



*An opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave
Based on the play Le roi s'amuse by Victor Hugo*

Rigoletto

~ OPERA IN CONCERT ~

*Presented by Ovation Award Nominee Vancouver Concert Opera Society
Performed in Italian with English Narrative by
Jessie Award Winning Actor, Bernard Cuffing*

VANCOUVER

February 15 and 17, 2012 at 7pm
Canadian Memorial United Church
(15th and Burrard)

WHITE ROCK

February 18, 2012 at 7pm
First Memorial United Church
(15385 Semiahmoo Ave)

Synopsis

Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes | **Format:** An Opera in Three Acts by Giuseppe Verdi
Place and Time: Mantua in the Sixteenth century

Act I

Scene 1: A room in the palace

At a ball in his palace, the Duke sings of a life of pleasure with as many women as possible (*Questa o quella - "This woman or that"*). He has seen an unknown beauty in church and desires to possess her, but he also wishes to seduce the Countess of Ceprano. Rigoletto, the Duke's hunchbacked court jester, mocks the husbands of the ladies to whom the Duke is paying attention, and advises the Duke to get rid of them by prison or death. Marullo informs the noblemen that Rigoletto has a "lover", and the noblemen cannot believe it. The noblemen resolve to take vengeance on Rigoletto. Subsequently Rigoletto mocks Count Monterone, whose daughter the Duke had seduced. Count Monterone is arrested at the Duke's order and curses the Duke and Rigoletto. The curse genuinely terrifies Rigoletto.

Scene 2: A street, with the courtyard of Rigoletto's house

Thinking of the curse, Rigoletto approaches his house and is accosted by the assassin Sparafucile, who offers his services. Rigoletto contemplates the similarities between the two of them (*Pari siamo! - "We are alike!"*); Sparafucile kills men with his sword, and Rigoletto uses "a tongue of malice" to stab his victims. Rigoletto opens a door in the wall and returns home to his daughter Gilda. They greet each other warmly (*Figlia! "Mio padre! - "Daughter!" "My father!"*). Rigoletto has been concealing his daughter from the Duke and the rest of the city, and she does not know her father's occupation. Since he has forbidden her to appear in public, she has been nowhere except to church and does not even know her own father's name.

When Rigoletto has gone, the Duke appears and overhears Gilda confess to her nurse Giovanna that she feels guilty for not having told her father about a young man she had met at the church, but that she would love him even more if he were a student and poor. As she declares her love, the Duke enters, overjoyed. Gilda, alarmed, calls for Giovanna, unaware that the Duke had sent her away. Pretending to be a student, the Duke convinces Gilda of his love (*E il sol dell'anima - "Love is the sunshine of the soul"*). When she asks for his name, he hesitantly calls himself Gualtier Maldè. Hearing sounds and fearing that her father has returned, Gilda sends the Duke away after they quickly trade vows of love (*Addio, addio - "Farewell, farewell"*). Alone, Gilda meditates on her love for the Duke, whom she believes is a student (*Gualtier Maldè! ... Caro nome - "Dearest name"*).

Later, the hostile noblemen outside the walled garden (believing Gilda to be the jester's mistress) get ready to abduct the helpless girl. Convincing Rigoletto that they are

actually abducting the Countess Ceprano, they blindfold him and use him to help with the abduction. He assists them, and Gilda is carried away by the noblemen. Upon realizing that it was in fact Gilda who was carried away, Rigoletto collapses, remembering the curse.

Act 2

The Duke's Palace

The Duke is concerned that Gilda has disappeared (*Ella mi fu rapita!* - "She was stolen from me!" and *Parmi veder le lagrime* - "I seem to see tears"). The noblemen then enter and inform him that they have captured Rigoletto's mistress. By their description, he recognizes it to be Gilda, and he rushes off to the room where she is held (*Possente amor mi chiama* - "Mighty love beckons me"). Pleased by the Duke's strange excitement, the courtiers now make sport with Rigoletto, who enters singing. He tries to find Gilda by pretending to be uncaring, as he fears she may fall into the hands of the Duke. Finally, he admits that he is in fact seeking his daughter and asks the courtiers to return her to him (*Cortigiani, vil razza dannata* - "Accursed race of courtiers"). The men beat up Rigoletto after his attempt to run into the room in which Gilda is being held. Gilda rushes in and begs her father to send the people away. The men leave the room believing Rigoletto has gone mad. Gilda describes to her father what has happened to her in the palace (*Tutte le feste al tempio* - "On all the blessed days"). Rigoletto demands vengeance against the Duke, while Gilda pleads for him (*Duet: Sì! Vendetta, tremenda vendetta!* - "Yes! Revenge, terrible revenge!").

