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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“PIRATES” TO INVADE QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

Swashbuckling satire featuring Christopher Gaze and Judith Forst
on stage for 6 performances only!

Vancouver, BC ~ Avast me hearties! Gilbert & Sullivan's uproarious and absurd satire *The Pirates of Penzance* takes control of the Queen Elizabeth stage for 6 performances only, December 1 - 9, 2012. Opening night is **Saturday, December 1, 2012** with subsequent performances **Sunday, December 2 (matinee); Tuesday, December 4; Thursday, December 6; Saturday, December 8** and **Sunday, December 9 (matinee)**.

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.

This colourful production features **Christopher Gaze** as the very model of a modern Major-General, internationally renowned mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst** as Ruth, and – in keeping with tradition – updates to the songs and script that will tickle local audiences. Mr. Gaze will also direct the production.

The Cast

Christopher Gaze makes his Vancouver Opera début as Major-General Stanley. Best known as Artistic Director of Vancouver's Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival, Mr. Gaze has performed in England, the USA and across Canada. He trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School before coming to Canada in 1975 where he spent three seasons at the Shaw Festival. In 1990 he founded Bard on the Beach. Mr. Gaze's voice is heard regularly in cartoon series, commercials and on the radio. He also hosts Vancouver Symphony's popular *Tea & Trumpets* series and their annual Christmas concerts.

International Vancouver-based superstar **Judith Forst, OC, OBC**, sings Ruth, the nursery maid whose poor hearing causes her charge, the hapless but dashing Frederic, to be indentured to a pirate (instead of a pilot). Ms. Forst's long and illustrious career includes regular performances with The Metropolitan Opera and the Canadian Opera Company. She has been called "one of the few truly world-class coloratura mezzo-sopranos on the operatic stage" (*COC Magazine*). Ms. Forst was last seen in VO's 2010 world premiere production of *Lillian Alling*, in which she created the role of Irene.

Roger Honeywell returns to Vancouver Opera to sing Frederic. The Toronto-based tenor "with the right kind of heroic mettle to his voice" (*Opera Now*) was last seen on the VO stage alongside Ms. Forst in the world premiere of *Lillian Alling*, creating the role of Jimmy.

Baritone **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson** sings The Pirate King. Known for his energetic and convincing performances, the BC baritone was last seen on the VO stage as Mercutio in the 2011's *Roméo et Juliette*. "Nicholson is blessed with a manly, smooth voice of robust beauty, but his greatest gift is the way he can expressively play with nuance," praised *The Globe and Mail*.

Soprano **Rachel Fenlon** sings Mabel, one of the many daughters of Major-General Stanley. Ms. Fenlon earned a Masters degree in opera performances from UBC and has trained at the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy (COSI), the Vancouver International Song Institute, and the European Music Academy in the Czech Republic. Ms. Fenlon is a member of VO's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program. This will be her major stage debut.

The Pirates of Penzance will be directed by Mr. Gaze; the associate director will be **Allison Grant**, most recently the Artistic Director at Theatre Athena in Waterloo, Ontario. Ms. Grant has directed or choreographed numerous plays, operas and musicals, including VO's 2011 production of *Roméo et Juliette*.

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 Story in Brief

A coastline. Frederic has turned 21 and has reached the end of his apprenticeship to a band of hopelessly inept pirates. But wait: he was born on February 29 in Leap Year, so in fact he's only five! Bound by his principles, he must remain indentured and forfeit both his new-found love for Mabel and his plan to lead a squeamish squad of police against the pirates. It all works out, though. Frederic

is freed and the pirates are revealed as noblemen and therefore suitable husbands for Mabel's sisters.

Background

The Pirates of Penzance; or, The Slave of Duty debuted on December 31, 1879 in New York City. The production ran there for three months and went on to be produced in London in a run of 363 performances. *Pirates* was the fifth Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration and introduced the much-parodied Major-General's Song.

There is a reason why *The Pirates of Penzance* was the only Gilbert and Sullivan opera to have its official premiere in the United States. At the time, American law offered no copyright protection to foreigners. After their previous opera, *H.M.S. Pinafore* was a hit in London, over a hundred American companies quickly mounted unauthorised productions, often taking considerable liberties with the text and paying no royalties to the creators.

Gilbert and Sullivan hoped to forestall further "copyright piracy" by mounting the first production of *Pirates* in America, before others could copy it, and by delaying publication of the score and libretto. They succeeded by opening the production themselves on Broadway, before the London production, and by operating U.S. touring companies.

The work's title is a multi-layered joke. On the one hand, Penzance was a docile seaside resort in 1879, and not the place where one would expect to encounter pirates. On the other hand, the title was also a jab at the *theatrical* pirates who had staged unlicensed productions of *H.M.S. Pinafore* in America.

Learn More

Topsy Turvy Film Screening

Thursday, November 8, 2012

Vancity Theatre, Vancouver International Film Centre

1181 Seymour Street (at Davie)

Doors: 6:30pm • Introduction and Screening: 7:00pm

Regular admission: \$11/\$9 senior or student (includes \$2 Vancity Film Centre membership).

In 1884 the most successful partnership on the English stage is in trouble. An unkind review of *Princess Ida* has dubbed librettist W.S. Gilbert (Jim Broadbent) 'the king of Topsy-Turvydom', while



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composer Sir Arthur Sullivan (Allan Corduner) has decided to devote himself to more serious classical pieces rather than fulfil his contract with impresario D'Oyly Carte (Ron Cook). The stalemate is broken when Gilbert visits an exhibition of Japanese arts and crafts, finds inspiration to pen *The Mikado*, engaging Sullivan's creativity once more.

Seating is limited. This special event continues a series of co-presentations between Vancouver Opera and Vancity Theatre.

Full Ticket Information

Single tickets are available exclusively 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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This production of *The Pirates of Penzance* is generously sponsored by Blakes.
VO's 2012-2013 Season is generously sponsored by Goldcorp