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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VO brings Bohemian Paris to Vancouver in
LA BOHÈME

Opening night is less than two weeks away!

Vancouver, BC ~ In less than two weeks, Vancouver Opera will transport audiences to the Bohemian world of 19th century Paris. Romance, drama and humour will come alive in Puccini's *La bohème*, "the world's most popular love story" (*The New York Times*).

Opening night is **Saturday, October 20, 2012**, with subsequent performances **Tuesday, October 23; Thursday, October 25; Saturday, October 27 at 7:30pm** and a matinee performance on **Sunday, October 28 at 1:30pm**. All performances take place at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. 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.

One of the world's most beloved operas, *La bohème* is a heartbreaking, universal portrait of youth and beauty struggling to survive in a world of hardship. VO's production combines evocative sets on a grand-opera scale and lavish costumes with a fresh young cast who bring new depths of emotion to an eternally effective and moving classic.

The Singers

Making her VO debut will be soprano **Marianne Fiset** as Mimi. Born in Quebec City, Ms. Fiset has sung with several companies worldwide, including L'Opéra du Montréal, Opera National de Paris, Orquestra Sinfonica Madrid and Orchestre Métropolitain, under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. "Little can dampen a performance of *La bohème* when you have a great Mimi in soprano Marianne Fiset, singing the role for the third time. Her clear, soaring voice and beautiful legato gave

goosebump moments from "Si, mi chiamano Mimi" to her touching Act III and IV scenes," praised the *Montreal Gazette*.

Tenor **Jason Slayden** makes his Canadian debut as Rodolfo. A Metropolitan Opera National Council semi-finalist and winner of the 2011 Gerda Lissner Foundation First Prize, Mr. Slayden has been praised for the warmth and beauty of his voice and charismatic stage presence. He began the 2012-2013 season as a Filene Young Artist at the Wolf Trap Summer Festival.

Toronto-based Hungarian-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó** sings Musetta. Ms. Szabó was last seen on the VO stage as Sesto in 2011's *La clemenza di Tito*. "Blessed with a honeyed mezzo, she made her pants role real and tormented," praised the *Georgia Straight*. Ms. Szabó performs frequently throughout Europe, the United States and Canada. She has appeared with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Chicago Opera Theatre, L'Opéra National du Rhin and the San Antonio Symphony.

Baritone **Étienne Dupuis** sings Marcello the painter. Mr. Dupuis studied at McGill University and has sung with L'Opéra de Montréal, Calgary Opera, Edmonton Opera and L'Opéra de Paris. In 2009 he was selected to represent Canada in the 2009 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition.

Bass-Baritone **Stephen Hegedus** has sung with the Houston Symphony, the Edmonton Symphony, Pacific Opera Victoria and others. He last sang on the VO stage in 2011's *La traviata*, directed by Sir Jonathan Miller. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2009 and was a recent finalist at Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition. "Stephen Hegedus ... is a charming actor and, more to the point a singer of enormous promise. He has a warm voice with a distinctive vibrato that adds interesting colour and truly amazing low notes." (*Opera Canada*)

Thomas Goerz, also a bass-baritone, sings Benoit, the landlord. Mr. Goerz's impressive variety of roles ranges from Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) to Pooh Bah (*The Mikado*) to Lord Krishna (*Satyagraha*). He was last seen on the VO stage as Basilio in 2012's *The Barber of Seville* and earned strong praise as Josef in 2010's world premiere of *Lillian Alling*: "Thomas Goerz's rolling bass-baritone perfectly caught the brutal energy of the nefarious Josef" (*The Globe and Mail*)

Baritone **Aaron Durand** sings Schounard. Mr. Durand began his opera studies at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. He transferred to UBC in 2007 and has since performed lead roles in *Così fan tutte*, *Louis Riel*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Cendrillon*, *Albert Herring*, and *The Merry Widow*. He recently participated in Vancouver Opera's Young Artist Coaching Intensive and completed his Masters in

Music at UBC. Mr. Durand is currently participating in the inaugural year of VO's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program.

The director is **Nancy Hermiston**, Director of the UBC Voice and Opera Division and recipient of a Dorothy Somerset Award for Performance and Development in the Visual and Performing Arts. Ms. Hermiston's last VO engagement was at the helm of 2004's *La traviata*. VO's Chorus Director and Associate Conductor **Leslie Dala** will lead the VO Orchestra. Mr. Dala was last seen in the orchestra pit as conductor of 2011's *West Side Story*. The set designer is **Erhard Rom**, who has won international praise for his design of VO's 2010 *Nixon in China*.

The story, in brief

19th century Paris. The Latin Quarter is impoverished, yet it pulses with the energy and passion of young artists. On Christmas Eve, Mimi and Rodolfo meet and fall deeply in love. Their happiness is cut short as Mimi's worsening health drives them apart. When they are reunited in the warmth of spring, it is too late. Mimi dies in Rodolfo's arms, with their dear friends close by.

Background

Puccini's *La bohème* was based on Henri Murger's popular 1845 collection of stories, *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*. The stories depicted the lives of a group of young Parisian 'Bohemians', a label made more popular by Murger's stories. Puccini based his cast of characters on those in the stories: the philosopher Colline, the poet Rodolfo, the painter Marcello, the musician Schaunard, the singer Musetta and the seamstress Mimi.

When Puccini decided to compose the opera, his friend Ruggero Leoncavallo was working on an opera based on Murger's stories, also called *La Bohème*. The friendship was destroyed by the rivalry. Leoncavallo completed his opera a year after Puccini completed his version, but Leoncavallo's is almost never performed (although Leoncavallo gained great fame for his 1892 opera *I pagliacci*).

The 1996 rock opera *Rent* is loosely based on *La bohème*, but set in New York instead of Paris. Instead of tuberculosis, the Mimi character is infected with AIDS.



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Full Ticket Information

Single tickets starting at \$35 (plus handling fee) are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre (sponsored by *Mission Hill Family Estate*), 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. Family Packs are also available for the October 28th matinee: with the purchase of two regular-priced adult tickets, one or two additional tickets for children aged 18 and under can be purchased for \$35 each. Contact the VO Ticket Centre for more information.

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VO's 2012-2013 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp.
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Production Patrons:
Mike & Kathy Gallagher
Martha Lou Henley, C.M.