Act 3

A street outside Sparafucile's house

A portion of Sparafucile's house is seen, with two rooms open to the view of the audience. Rigoletto and Gilda, who still loves the Duke, arrive outside. The Duke's voice can be heard (*La donna è mobile* - "Woman is fickle") laying out the infidelity and fickle nature of women. Rigoletto makes Gilda realize that it is the Duke who is in the assassin's house and that he is attempting to seduce Sparafucile's sister, Maddalena. (*Bella figlia dell'amore* - "Sweet daughter of love")

Rigoletto bargains with the assassin, who is ready to murder his guest for money, and offers him 20 scudi for killing the Duke. He orders his daughter to put on a man's clothes in order to prepare to go to Verona and states that he plans to follow later. With falling darkness, a thunderstorm approaches and the Duke determines to remain in the house. Sparafucile assigns to him the ground floor sleeping quarters.

Gilda, who still loves the Duke despite knowing him to be unfaithful, returns dressed as a man. She overhears Maddalena begging for the Duke's life, and Sparafucile promises her that if by midnight another can be found in place of the Duke, he will spare the Duke's life. Gilda resolves to sacrifice herself for the Duke and enters the house. She is immediately mortally wounded and collapses.

At midnight, when Rigoletto arrives with money, he receives a corpse wrapped in a sack, and rejoices in his triumph. Weighting it with stones, he is about to cast the sack

into the river when he hears the voice of the Duke singing a reprise of his "La donna è mobile" aria. Bewildered, Rigoletto opens the sack and, to his despair, discovers his mortally wounded daughter. For a moment, she revives and declares she is glad to die for her beloved (*V'ho ingannato* - "Father, I deceived you"). She dies in his arms. Rigoletto's wildest fear materializes when he cries out in horror: "The curse!"

(Source: Wikipedia)

Roles

Rigoletto, the Duke's jester

Gilda, his daughter

Duke of Mantua

Sparafucile, an assassin

Maddalena, his sister

Giovanna, Gilda's Nurse

Count Ceprano

Countess Ceprano, his wife

Matteo Borsa, a courtier

Count Monterone

Marullo

A Court Usher

A Page

Riggi-toids!

Rigoletto is a three act opera by Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi. The Italian libretto was written by Francesco Maria Piave based on the play *Le roi s'amuse* by Victor Hugo. It was first performed at La Fenice in Venice on March 11, 1851. It is considered by many to be the first of the operatic masterpieces of Verdi's middle-to-late career and it has become a staple of the standard operatic repertoire and it appears as number ten on the Operabase list of the most-performed operas worldwide.

Moods: Dramatic

Controversy: Verdi was commissioned to write a new opera by the La Fenice opera house in Venice in 1850, at a time when he was already a well-known composer with a degree of freedom in choosing the works he would prefer to set to music. He then asked Piave to examine the play *Kean* by Alexandre Dumas, père, but he felt he needed a more energetic subject to work on. Verdi soon stumbled upon Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse*. He later explained *that "It contains extremely powerful positions ... The subject is great, immense, and has a character that is*

one of the most important creations of the theatre of all countries and all Ages". It was a highly controversial subject and Hugo himself had already had trouble with censorship in France, which had banned productions of his play after its first performance nearly twenty years earlier (and would continue to ban it for another thirty years). As Austria at that time directly controlled much of Northern Italy, it came before the Austrian Board of Censors. Hugo's play depicted a king (Francis I of France) as an immoral and cynical womanizer, something that was not accepted in Europe during the Restoration period.

Censorship: At the beginning of the summer of 1850, rumors started to spread that Austrian censorship was going to forbid the production. They considered the Hugo work to verge on *lèse majesté*, and would never permit such a scandalous work to be performed in Venice. In August, Verdi and Piave prudently retired to Busseto, Verdi's hometown, to continue the composition and prepare a defensive scheme. They wrote to the theatre, assuring them that the censor's doubts about the morality of the work were not justified but since very little time was left, very little could be done. The work was secretly called by the composers *The Malediction* (or *The Curse*), and this unofficial title was used by Austrian censor De Gorzkowski (who evidently had known of it from spies) to enforce, if needed, the violent letter by which he definitively denied consent to its production.

