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## CANADIAN PREMIERE TEA: A MIRROR OF SOUL

An extraordinary opera by the Academy Award-winning composer of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

**Vancouver, BC** ~ Vancouverites will be the first in Canada to experience Tan Dun's extraordinary fusion of Western opera and Eastern myth in Vancouver Opera's national premiere of *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*. This haunting and beautiful creation by one of the world's most innovative composers will be on stage at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre for four performances only, May 4 - 11, 2013. This will be only the third production in North America and the fifth production world-wide.

Opening night is **Saturday, May 4, 2013**, with subsequent performances **Tuesday, May 7, Thursday, May 9** and **Saturday May 11, 2013**.

All performances take place at 7:30 pm 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](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or by telephone (604-683-0222). See complete ticket information below.

Sung in English with English SURTITLES™, this highly theatrical and visually stunning production is charged with eroticism, ritual and poetry. The score combines natural sounds with a traditional western orchestra. Bowls of water, sheets of paper, ceramic, stone and other natural materials are 'played' along with a 40-plus piece orchestra, conducted by VO's Music Director **Jonathan Darlington**. The result is trance-like, lyrical, beautiful and extraordinary. Describing the European premiere, in 2002, Michael Davidson, writing in *Opera* magazine, said, "The central love story, of the Japanese monk Seikyo and the Chinese princess Lan, is presented with so much poetry that by comparison the world of Romeo and Juliet seems very rough-and-tumble indeed."

### THE CAST

Baritone **Chen-Ye Yuan** sings Seikyo, the Japanese monk whose search for The Book of Tea is the subject of the opera. Mr. Yuan last sung with Vancouver Opera in the 2010 Canadian premiere of *Nixon in China*. "Chen-Ye Yuan's Chou En-lai was remarkable for both the gravity of his portrayal and the voluptuous beauty of his singing," raved *the Globe and Mail*.

Described as "enthraling" by *Opera News*, soprano **Nancy Allen Lundy** sings Lan, the Chinese princess betrothed to Seikyo. Composer Tan Dun has written other works especially for Ms. Lundy; he scored the role of Juliet for her in his

*Orchestral Theatre IV: The Gate*. Ms. Lundy created the role of Lan for the 2002 world premiere of *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* in Tokyo.

**Roger Honeywell** reprises his role of Prince, which he sung in Opera Philadelphia's 2010 production and in the North American premiere, at Santa Fe Opera, in 2007. The Toronto-based tenor was last seen on the VO stage in December 2012's *The Pirates of Penzance*, in the role of Frederic. "In a role that can so easily go so wrong, Honeywell offers charm - boyish, of course - a hint of knowing irony, and stylish singing from opening scene to the obligatory happy ending. He's perfect," raved the *Vancouver Sun*.

Bass **Kirk Eichelberger** sings the Emperor. Mr Eichelberger was last seen on the VO stage in 2008's *Rigoletto*. "Deliciously sinister" declared the *Georgia Straight* of his performance.

Mezzo-soprano **Ning Liang** sings the roles of Lu and The Ritualist. Ms. Liang has appeared in three different productions of *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* and co-created the role of the Shaman in Tan Dun's *The First Emperor*, commissioned by The Metropolitan Opera. This will be her Vancouver Opera debut.

**Paul Peers** will direct the production. Mr. Peers was Assistant Director to Amon Miyamoto for the 2007 American premiere of *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* at Santa Fe Opera. This will be Mr. Peers's first appearance with Vancouver Opera.

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

Ancient Japan. Seikyo, a prince by birth, tells his fellow monks the story of how he came to the temple: years earlier, in China, seeking to marry Princess Lan, Seikyo confronts her jealous brother, the Prince, and must answer his challenge: find The Book of Tea and reveal its secret wisdom.

In the distant south, Lu, daughter of the Tea Sage, relinquishes the book on condition that Seikyo and Lan vow to spread its truth throughout the world. Before they can read it, the Prince attacks Seikyo, and Lan is killed when she intervenes. The grief-stricken Prince offers himself in sacrifice, but Seikyo declines, choosing instead to cut off his own hair and take a monk's vow.

