

Vancouver Opera 65th Season Soars into 2025 with a New Production of Jonathan Dove's Acclaimed Opera

Flight has THREE performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver
Saturday, February 8, 7:30PM | Thursday, February 13, 7:30PM | Sunday, February 16, 2:00PM

NOVEMBER 27, 2024, VANCOUVER, B.C. / Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations – Vancouver Opera's 65th season soars into 2025 with a new production of ***Flight*****,** a contemporary masterpiece by renowned composer **Jonathan Dove**. Celebrated as the greatest opera of the past 30 years, *Flight* graces the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage for three performances in February 2025.

Inspired by a remarkable true story—one that also inspired the Tom Hanks movie *The Terminal*—***Flight*** masterfully blends humour, heartbreak, and hope into an unforgettable operatic experience. This stunning production is helmed by the internationally acclaimed Canadian creative team of **Morris Panych** (director), **Ken MacDonald** (set designer) **Dana Osborne** (costume designer) and **Alan Brodie** (Lighting Designer). Their visionary approach promises to bring a fresh and compelling perspective to the Vancouver Opera debut of Dove's work. Opera audiences may recall its acclaimed Canadian premiere by Pacific Opera (Victoria) in February 2020.

"***Flight*** is both profoundly moving and wonderfully comedic," says Tom Wright, General Director of Vancouver Opera. "We're delighted to bring this opera to Vancouver audiences as part of our exciting 65th season. This production offers a unique opportunity to experience a story of resilience, connection, and humanity."

In the unlikely setting of an airport departure lounge, *Flight* is a wildly engaging, melodically accessible comedy, a triumph of pathos, and an absolute must-see. All around The Refugee, the airport swirls with colourful characters who find their lives unexpectedly intertwined during a storm-induced delay: Bill and Tina, who hope to stoke the embers of a dull marriage; The Steward and The Stewardess, whose embers require no additional stoking; a diplomat and his very pregnant wife; a woman awaiting a lover 30 years her junior; and The Immigration Officer – all while The Controller oversees operations high above the concourse, hitting decidedly high notes.

Inspired by the extraordinary true story of Mehran Karimi Nasseri, an Iranian refugee who lived in Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport for 18 years, Dove's soaring music and April De Angelis' libretto combine humour, pathos, and profound beauty to build a narrative that resonates deeply with contemporary audiences. Adds Wright, "Jonathan Dove has been called 'the Mozart of the 21st century' and *Flight* has been celebrated as one of the most successful contemporary operas by a living composer. Since its premiere in 1998, *Flight* has been praised by critics and audiences for its

emotional breadth, dynamic score, and modern sensibilities. We are thrilled to have an all-Canadian cast coming together for this stunning production"

Director Morris Panych (*The Overcoat: A Musical Tailoring, Three Penny Opera, Susanna)* brings his insightful interpretation and innovative staging to this new work. Collaborating with his creative partner, **set designer Ken MacDonald**, Panych drew inspiration from Eero Saarinen's iconic TWA terminal at JFK Airport, crafting a set whose curving wings and soaring, light-filled windows convey an airport's transitory nature. Under Panych's direction, *Flight* is a balance of comedic and poignant elements, populated by characters whose depth and humanity make for production that's both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Conductor Leslie Dala *(Carmen, The Flying Dutchman)* leads the Vancouver Opera Orchestra through a dynamic and intricate score that brims with humor, poignancy, and moments of high tension, while evoking the transient bustle of an airport terminal.

Flight's incredible cast of principal singers includes **Cameron Shahbazi** who makes his Vancouver Opera debut as The Refugee, **Caitlin Wood** (*HMS Pinafore, Le Nozze di Figaro, Sweeney Todd)* as The Controller, **Asitha Tennekoon** (*A Midsummer Night's Dream)* as Bill, **Megan Latham** (*The Flying Dutchman, HMS Pinafore)* as The Older Woman, **Clarence Frazer** (*The Magic Flute, A Midsummer Night's Dream)* as The Steward, **Neil Craighead** (*The Magic Flute, La Boheme)* as Minskman, and **Henry Chen** (*The Magic Flute)* as The Immigration Officer. Joining Shahbazi in their Vancouver Opera company debuts are **Andriana Chuchman** as Tina and **Alex Hetherington** as The Stewardess. The principals are joined by members of the Vancouver Opera Chorus and the Vancouver Opera Orchestra.

To make this performance accessible to all, Vancouver Opera's **annual Black Friday and Cyber Monday Sale** returns on Wednesday November 27, offering special deals on tickets for *Flight* as well as *Madama Butterfly*. For more information about the 2024–2025 Vancouver Opera Season, and to subscribe, please visit vancouveropera.ca.

2024-2025 VANCOUVER OPERA 65TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON



FLIGHT
By Jonathan Dove
Queen Elizabeth Theatre
Sung in English with English SURTITLES™ projected above the stage
Saturday, February 8, 7:30PM
Thursday, February 13, 7:30PM
Sunday, February 16, 2:00PM



MADAMA BUTTERFLY
By Giacomo Puccini
Queen Elizabeth Theatre
Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ projected above the stage
Saturday, April 26, 7:30PM
Sunday, April 27, 2:00PM
Thursday, May 1, 7:30PM
Saturday, May 3, 7:30PM
Sunday, May 4, 2:00PM

ABOUT VANCOUVER OPERA

Vancouver Opera creates extraordinary experiences that engage, inspire and entertain through voice, music and theatre. Vancouver Opera is the second largest professional opera company in Canada and is regarded worldwide for its fine mainstage productions, country-leading education programs and innovative community programs. Learn more at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Vancouver Opera has the continuing support of The Canada Council for the Arts, Government of Canada, the BC Arts Council and BC Provincial Government, the City of Vancouver Cultural Services and Vancouver Civic Theatres. Vancouver Opera's season sponsors are BMO, Mission Hill Family Estate, and the Alan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation.

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For more information, access to photo gallery and interviews, contact
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