Disguise: The action of the opera had to be moved from the royal court of France to a duchy of France or Italy, as well as a renaming of the characters. In the Italian version the Duke reigns over Mantova and belongs to the Gonzaga family: the Gonzaga had long been extinct by the mid-19th Century, and the Dukedom of Mantova did not exist anymore, so nobody could be offended. The scene in which the sovereign retires in Gilda's bedroom would be deleted and the visit of the Duke to the Taverna (inn) was not intentional anymore, but provoked by a trick. The hunchback (originally Triboulet) became Rigoletto (from French *rigolo* = funny). The name of the work too was changed.

Success: The opening was a complete triumph, especially the *scena drammatica*, and the Duke's cynical aria, "*La donna è mobile*", was sung in the streets the next morning.

Secrecy: Due to the high risk of unauthorised copying, Verdi had demanded the maximum secrecy from all his singers and musicians. Mirate had use of his score only a few evenings before the première and was forced to

swear he would not sing or even whistle the tune of "La donna è mobile".

Panic Attack: Many years later, Giulia Cori, Varesi's daughter, described her father's performance at the premiere. Playing the original Rigoletto, her father was really uncomfortable with the false hump he had to wear; he was so uncertain that, even though he was quite an experienced singer, he had a panic attack when it was his turn to enter the stage. Verdi immediately realised he was paralysed and roughly pushed him on the stage, so he appeared with a clumsy tumble. The audience, thinking it was a gag, was very amused.

(Source: Wikipedia)

Composer

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi (10 October 1813 – 27 January 1901) was an Italian Romantic composer, mainly of opera. He was one of the most influential composers of the 19th century. His works are frequently performed in opera houses throughout the world and, transcending the boundaries of the genre, some of his themes have long since taken root in popular culture – such as "*La donna è mobile*" from Rigoletto, "*Va, pensiero*" (The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) from Nabucco, "*Libiamo ne' lieti calici*" (The Drinking Song) from La traviata and the "Grand March" from Aida.

Verdi's masterworks dominate the standard opera repertoire a century and a half after their composition.

(Sources: Wikipedia)

The Company

Gordon Gerrard ~ Musical Director/Conductor

Gordon Gerrard is quickly establishing a place among Canada's most exciting young musicians. Gordon is currently on staff for Opera McGill and also works with the singers of Opéra de Montréal's Atelier. For four seasons, Gordon was the Resident Conductor for Calgary Opera, and he continues to serve on the music staffs of Opera Nuova and the Opera as Theatre Program at the Banff Centre. Gordon conducted the Canadian premiere of Mark Adamo's Little Women for Calgary Opera, which was broadcast on CBC. Recently, Gordon led productions of Le Nozze di Figaro and Il Barbiere di Siviglia for Opera Hamilton. In 2009, Gordon was awarded the Mayor's Arts Award for Emerging Artists by the City of Calgary. In recent years, he has worked as Assistant

Conductor for Opera Lyra Ottawa, Repetiteur for Vancouver Opera, Associate Music Director for the Manhattan School of Music Undergraduate Opera Studio, and Lecturer at Iowa State University. As a pianist, Gordon recently presented a recital with mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber at the University of Alberta, as well as a program with internationally renowned soprano Jane Eaglen for the Edmonton Recital Society. In 2012, Gordon conducts *La Bohème* and *Ariodante* for Calgary Opera, *Don Giovanni* for Opera McGill and *Alcina* for Opera Nuova.

Bernard Cuffling ~ Narrator

Bernard has been a member of the Vancouver theatre scene for over 35 years, both as an actor and director. Although he would class himself as a "would love to be" singer, he has appeared in musicals such as *My Fair Lady*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Gypsy*, and many years ago he played the non-singing role of Frosch in Vancouver Opera's production of *Die Fledermaus* (starring Richard Margison). As an actor he most recently played the angel Clarence for the fourth consecutive year at the Arts Club Theatre's production of *It's a Wonderful Life*. Later in January he will be directing in Calgary then he returns to the Arts Club to appear in G.B. Shaw's play *The Philanderer*. Later on in 2011 he will be seen as the Chemanius Festival Theatre as Salieri in their production of *Amadeus*. Bernard is a past Jessie Award Winner (Theatre Awards), a recipient of the Sam Payne award for services to theatre, he is also a member of the B.C. Walk of Fame.

