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Magic and enchantment return to Vancouver in VO's acclaimed

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Innovative production transforms the Queen Elizabeth Theatre
into a timeless Coast Salish realm

Vancouver, BC ~ Rehearsals are underway for the return of Vancouver Opera's highly acclaimed First Nations-inspired *The Magic Flute*, on stage for 6 performances only, March 9 - 17, 2013.

Opening night is **Saturday, March 9, 2013** with subsequent performances **Sunday, March 10 (matinée)**; **Tuesday, March 12**; **Thursday, March 14**; **Saturday, March 16** and **Sunday, March 17 (matinée)**. Evening performances are at 7:30pm. Matinee performances begin 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.

Conceived with the guidance of First Peoples' Cultural Council and an advisory group of First Nations artists, and incorporating words from the *hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm̓* language, this innovative collaboration has been hailed as "An opulent theatrical experience.... a shining and original *Magic Flute*" (*Vancouver Sun*). Language, movement, imagery and other aspects were created in accordance with First Nations protocol. Each performance at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre will be preceded by a blessing by a Coast Salish elder.

The production, enhanced since the 2007 premiere, incorporates substantial design updates. Two state-of-the-art projectors recently acquired by VO will help create front and rear HD video projections of high visual impact. Costumes have been significantly revised, with an even more

magical and imposing Queen of the Night. Mozart's beguiling music remains unchanged, set to a libretto in English, by stage director Robert McQueen, which incorporates words from the *hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓* language, with permission of the Musqueam nation.

THE ORIGINAL CREATIVE TEAM

A dynamic team of artists and designers has created the stunning sets and costumes. Scenic design is by **Kevin McAllister** and scenic design consultant **Carey Newman** (Kwagiulth and Coast Salish). Costumes are co-designed by **John Powell** (Kwakwaka'wakw) and **Christine Reimer**. Choreography is by **Michelle Olson** (Han), with guidance from Cultural Dance Advisor **Bob Baker** (Squamish). Additional key creative contributions have been made by Cultural Advisor, Staging **Marlena Dolan** (Cree) and by interns **Lance Cardinal** (Scenic Design; Cree), **Sharifah Marsden** (Costume Construction; Ojibway/Micmac), and **Debra Sparrow** (Costume Design; Musqueam).

Robert McQueen returns to VO to direct this production. As the director of the original 2007 production, Mr. McQueen was instrumental in the creation process of this unique *Magic Flute*.

New and updated visuals have been created for this production by the original team of **Sean Nieuwenhuis** (Video and Projections) and **Alan Brodie** (Lighting). Joining them is **Tobie Caplette** (Métis), assistant videographer. *The Magic Flute* is sung in English, with English SURTITLES™ projected above the stage. Spoken dialogue is in English and in *hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓*, a dialect of the Musqueam language.

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 2012's *La bohème*.

THE CAST

Tamino will be sung by Juno Award-winning tenor, and frequent VO artist, **John Tessier**. "Tessier has an international reputation as the perfect light lyric tenor," praised *The Globe and Mail*. "He has beautiful clarity of tone and hits seemingly effortless high notes, and over the years he has grown into a terrific actor to boot." Mr. Tessier has worked with Plácido Domingo, Itzhak Perlman, Dame Gwyneth Jones and several other notable musicians and has sung internationally. He was last seen on the VO stage in the title role of 2011's *La clemenza di Tito*.

The role of Pamina will be shared by two exciting and acclaimed singers: **Simone Osborne** and **Rachel Fenlon**. Ms. Osborne will sing in the March 9, 12, 14, 16 and 17 (matinée) performances. Ms. Fenlon will sing in the March 10 (matinée) performance.

Metropolitan Opera audition-winner **Simone Osborne** last appeared with VO as Juliette in 2011's *Roméo et Juliette*. Ms. Osborne has been praised by the *Georgia Straight* for her "elegant and expressive style, her openness of sound, and her unaffectedly natural acting," Continues the *Straight*, "She sang no less than exquisitely, hitting every high note...This girl's going places. Watch her."

Soprano **Rachel Fenlon** earned high praise for her performance as Mabel in this season's hit *The Pirates of Penzance*. "Mabel, soprano Rachel Fenlon is a classic ingenue, trilling into the vocal stratosphere on demand, demure and ruthless by turns," declared the *Vancouver Sun*. "Fenlon trills like a bird, virtuosically yet hilariously, through her first-act coloratura sendup," reported the *Georgia Straight*.

Baritone **Joshua Hopkins** will sing Papageno. Winner of the 2006 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and the Verbier Festival Academy's 2008 Prix d'Honneur, Joshua Hopkins has been hailed for his "gorgeous voice, a voice with gold in it. ...[T]his young Hopkins is one of those golden singers, and he filled the Koch Theater with this gold, this glow." (*The New Criterion*). Mr. Hopkins was last seen on the VO stage as Figaro in 2012's acclaimed *The Barber of Seville*.

