

Pauline

A New Opera by Margaret Atwood and Christos Hatzis Commissioned For Judith Forst

March 11, 2008: City Opera Vancouver today announced *Pauline*, a newly commissioned chamber opera created for the great dramatic mezzo Judith Forst. The work is based on the life, and final days, of Canadian writer, poet, and actress Pauline Johnson.

The music for *Pauline* will be written by Christos Hatzis and the libretto by Margaret Atwood.

Pauline deals with questions of dualism. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913) was a woman ahead of her time, traveling across Canada, the United States and Great Britain giving readings of her own work in an era when such female independence was rare and remarkable. She was the child of a Mohawk chief and a Quaker Englishwoman, always torn by loyalty and ambition. She was a popular stage figure who was in private deeply insecure. She lived her last years in Vancouver, and died a terrible death of breast cancer, treated by crude surgery and morphine.

Upon that death, Pauline's sister destroyed a number of letters that might have illuminated real personality and historic encounter. *Pauline* imagines what those letters might have said, and revealed, and intended.

"We are proud to offer a new opera to Judith Forst," said Nora Kelly, president of City Opera Vancouver. "Such a gift to one of Canada's greatest singers is an honour for us.

"We are delighted to have Margaret Atwood write its libretto, and Christos Hatzis its music. Forst, Atwood and Hatzis constitute an unmatched trio of talent in Canadian arts and letters.

"Our opera deals with an important Canadian subject, and brings to its telling three of our most brilliant artists."

Judith Forst has appeared on the great stages of the world, including La Scala, The Met, San Francisco Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, and the Canadian Opera Company. *Pauline* is the first signature role written especially for her.

Margaret Atwood is one of the world's leading authors. She has long championed the vitality and historical importance of the 19th century literary and theatrical figure Pauline Johnson. *Pauline* was conceived by Ms. Atwood, and will be her first opera.

Christos Hatzis is one of Canada's most distinguished composers. His work is widely published, recorded and performed, and has earned numerous prizes. *Pauline* will be his first opera.

Pauline is the first opera commissioned by City Opera Vancouver, a professional chamber opera company to be resident at the restored Pantages Theatre in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Pauline will debut under the baton of City Opera's music director and conductor, Dr. Charles Barber, at a date in early 2010, to be announced shortly.

It was also announced that the dramaturge for *Pauline* will be Thomas Durrie. An offer has been made to a distinguished stage director, and is at the discussion stage.

A more detailed statement concerning the themes of *Pauline* and biographies of the artistic team are included in this media information package and can be found at www.cityoperavancouver.com.

City Opera Vancouver operates in partnership with the Community Arts Council of Vancouver.

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Judith Forst

"Being a Canadian woman and artist able to play a Canadian woman and artist is very important to me.

To have the opportunity to sing a text by Margaret Atwood – what better could there be? Concerning Christos Hatzis? It is a very exciting time to be able to work with a composer of his stature."

Margaret Atwood

"Pauline Johnson has interested me for a long time. It was I who restored her to the 'canon' after a period of eclipse -- I included her in my edition of *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* in English, back in the early 80s. I felt she really deserved to be there, as she is such an iconic figure -- and so far ahead of her times -- in so many ways.

"The opera weaves Pauline's conflict with her sister in and out of her interactions with the phantom of her lover, as cancer and morphine contribute to the mix. The main arias use Pauline's own words, from her poems. I am proud to be a part of this production."

Christos Hatzis

"Margaret Atwood's uncanny ability in creating vivid characters for her novels finds here a new forum on the operatic stage. Pauline has already a very strong voice in the pages of the libretto and one can only imagine what further strength this character will attain through the magnificent vocal instrument of Judith Forst, one of Canada's vocal treasures.

"Canadian opera on Canadian subjects has been having a renaissance in recent years and this will build upon this growing legacy. It will be my first attempt at this genre, but I have been eager for a while to find a good libretto so that I can get creatively involved with this medium.