Wenwen Du ~ Pianist

Hailed as "exceptional" by Opera Canada magazine, Wenwen Du is an accomplished, young pianist. Excelling in both the solo and collaborative fields, Ms. Du is in high demand both in Canada and abroad. Originally from China, Miss Du began her early years of study under the tutelage of Zhaoyi Dan at the Shenzhen Arts School, China. She received a Bachelor of Music (Performance) and an Artist's Diploma from the Vancouver Academy of Music, where she studied with Lee Kum Sing for 6 years. Miss Du has participated in numerous international masterclasses, including the Shanghai International Piano Masterclass, Gold Country Piano Institute - Masterclass in Interpretation (Nevada City, California, USA), Festival Orford (Montreal, Canada), Holland Music Festival (Holland, Netherlands), and the Warsaw Piano Workshop - International Piano Course in Interpretation (Warsaw, Poland). These masterclasses were held by many renowned professors, including Paul Badura-Skoda, Boris Berman, Mikhail Voskresensky, Dimitri Bashkirov, Thomas Ungar, Jerome Rose, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Peter Donohoe. Since 2008, Wenwen Du has been worked with many young musicians in the Vancouver region, performing with singers, instrumentalists, and chamber groups. She has been the primary repetiteur for the Vancouver Academy of Music, where she has been praised as "highly musical, technically very solid, and.. sought after by all." (David Meek, Head of VAM Opera).

Keith O'Brien ~ Baritone ~ Rigoletto

Keith is thrilled to be making his debut with Vancouver Opera Concert Society as Rigoletto. Originally from Thunder Bay, Ontario, Keith took his Bachelor of Music from McGill (Montreal) and a Master of Architecture from University of Toronto. Keith enjoyed many successes as a varsity oarsman, competing internationally for both schools. Recent opera credits include Silvio (Pagliacci) with Toronto Opera Collaborative, Marchese d'Obigny (La Traviata) with Opera Tampa, Enrico (Lucia di Lammermoor) with Coro Giuseppe Verdi, Malatesta (Don Pasquale), Escamillo (Carmen) and Marcello & Schaunard (La Bohème) with Opera by Request, Chorus (War and Peace & Aida) with the Canadian Opera Company, Nilakantha & Frederik (Lakmé) with Summer Opera Lyric Theatre, Mark (Frobisher) at The Banff Centre, Njegus (The Merry Widow) with Toronto Operetta Theatre, and Seargent Fiorello (Il Barbiere di Siviglia) with Edmonton Opera. Keith studies in Toronto with Gary Relyea, and as a New Artist with Opera Tampa, regularly travels to Tampa and New York to study with the famous Verdi baritone, Sherrill Milnes.

Szu-Wen Wang ~ Soprano ~ Gilda

Praised for her *"...incandescent intonation and carefully crafted phrasing as the Fairy Godmother"* in Massenet's Cinderella (Opera Canada), Soprano Szu-Wen Wang has been the recipient of favourable reviews time and time again. For her performance in Handel's Amadigi, Opera Canada declared that, "Oriana, the object of his [Amadigi's] desire, was exquisitely sung by coloratura soprano Szu-Wen Wang", and they further applauded the *"...delicacy of approach, her innocence and her impressive soprano"* as Cio-Cio-San in Vancouver Island Opera's production of Madama Butterfly. The Parksville Qualicum Beach News raved that "even in Italian, one can read Wang's performance without the need for translation. Butterfly's roller-coaster ride of emotion was performed flawlessly." As a performer with numerous opera companies in BC, her most memorable operatic roles include: The Fairy Godmother (Cinderella), Gretel (Hansel and Gretel), Amahl (Amahl and the Night Visitors), Patience (Patience), Oriana (Amadigi), Giannetta (Elixir of Love), Josephine (HMS Pinafore), Phyllis (Iolanthe), Lola (Cavalleria Rusticana), First Witch (Dido and Aeneas), Cissy (Albert Herring), and Yniold (Pelléas et Mélisande). As a concert soloist, Ms. Wang has appeared in Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, Haydn's Missa Brevis St. Joannis de Deo, Mozart's Coronation Mass, Nunes Garcia's Mass, Orff's Catulli Carmina, Rutter's Requiem and Schütz' Christmas Oratorio. In 2008 and 2009, she was a featured soloist in the annual "Voices of the Pacific Rim" with the Vancouver Opera. Ms. Wang holds a Bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from Taipei National University of the Arts, a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Vocal Performance from the University of Texas at Austin, and was an artist in residence with Amarillo Opera.

