VANCOUVER OPERA LAUNCHES EXCITING VOICES: CONCERT SERIES WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM TD

FIRST FREE CONCERT IN SERIES INSTANT SELLOUT WITH OPERA DATE NIGHT ON FEBRUARY 2ND

FEBRUARY 1, 2024, VANCOUVER, B.C./ Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations – **Vancouver Opera** proudly announces the launch of its innovative concert series, **VOICES**, set to captivate audiences with an enchanting array of performances. Made possible through the generous support of TD, this dynamic concert series will feature a lineup of world-class vocalists and musicians, showcasing the rich tapestry of operatic music in an intimate and approachable setting.

VOICES: Free Concert Series supported by TD officially launches February 2nd with an incredible night of operatic splendour at Vancouver Opera's ***Opera Date Night.*** Hosted in the Martha Lou Henley Rehearsal Hall at The O'Brian Centre for Vancouver Opera, this enchanting evening celebrates the exquisite beauty of bel canto repertoire, showcasing a stellar lineup of vocal virtuosos and is hosted by Vancouver Opera's Director of Engagement and Civic Practice, Ashley Daniel Foot.

"Vancouver Opera is proud to work with TD as the presenting sponsor of the VOICES concert series," said Tom Wright, Vancouver Opera General Director. "Through TD's commitment to fostering the arts and enriching communities, this collaboration ensures that these exceptional musical experiences remain free and accessible to all. Join us for a night of passion, romance, and musical mastery, as these remarkable performers weave an evening of captivating melodies, promising an unforgettable ***Opera Date Night.***"

The first concert in the series brings spellbinding performances from an incredible group of performers. Featuring countertenor **Nicholas Burns**, tenor **Spencer Britten**, sopranos **Emma Parkinson** and **Rebecca Collett**, alongside bass **Neil Craighead**, and accompanied by the illustrious pianist **Perri Lo**, these artists promise an immersive experience, drawing you into the heart of bel canto's emotional tapestry. The first concert is sold out, a testament to the public interest in seeing this incredible art form.

"We're thrilled to team up with Vancouver Opera to launch this incredible series of free concerts, making world-class performances more accessible to a wider local audience," said Catherine Dangerfield, Assistant Pacific Region Head, TD Wealth. "Through the TD Ready Commitment, our corporate citizenship platform, we're supporting arts and culture initiatives that reflect diverse voices and bring people together."

More than a concert series, VOICES represents a commitment to inclusivity and representation. The program focuses on amplifying the talents of artists and creators from historically underrepresented communities, including those who identify as Queer, differently abled, and BIPOC. Diversifying both the faces seen on stage and the minds working behind the scenes is at the core of VOICES. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate to every Vancouverite that they have a place in the world of opera and the arts. From soaring

arias to tender duets, each artist brings their unique voice and interpretation, offering an unforgettable journey through the beloved operatic tradition.

Adds Wright, “for those who may have missed the opportunity to join us for this concert, keep checking our website for further events in the VOICES: Free Concert Series supported by TD.”

Vancouver Opera's ***Opera Date Night*** is on February 2, 2024, 7:30 PM, hosted in the Martha Lou Henley Rehearsal Hall at The O'Brian Centre for Vancouver Opera, 1955 Mclean Drive in Vancouver.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tenor **Spencer Britten** is a Chinese-Canadian artist “oozing with mirth and personality” (Opera Canada) from Vancouver. His accomplishments in Opera & Musical Theatre have led him to performances internationally with companies including Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Glyndebourne Festival, Royal Opera Versailles, Bregenzer Festspiele, The Glimmerglass Festival, Opéra de Montréal, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Spencer also appeared in the critically acclaimed *Messiah/Complex* with Against the Grain Theatre, representing the queer and Asian communities in this all-Canadian take on Handel’s *Messiah*. 2023/24 work includes appearances with Hungarian State Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Orchestre Metropolitan, and Opera Southwest.

From Vancouver, countertenor **Nicholas Burns** has been described as possessing a “thrilling voice” that “caresses the ear with its velvet” and past performances have been described as a “revelation” (Opera Canada, le Devoir, Süddeutsche Zeitung). Upcoming performances include engagements with the Canadian Opera Company, Opera Sofia (Bulgarian State Opera), the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Opera San Miguel de Allende, Arion Baroque Orchestra, Vancouver Opera, Symphony Nova Scotia, Tafelmusik, and the Montréal Bach Festival. In 2023 Nicholas was a winner of the New York Oratorio Society competition at Carnegie Hall, Les Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques, the Vancouver International Music Competition, and Edmonton Opera’s Rumbold Vocal Prize.

Rebecca Collett is a singer who “clearly has talent with her compelling, rich, strong soprano voice,” (Opera Canada). She is a recitalist, soloist and vocal ensemble leader with choirs and orchestras throughout Ontario and British Columbia. This season, she sings with the Vancouver Opera Chorus in their mainstage productions. She is the co-director of the West End Children’s Choir, a low-barrier children’s choir in Vancouver, operates a small voice studio, and sits on the Canadian Actor’s Equity Association council representing Western Opera members.

Neil Craighead is a professional bass-baritone with many years of experience performing on stages across Canada. This season he sang Sarastro in Vancouver Opera's recent production of Mozart's Die Zauberflöte and the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the UBC Opera Ensemble, where he is currently in the second year of studies towards his Doctorate of Musical Arts in Voice Performance. Upcoming performances this season include returns to Pacific Opera Victoria in Ainadamar by Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov, Bach’s St. John’s Passion with Vancouver Bach Choir, and his role debut as Wotan in Wagner's Das Rheingold with Edmonton Opera.

Perri Lo is a pianist and vocal coach, working in opera, chamber music, and dance. She has worked with opera companies across Canada including Montreal’s Institut Canadien d’Art Vocal, Toronto’s Opera Atelier, and at the Banff Arts Centre’s Opera in the 21st Century Program. Since her role as apprentice coach with the Vancouver Opera’s Young Artist Program (’18-19), Perri has music directed and coached singers with West coast companies including Pacific Opera Victoria, City Opera Vancouver, Re:Naissance Opera, Burnaby Lyric Opera, and Sound The Alarm Music Theatre – both in traditional and contemporary repertoire. She was most recently repetiteur with Vancouver Opera’s production of *The Magic Flute* and debuted with Opera Kelowna’s concert series *Singing the ’97*.

Chinese-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Emma Parkinson** has performed across Canada and internationally, she has been hailed as "an outstanding voice" (La Scena Musicale). Most recently, she performed the role of Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* with Vancouver Opera. She has also performed roles with Pacific Opera Victoria, Opéra de Montreal, City Opera Vancouver, Burnaby Lyric Opera, Seefestspiele Berlin, re:Naissance Opera, and Astrolabe Musik Theatre among others. On the concert stage, she has been a soloist with the Vancouver Island Symphony, Alberta Baroque Ensemble, Vancouver Bach Choir, Kingston Symphony Orchestra, Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre Métropolitain.

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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.

For more information, photos and interview requests, contact
Cynnamon Schreinert. Tel: 604-802-2733; email: cynnamon@hartleypr.com

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