"This is the opportunity I have been waiting for. I am sure that, with your meticulous development of this project through all stages of pre-production and production, this will be a project the impact of which will be felt across Canada and internationally.

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Pauline is a chamber opera set in Vancouver in March 1913, during the last week in the life of Canadian actress, poet and writer Pauline Johnson (1861-1913). In the last two decades, there has been a significant re-appraisal of Johnson's life, art and achievement.

Led by Margaret Atwood, this second look has demonstrated Johnson's unusually bold and prescient views, writing and life as an independent woman. Her childhood home is now a national historic site, and her public burial at Stanley Park remains unique in Vancouver history.

Shifting between a shattered present and a vivid past, *Pauline* examines the question of her identities as poet and popular entertainer, white and Mohawk, independent woman and desperate lover, imagined failure and creative immortal. Figures from her life, particularly her sister and her manager, move in and out of her consciousness and, through the hopes and conflicts they evoke, portray Pauline Johnson as a great and tragic Canadian artist.

Pauline deals with questions of dualism. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913) was a woman ahead of her time, traveling across Canada, the United States and Great Britain giving readings of her own work in an era when such female independence was rare and remarkable. She was the child of a Mohawk chief and a Quaker Englishwoman, always torn by loyalty and ambition. She was a popular stage figure who was in private deeply insecure. She lived her last years in Vancouver, and died a terrible death of breast cancer, treated by crude surgery and morphine.

Upon that death, Pauline's sister destroyed a number of letters that might have illuminated real personality and historic encounter. *Pauline* imagines what those letters might have said, and revealed, and intended.

City Opera will produce *Pauline* in early 2010.

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BACKGROUND: City Opera

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City Opera Vancouver is a professional chamber opera company and will produce the intimate works by which chamber opera is defined.

The company's repertoire will include the serious and the comic, the new and the restored.

Resident in the Downtown Eastside, the company's goal is to bring chamber opera to a wide audience, including the DTES community. The repertoire will span four centuries, from chamber opera's beginnings to contemporary and commissioned works, with a special interest in Canadian music and artists.

Opera is music drama: City Opera will seek outstanding singers whose talent for tragedy and comedy will bring opera's human stories to life. The company will give singers new repertoire to explore and create new opportunities to hear voices that are at their best in an intimate setting.

Accessible and innovative, City Opera will offer a unique musical experience to Metro Vancouver audiences.

The company is pleased to announce that Prof. Abraham Rogatnick has become its first underwriter. Wide support is now being sought for the production of *Pauline*, and the company thanks him for his confidence.

City Opera will be resident at the restored, 650-seat Pantages Theatre in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. It is the lead company in the restoration of this unique, century-old theatre.

City Opera's artistic director, Dr. Charles Barber, serves as professional advisor to the developer and to the non-profit Society that will manage the theatre in the public interest.

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Judith Doris Forst is a Canadian dramatic mezzo-soprano, and one of our most important and influential artists, ranked among Lois Marshall, Maureen Forrester, Teresa Stratas, Jon Vickers, Richard Margison and Ben Heppner in her achievement. She is known around the world for the musical integrity and dramatic intensity of her performances.

Born in New Westminster, British Columbia, in 1943, she received a Bachelor of Music from the University of British Columbia in 1964.

In 1991, she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. In 2001, she was awarded the Order of British Columbia.

Ms. Forst studied piano as a child and voice later with French Tickner of the University of British Columbia, and was coached by Harold Brown. A participant 1966-8 in the Vancouver Opera Association training program, she won the 1967 western finals of the San Francisco Opera auditions and the 1968 CBC Talent Festival. A 1968 audition for the Metropolitan Opera led to a contract and her debut there that same year.

Ms. Forst lived from 1968-75 in New York where she continued her studies with Hans Joachim Heinz while performing as a regular member of the Metropolitan Opera, singing mainly minor roles. In 1975 she returned to Vancouver.