Frédéric Robert ~ Tenor ~ Duke of Mantua

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

Tenor Frédéric Robert began his operatic training at an early age. His professional training led him to some of the most inspirational coaches and teachers across the

globe, including coaches from the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Toronto's Canadian Opera Company. Frédéric has sung lead and supporting roles with major companies and orchestras including: Winnipeg Symphony, Regina Symphony, National Arts Center Orchestra, Prince George Symphony, Edmonton Opera, Calgary Opera, Opera Saskatoon, and The Opera Project. Frédéric's passion is in classical cross-over or "pop-opera". He began his cross-over career as one of the original members of "The Canadian Tenors" and later formed the touring group Romanza, which he toured with for nearly five years. Since 2004 he has exclusively committed his passion to the cross-over genre, extensively touring across North America. As a composer and arranger, Frédéric's works have been featured at the prestigious Vancouver International Song Institute and many of his works continue to be commissioned in various genres including art song, orchestral, chamber and cross-over.

Jordan Collalto ~ Bass-Baritone ~ Sparafucile

Bass-Baritone Jordan Collalto is a third year undergraduate in the UBC Opera Ensemble. In 2005, he joined the Calgary Opera Chorus and performed with them for four seasons. It was there, that he had the opportunity to make his mainstage debut in the role of Count Ceprano in the 2007 production of Rigoletto. Jordan has appeared with the UBC Opera Ensemble in the title role of Le nozze di Figaro, La bohème as Colline, Don Giovanni as Masetto, and as Superintendent Budd in Britten's Albert Herring. Most recently he performed Reverend Hale in UBC's new production of The Crucible by Robert Ward.

Natalie Burdeny ~ Contralto ~ Maddalena

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

With her performances described as "human, multi-faceted, emotional and real", Canadian Contralto, Natalie Burdeny is fast becoming a versatile and sought-after performer. Having recently made her debut in the title role of Carmen, Hilary Clark (Review Contributor - Opera Canada Magazine), described her voice as *"... perfect for the part of Carmen. She showed an enviable understanding of the role, careful use of the many nuances of her vocal arsenal, to portray the vagaries of Carmen's personality. Her card scene was particularly memorable as she was able to counter-point the darkness of her fate against the frivolity of sopranos Frasquita and Mercedes"*. Her repertoire includes; Title Role (Carmen), Madame de la Haltière (Cendrillon), Dorabella (Cosi Fan Tutte), Mercedes (Carmen), Hata (Prodaná Nevesta), Zweite Dame (Die Zauberflöte), Marcellina (Le Nozze di Figaro), Berta (Il Barbiere di Siviglia), and Mother's Voice (Les Contes d'Hoffmann). Natalie performs frequently in concerts and recitals, including oratorio. A graduate of the Classical & Contemporary Music program at Vancouver Community College, Natalie also holds a multi-disciplinary Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Victoria with a focus on Germanic Studies and Music History. In addition to her musical pursuits, Natalie is the Administrator for Lyric Opera Studio of Weimar (Germany), the Managing and Artistic Director for Vancouver Concert Opera Society, and the Founder and Artistic Director for Vancouver Summer Opera

Studio. Natalie studied extensively with Vancouver based Soprano, Heidi Klassen, and is now coaching regularly with the internationally acclaimed Mezzo-Soprano, Victoria Livengood.

Ed Moran ~ Baritone ~ Count Monterone

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

Among other roles Mr. Moran has been seen across Canada in the roles of Capulet in Gounod's Romeo et Juliette, Il Conte d'Almaviva in Le Nozze di Figaro, Sharpless in Madama Butterfly, and most recently as Frank in Die Fledermaus with Vancouver Island Opera. Praised for his "gusto and panache", Mr. Moran made his professional American debut as Benoit/Alcindoro with Opera San Luis Obispo in their April production of La Bohème. Mr. Moran has also enjoyed introducing over 50,000 children to the world of opera with both Vancouver Opera In Schools and Opera Nuova Outreach. Mr. Moran comes from Anchorage, Alaska where he received a Bachelors of Vocal Performance in 2005 and graduated from the UBC School of Music with a Masters Degree in Opera Performance in 2008. Mr. Moran also enjoys spreading the joy of opera as Production Manager with VanCOCO. The tag line, "It's all about the Music" says it all.

