such as *Of Mice and Men* (2002), *Elektra* (2003), *Der Rosenkavalier* (2004), and *West Side Story* (2012).

Wright commissioned and led a ground-breaking production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, in collaboration with First Nations artists and designers, which garnered broad local interest and international attention upon its premiere, in 2007 and on its remounting, in 2013.

Wright also initiated, in 2002, Vancouver Opera's industry-leading community engagement program, which, through its series of forums and events called "Opera Speaks", continues to tackle social issues and themes that arise from the work that the company produces.

"We are delighted that Jim has agreed to extend his tenure," said Pascal Spothelfer, chair of VO's board of directors. "The company is in an exciting period of stretching itself to engage new audiences and build the next generation of opera lovers. Jim's steady, sure-footed leadership and his flexible, creative vision for the future continue to play an invaluable role. All of us on the board are grateful that

he is staying on another year to lead the company through a very exciting season during transformative times.”

“This has been - by far - the most satisfying work in my almost 40 years in the arts,” said Wright. “My relationships over the years with the board of directors, my professional colleagues, and British Columbia and Canada’s wonderful artists have been extremely rewarding. The opportunity to both serve a grand, 55-year tradition of opera in Vancouver and innovate in a city that thrives on innovation continues to be an enormous privilege. I look forward to staying at the helm for another year and actively managing the transition to my eventual successor.”

VO’s 2014-2015 season opened with a fiery and passionate *Carmen*, followed by the world premiere of the highly-acclaimed *Stickboy*. The season continued with a delightful *Die Fledermaus*, and concludes with a darkly beautiful *Sweeney Todd* starring bass-baritone Greer Grimsley, both conducted by Jonathan Darlington, VO’s Music Director.

The recently-announced 2015-2016 season will include productions in a variety of venues: the Vancouver Opera In Schools tour of *Stickboy* to school and community venues throughout Metro Vancouver and beyond, as well as the Canadian premiere of Nico Muhly’s *Dark Sisters* at the Vancouver Playhouse. Two of opera’s most popular masterpieces, *Rigoletto* and *Madama Butterfly*, will be performed at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, as well as the season-closing company premiere of *Evita*.

About Vancouver Opera

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