She sang Hansel in the CBC's 1970 TV production of *Hansel and Gretel* and made her COC debut in 1972 as Olga in *Eugene Onegin*. She also sang the Secretary in *The Consul* (1973) and Polly Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera* (1976) at the Guelph Spring Festival, and made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1974 as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. Other assignments with the COC included Maddalena in *Rigoletto* (1973), Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (1978), the title roles in *Carmen* and Rossini's *Cinderella* (1979), Charlotte in *Werther* (1980), Preziosilla in *La forza del destino* (1987), the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1988), and Marie in *Wozzeck* (1990).

She sang Jane Seymour in Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* with Joan Sutherland in the title role for the COC in 1984 and then for the San Francisco Opera and in concerts in Boston, Washington, DC, and in 1986 at Avery Fisher Hall in New York, the last broadcast as part of the 'Live from Lincoln Center' PBS series.

Although a mezzo-soprano, Ms. Forst also performed such traditional soprano roles as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, which she performed in Calgary, Edmonton, Miami, and Ottawa. In 1985 she made her European debut in Paris in a concert performance of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and in 1988 made her debut in Munich in *La forza del destino*. Ms. Forst has appeared with the Edmonton,

Dallas, Fort Worth, Manitoba, Miami, New York City, New Orleans, Santa Fe, Seattle, Southern Alberta (Calgary), and Vancouver operas and in the operatic productions of Festival Ottawa and Opera Lyra Ottawa.

She gave duet recitals with the soprano Riki Turofsky in 1974 in Toronto and at the 1976 CBC Vancouver Festival and sang in oratorio with the Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver symphony orchestras. In 1988 she sang in the premiere of Rudolf Komorous' opera *No No Miya* for the Vancouver New Music Society and in 1989 she premiered Malcolm Forsyth's *Sun Songs* with the Calgary Philharmonic.

For the COC in 1995, and also for the Vancouver, Montreal and Portland Opera companies, Ms. Forst performed the role of Kostelnicka in Janacek's *Jenufa*. Among her many other COC roles, she created the part of Pamphilea for the 1999 world premiere of *The Golden Ass* (by Randolph Peters and Robertson Davies), and was Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex* in 1997.

With the Metropolitan Opera in 2001, she took on the role of the Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, singing the part again with the Arizona Opera the following year. Also with the Met, as well as for Vancouver Opera and Netherlands Opera, she was Madame de Croissy in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Ms. Forst appeared often for San Francisco Opera, including in the world premieres of Conrad Susa's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1994) and André Previn's *Streetcar Named Desire* (1998), creating the roles of Madame de Volanges and Eunice respectively. In 2003 Forst appeared as Klytemnestra in the Vancouver premiere of *Elektra*, a role which she had sung in concert with the MSO in 2001. She was also a frequent guest instructor at the University of British Columbia. She recently made her debuts with Chicago Lyric Opera, and with La Scala in Milan.

Judith Forst has been called 'one of the few truly world class coloratura mezzo-sopranos on the operatic stage,' with a voice that is 'bright, sensuous, seamless through its range, full of secure, shining high notes' (COC Magazine Apr 1988).

She is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of British Columbia; in 1978 she was named Canadian Woman of the Year. The City of Port Moody, BC, granted her the freedom of the city in 1992. She and her family continue to make their home in Port Moody.

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Margaret Eleanor Atwood, OC is a prolific poet, novelist, literary critic, feminist and activist. She is a winner of the Booker Prize and Arthur C. Clarke Award, and has been a finalist for the Governor General's Award seven times, winning twice. Ms. Atwood is among the most-honored authors of fiction in recent history

Born in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1939, Ms. Atwood was second of three children of Carl Edmund Atwood, a zoologist, and Margaret Dorothy Killiam, a former dietician and nutritionist. Due to her father's ongoing research in forest entomology, Atwood spent much of her childhood in the backwoods of Northern Quebec and back and forth between Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie and Toronto. She did not complete a full year of school until grade eight. She became a voracious reader of refined literature, Dell pocketbook mysteries, Grimm's Fairy Tales, Canadian animal stories, and comic books. She attended Leaside High School in Leaside, Toronto.