Megan Morrison ~ Mezzo Soprano ~ Giovanna/Countess Ceprano

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (October 2011)

A diverse and passionate performer, Megan enjoys a busy career in both opera and theatre. Recent highlights include Mercedes in Carmen (VanCOCO), Sarah Brown in Guys and Dolls (Chemainus Theatre Festival), Dorabella in Così fan tutte (Burnaby Lyric Opera), Rapunzel in Into the Woods (Patrick Street Productions), Ruth in Pirates of Penzance (DragonDiva), Hansel in Hansel and Gretel (Opera Appassionata), Theresa in Boy Gets Girl (Wicked Awesome Theatre), and Trommler in Der Kaiser von Atlantis (City Opera Vancouver). Megan has also appeared as a concert soloist in repertoire ranging from Handel's Messiah (Vancouver Bach Choir) to intimate songs of love and heartache with frequent collaborator: pianist and vocalist Karen Lee-Morlang. Also an accomplished actor off the stage, Megan has several credits in film, tv and voice-over. A current member of the Vancouver Opera Chorus, Megan recently appeared in their 2011 production of Romeo et Juliette. She is also working with City Opera Vancouver again this season on the Annenberg/Explore Project – creating a new opera based on a marine's experience in Iraq. Later this spring, Megan is very excited to be debuting in Love in Public, an opera cabaret by Vancouver composer David MacIntyre, presented at the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre in April 2012.

Martin Sadd ~ Tenor ~ Borsa

Martin Sadd did his undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria where he studied under the tutelage of Alexandra Browning Moore. Afterwards moved to Vancouver to tour with the Vancouver Opera in Schools Programme. He continued on to complete a masters of music in Opera. In 2006 he was a member of the Pacific Opera Victoria's Young Artist Programme and in 2008 he was invited to Banff to participate in their Opera as Theatre. Last year he was a district winner of the Metropolitan Opera

Competition. Martin has just returned from Calgary where he was a member of the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist programme.

Aaron Durand ~ Baritone ~ Marullo

Aaron hated opera until a chance viewing of VOA's Carmen got to him, and he found himself enrolled at the Victoria Conservatory of Music at 19. Soon after, he was (with great delight) thrown into POV's production of Eugene Onegin, and his fate was sealed. After transferring to UBC in 2007, Aaron has performed roles in Così fan tutte, Louis Riel, Die Zauberflöte, Cendrillon and Albert Herring. Most recently, he was seen as Thomas Putnam in The Crucible with UBC Opera. He is in the final year of his masters.

Brandon Thornhill ~ Bass-Baritone ~ Count Ceprano

Brandon began his journey of developing and harnessing his vocal talents at the University of North Florida where he received his bachelors degree in Classical Vocal Performance in 2009. He has performed many different works including arias from operas such as Marriage of Figaro, Rigoletto, and The Magic Flute. Brandon's operatic roles include King Balthazar and King Melchior in Amahl and the Night Visitors, the father in Hansel and Gretel, Sarastro and Speaker in The Magic Flute, and Mr. Kofner in The Consul and Reverend Hale in The Crucible. In 2010, he traveled to the Czech Republic to perform The Magic Flute in Teplice and Prague. Brandon currently attends the University of British Columbia for his masters in opera.

Max Van Wyck ~ Baritone ~ Court Usher

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

Christopher van Wyck is in the first year Opera diploma program at UBC and has grown under the tutelage of his teacher Peter Barcza. He started singing with the BC Boys Choir when he was seven and has been a soloist at West Vancouver United Church and with the Pacific Spirit Choir for the last 8 years. He made his debut as Koko in Vancouver Community College's production of Mikado in 2007, and has since then performed with Vancouver Island Opera for the last three years: as the Marquis D'Obigny in La Traviata, El Dancairo in Carmen and the Imperial Commissioner in Madama Butterfly last November. This year he has been a part of UBC's production of Louis Riel, is fulfilled the role of Seneca in Monteverdi's L'incoronazione di Poppea with the Academy of Music, and this summer performed in Dragon Diva's production of Cendrillon! He enjoys biking to school fueled by hearty meals of potato's and gravy.