Canadian bass **Phillip Ens** will sing Sarastro. Mr. Ens made his operatic debut in 1985 with Manitoba Opera and has since sung with opera companies across the country as well as in Philadelphia, Denver, Austin and the Bayerische Staatsoper. He has also appeared with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Edinburgh and Salzburg Festivals, and the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome.

The Queen of the Night will be sung by Canadian lyric coloratura soprano **Teiya Kasahara**. Ms. Kasahara is becoming known to audiences for her "flair for drama and blazing high notes" (*La Scena Musicale*). She is quickly rising as a versatile artist in the world of opera, oratorio and art song with her "brilliant coloratura voice" (*Opera Canada*). She has previously sung in VO's *Voices of the Pacific Rim* concerts. This will be Ms. Kasahara's mainstage debut.

Newfoundland tenor **Michael Barrett** will sing Monostatos. Mr. Barrett is a former member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio and has sung in Toronto, Newfoundland and Edmonton. He regularly appears with the Aldeburgh Connection. This will be Mr. Barrett's VO debut.

The Three Ladies will be sung by First Nations artists. Métis soprano **Melody Mercredi** will sing the First Lady and will also be cover for the Queen of the Night. Ms. Mercredi sang the Queen in the Vancouver Opera In Schools' touring production of *The Magic Flute: Quest for the Box of Shadows* and made her VO mainstage debut as Barbarina in 2010's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Kwagiulth soprano **Leah Alfred** will sing the Second Lady. Ms. Alfred studied opera at UBC where she appeared in UBC Opera's production of *Louis Riel* and performed with the VSO. She currently studies at the University of Victoria. This will be Ms. Alfred's mainstage debut.

Kwakwaka'wakw mezzo-soprano **Marion Newman** will sing the Third Lady, as she did in the 2007 production. She has been praised as a "show stealer" (*BBC Music Magazine*) for her "distinctive, dusky voice" (*Toronto Star*). Ms. Newman has sung in Italy, the Czech Republic, Germany and France and has made several recordings with the Aradia Ensemble for Naxos.

Mezzo-soprano **Sylvia Szadovszki** will sing Papagena. Ms. Szadovszki is a graduate of the University of British Columbia and the Manhattan School of Music. She has performed with the European Music Academy (Czech Republic), Mountain View Festival of Song (Alberta), Artistic Repertory Theater (Florida), Spoleto Vocal Arts Symposium and International Lyric Academy of Rome. Ms. Szadovski is a member of VO's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program and was last seen on the VO stage as Kate in 2012's *The Pirates of Penzance*.

THE STORY IN BRIEF

On a quest for love and enlightenment, young Tamino finds himself at the centre of a battle between the forces of light and darkness. Accompanied by an absurdly lovelorn bird catcher, Papageno, and protected by his spirit-guide, Sarastro, Tamino confronts the formidable Queen of the Night, bravely endures terrifying trials, and is finally united in love with his beloved Pamina.

BACKGROUND

The Magic Flute is the most unusual of Mozart's operas. On one level, it is a romantic story of lovers in jeopardy, enjoyable by audiences of all ages. On another level, it is an allegorical tale of the quest for life's meaning, subject to more interpretations than any opera outside of the canon of Wagner. The recurrence of the number three (three trials, Three Ladies, Three Spirits, three priests) in the narrative is echoed musically by Mozart's sublime score, leading to many political and spiritual

interpretations of the deceptively simple story. Ultimately, analysis matters not, as the music is some of Mozart's finest, with exalted arias existing in harmony with heartfelt love songs; outrageously silly buffa pieces and hair-raising coloratura passages.

Adapted by director Robert McQueen, in consultation with a panel of First Nations artists, the legends and traditions of BC's coastal First Nations proved ideal for providing a fresh look at Mozart's work. Coastal traditions dictate equality of the sexes, allowing McQueen to eliminate much of the language criticized as sexist in recent years. As well, the "trickster" archetype of First Nations legend allows for a wider appreciation of the characters of The Queen of the Night and Sarastro, as each contains the duality of good and evil. Sarastro's followers are clothed in representative dress of BC's 10 coastal Nations, and his three priests, or "siem," represent spiritual figures in the Coast Salish tradition. The set design represents the three planes of land, water and air central to First Nations mythology, which is echoed in the symbolic movements of the five dancers.

Full Ticket Information

Tickets to *The Magic Flute* are available now 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 2012-2013 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp.

This production of *The Magic Flute* is sponsored by YVR.