Ms. Atwood began writing at age sixteen and in 1957 began studying at Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Her professors included Jay Macpherson and Northrop Frye.

In the fall of 1961, after winning the E.J. Pratt Medal for her privately-printed book of poems, *Double Persephone*, she began graduate studies at Harvard's Radcliffe College with a Woodrow Wilson fellowship. She obtained a master's degree (MA) from Radcliffe in 1962 and pursued further graduate studies at Harvard, for two two-year periods, but never took a degree.

Atwood and her partner Graeme Gibson are members of the Green Party of Canada and strong supporters of GPC leader Elizabeth May, whom Atwood has referred to as fearless, honest, reliable and knowledgeable. Atwood has strong views on environmental issues, such as suggesting that petrol-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers be banned, and has made her own home more energy efficient – including not having air-conditioning - by installing awnings and skylights that open. She and her husband also use a hybrid car when they are in the city.

Margaret Atwood has written thematically diverse novels from a number of genres and traditions, including science fiction/speculative fiction, space opera and Southern Ontario Gothic. She is often described as a feminist writer, as issues of gender often (but not always) appear prominently in her work.

Her work has focused on Canadian national identity, Canada's relations with the United States and Europe, human rights issues, environmental issues, the Canadian wilderness, the social myths of femininity, representations of women's bodies in art, women's social and economic exploitation, as well as women's relations with each other and with men. In her novel *Oryx and Crake* and in recent essays, she has demonstrated great interest in (and wariness of) unchecked biotechnology.

Ms. Atwood's first collection of poetry was *Double Persephone* (1961). *The Circle Game* (1964), her second, won the Governor General's award for poetry. Of Atwood's poetry collections, the most well-known is perhaps *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), in which Atwood writes poems from the viewpoint of Susanna Moodie, a historical nineteenth-century Canadian pioneer on the frontier.

As a literary critic, she is best known as author of the seminal *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), which is credited with sparking renewed interest in Canadian literature in the 1970s. She also wrote several television scripts, *The Servant Girl* (1974) and *Days of the Rebels: 1815-1840* (1977).

Atwood has been vice-chairman of the Writers' Union of Canada and president of International PEN (1984-1986), an international group committed to promoting freedom of expression and freeing writers who are political prisoners. Elected a Senior Fellow of Massey College at the University of Toronto, she has sixteen honorary degrees, including a doctorate from Victoria College (1987), and was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame in 2001. Her literary papers are housed at the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. She was awarded the Humanist of the Year award from the American Humanist Association in 1987.

Among her more notable acts of activism, Atwood donated all of her Booker Prize money to environmental causes and gave up her house in France after Jacques Chirac resumed nuclear testing. An active member of Amnesty International, Atwood once promised a free subscription to its bimonthly reports to the next person who accused her of being too pessimistic.

Ms. Atwood invented the "LongPen" billed as "the world's first long distance signing device."

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Christos Hatzis was born in Volos, Greece on March 21, 1953. He received his early music training at the local branch of the Hellenic Conservatory and later at the Eastman School of Music and SUNY at Buffalo, from which school he received his Ph.D. in 1982. He emigrated to Canada in 1982 and became a Canadian citizen in 1985.

He has lived in Toronto ever since and has been active as a free-lance composer and a teacher after a rather long stint as a nightclub musician. Christos is married to percussionist Beverley Johnston and they live together at their rural home outside of Uxbridge, Ontario.

Christos Hatzis is "one of the most important composers in Canada" (*International Musician*) and is recently enjoying international recognition for his work. He is the recipient of the 1998 Jean A. Chalmers National Music Award for his composition Nunavut, the 1996 (Governor General) Jules Leg r Prize for Erotikos Logos, the 1996 Prix Italia Special Prize for Footprints in New Snow (it was the first time this prestigious broadcasting award went to a Canadian composer), the 1998 Prix Bohemia Special Prize for the same work, the 2002 New Pioneer Award, as well as three Juno Award nominations (2003, 2004 and 2006) in addition to his 2006 Juno Award in the "Classical Composition of the Year" category. He has composed major works for all media and is the recipient of numerous commissions from some of the best-known artists in Canada and abroad.