Jacqollyne Keath ~ Mezzo Soprano ~ Page

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

Rigoletto marks Jacqollyne's second production with VanCOCO having appeared in "Carmen". Rigoletto is special to her as it was her first ever opera with the Pacific Opera Company in Victoria over 20 years ago! Jacqollyne is equally comfortable on the Stage as a performer or behind the scenes as director, or choreographer. Her recent performances include Ruth in "Pirates of Penzance" with the Chilliwack Opera Troupe (COT) and the Duchess in "The Gondoliers" with the Fraser Valley Gilbert and Sullivan

Society. Jacquollyne's voice is heard in many of the "Elwoodette Marionette" productions. She is also directing for Vagabond Players in New Westminster for their spring show "The Kitchen Witches." Her next opera role will be with the The Opera Project as Zita in Gianni Schicchi this June.

Jessica Cheung ~ Soprano ~ COVER (Gilda)

Performing on stages across Canada, USA and Hong Kong, soprano Jessica Cheung is a "real coloratura who tosses off the many runs...with accuracy and aplomb" (WholeNote, 2011). Ms. Cheung enjoys a diverse repertoire from oratorio to opera, and thrives on challenging herself vocally and dramatically. The 2011 season was particularly exciting for Ms. Cheung as she made her operetta debut as Mabel in the Pirates of Penzance with the Toronto Operetta Theatre, made her oratorio return in Fauré's Requiem with the Hong Kong Bach Choir, and realized her first Queen of the Night in Die Zauberflöte with the Halifax Summer Opera Workshop. Born in Ottawa, Ms. Cheung's vocal career truly flourished in Vancouver, where her family had relocated in her early teenage years. Though Ms. Cheung later obtained degrees in Biology and Psychology from UBC, she took every opportunity to develop herself as a singer outside of school. Shortly after graduation, Ms. Cheung received the greatest opportunity, which became the pivotal moment of her singing journey and career. Ms. Cheung had been offered the title role in Vancouver Opera's world premiere of Naomi's Road in 2005 and thus, became a professional singer. After touring with Vancouver Opera, she returned to school and in 2009, she obtained her Artist Diploma from The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Throughout her academic and vocal journey, Ms. Cheung is grateful for the opportunities she had been given to perform on stage. She has been invited to sing at Vancouver Opera's "Voice of the Pacific Rim" concerts, the Toronto Operetta Theatre's "Gilbert & Sullivan Extravaganza" and in Le Roi David with the Hong Kong Bach Choir. She has performed the roles of Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro, Morgana from Alcina, Nannetta from Falstaff and Barbarina from Le nozze di Figaro. As her 2012 season continues to take shape, Ms. Cheung is thrilled to start the year with the Vancouver Concert Opera Society as the cover of one of her favourite roles, Gilda, in Rigoletto.

Andrzej Jeziorski ~ Tenor ~ COVER (Duke)

VanCOCO Debut: Carmen (January 2011)

London, UK-born tenor Andrzej Jeziorski is a Diploma student at the Vancouver Academy of Music under David Meek, having moved into opera from years of singing pop and rock music. Recent operatic roles have included Don Ottavio in the Burnaby Lyric Opera production of 'Don Giovanni', Prince Charming in DragonDiva Operatic Theatre's Cendrillon, and Ferrando in the UBC Opera Ensemble production of Cosi Fan Tutte, performed in the Czech Republic and Ontario. Andrzej is also a regular member of the Vancouver Opera Chorus, having appeared in La Traviata, Lillian Alling, Norma and Eugene Onegin. He recently sang as a soloist in the Vancouver Bach Choir's annual "Sing-Along Messiah" concert at the Orpheum Theatre. Outside of his musical pursuits Andrzej is a magazine editor and journalist, specialising in aviation and aerospace.

Anthony Wade-Cooper ~ Stage Manager

Anthony Wade-Cooper has been lucky enough to work with some of Vancouver's favourite actors and directors in his short career in stage management. *"I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this rarely performed but really enchanting piece of Bernstein. I am sure you will enjoy it as much as we do!"*

Behind the Scenes (because it takes a team!)

Natalie Burdeny, Founder & Artistic Director | Media Contact | Producer
Ed Moran, Production Manager & Blogger Extraordinaire
Jana Curll, Art & Illustration

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