## BACKGROUND ON THE COMPOSER

Composer and conductor Tan Dun's work spans the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. He is well-known as the Grammy and Academy Award-winning composer of the score for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and has composed several classical works, including *Marco Polo*, commissioned by the Edinburgh Festival and produced by De Nederlandse Opera directed by Pierre Audi; *The First Emperor* with Plácido Domingo in the title role, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera; and *Peony Pavilion*, directed by Peter Sellars which has had over 50 performances at major festivals in Vienna, Paris, London and Rome.

His first *Internet Symphony*, which was commissioned by Google/YouTube, has reached over 15 million people online. His *Organic Music Trilogy* of *Water*, *Paper* and *Ceramic Concerti* has frequented major concert halls and festivals; *Paper Concerto* premiered with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the opening of the Walt Disney Hall. His multimedia work, *The Map*, premiered by Yo Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has toured more than 30 countries worldwide. Its manuscript has been included in the Carnegie Hall Composers Gallery.

Tan Dun has led the world's most renowned orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berliner Philharmoniker, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In 2010, he served as "Cultural Ambassador to the World" for World EXPO Shanghai and recently was appointed as UNESCO's global Goodwill Ambassador.

*Tea: A Mirror of Soul* premiered at Japan's Suntory Hall and since had new productions with Opera de Lyon, a co-production by Santa Fe Opera and The Opera Company of Philadelphia.

## LEARN MORE

### Opera Speaks @ VPL: All About Tea

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

7:00pm - 9:00pm

Alice MacKay Room, Lower Level  
Central Library, 350 West Georgia Street  
Admission is free. Seating is limited.

Explore the history, the rituals, the mythology and the mystery of tea, with a special focus on China and Japan. Leading experts, including curator and Japanese tea ceremony instructor **Maiko Behr**, will reveal some of tea's secrets and special powers in preparation for Vancouver Opera's Canadian-premiere production of *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* by Tan Dun.

Opera Speaks is an award-winning series of free public forums on themes and issues arising from the season's operas. In these fascinating and lively sessions, esteemed writers, academics, practitioners, artists and other creative thinkers engage in penetrating discussion and dialogue that deepen the connections between the operas stories and our lives.

### Film Screening: *The Banquet (Legend of the Black Scorpion)*

Monday, April 15, 2013

Introduction: 6:30pm • Screening: 6:45pm

Vancity Theatre, Vancouver International Film Centre  
1181 Seymour Street (at Davie)

Composer Tan Dun (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) contributes a lovely score to this visually dazzling Tang dynasty court intrigue starring Zhang Ziyi and Ge You (*Farewell My Concubine*).

Although it was released on DVD in the US under the unpretentious title *Legend of the Black Scorpion*, the film's story is a sexed up *Hamlet*. Daniel Wu (*The Man with the Iron Fists*) is the young prince vacillating between revenge and

resignation when the love of his life (Zhang) is first married by his father, the Emperor, then widowed and remarried by his scheming uncle.

Mixing extraordinary pageantry with passionate, balletic martial arts sequences choreographed by the great Yuen Wo-ping, *The Banquet* is a thrilling aesthetic experience in the tradition of *Hero* and *House of the Flying Daggers*.

Composer Tan Dun has been acclaimed worldwide for his operas, all of which he has written with western audiences in mind. Vancouver Opera's Canadian-premiere production of his 2001 work *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* (May 4-11, 2013) presents a highly engaging and accessible fusion of western opera and eastern myth.

"Highly entertaining costume melodrama on a magnificent canvas." - Sean Axmaker, *MSN*

"Stunningly beautiful." - Philip French, *The Observer*

"As eye-opening as it is thought-provoking... Brings new life to a classic... A true work of art." - Bill Gibron, *Pop Matters*

#### FULL TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://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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