Christos' works are "brilliant, complex, and intellectually and emotionally challenging but [they] touch the heart of the average listener" (Paul Pedersen). His music has been featured in many international festivals, is being broadcast regularly by CBC and foreign networks and is frequently performed worldwide. In addition to composing, Christos teaches composition full-time as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto.

Since the early eighties, he has stylistically gravitated towards eclecticism, eventually developing his own unique post-modern aesthetic influenced by the music of the third world (The Temptation of St. Anthony, Nadir, Orbiting Garden, Crucifix, Pavillons En l' Air, Byzantium, Pyrrhic Dances), jazz and pop music (On Cerebral Dominance, The Birth of Venus), the music of J. S. Bach (Equivoque, Mortiferum Fel, Stylus, The Goldberg Variations, Concerto for Flute and Chamber Orchestra, Farewell to Bach) and of other Baroque composers (Burial Ground).

His most recent music is influenced by religious and/or spiritual themes and New Age ideas, and by the culture of the Inuit.

Premieres of Mr. Hatzis' music from 2003 to '07 included venues such as The Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, St. Paul's Cathedral, The Barbican Center and the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, UK, The Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Konzerthaus in

Berlin, the Lively Arts Center in Palo Alto, CA, the Megaron in Athens, Greece, The Winspear Centre in Edmonton and the Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto.

In 2007, Mr. Hatzis was composer-in-residence with three Canadian music festivals: Winnipeg New Music Festival; Scotia Festival of Music and Festival of the Sound. The Camerata Orchesra of Athens under the direction of Alexander Myrat has performed a Hatzis work in each season during the past few years, while the 2004 Byzantine Festival in London built its theme around his *The Troparion of Kassiani*. His recent large-scale work *Sepulcher of Life*, for soloists, choir and orchestra was commissioned by four different Canadian philharmonic choirs and already has had nine performances across North America by nine different presenters, including a remarkable performance at the Temple of Dendur, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in May 2004.

His most important multimedia music theatre piece, *Constantinople*, performed at sold-out halls at Banff and Toronto during the summer and fall of 2004 and was described by the Toronto Star as "A multimedia feast of the imagination."

In June 2005 *Constantinople* opened the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, Connecticut, and it is now signed by IMG Artists Management for international touring. *Constantinople* had several prestigious international performances in 2007 including five completely sold-out shows at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in March.

He is an advocate of borderless culture and many of his most recent works bridge the gap between classical music and today's popular music idioms, His compositions are structurally complex while sonically accessible. He has created several works inspired by the music of the Inuit, Canada's arctic inhabitants, and his Inuit-inspired works, particularly the award winning radio documentary *Footprints in New Snow*, have promoted Inuit culture around the globe. Most of Hatzis' writings and other information about the composer are posted at www.hatzis.com.

Christos Hatzis' music is published by Promethean Editions, based in Wellington, New Zealand.

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Conductor and City Opera Vancouver artistic director Dr. Charles Barber began piano at six, violin and trumpet at ten, at age 14 wrote a piano concerto, and at 15 conducted an orchestra. The following year he wrote his first film score, and his first musical.

He has since earned a Bachelor of Music, University of Victoria; Master of Arts, Stanford; and, Doctor of Musical Arts, Stanford. His graduate work concentrated on the music of Alexander Ziloti, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie*.

Dr. Barber's teachers include Carlos Kleiber, Andor Toth, George Corwin (conducting); Jaroslav Karlovsky, Bernard Zaslav (viola); Boris Zarry, Paul Kling (violin); Frona Colquhoun (piano); Leonard Ratner (analysis); George Houle (early music); and Marty Paich (arranging).

His teacher Carlos Kleiber is one of the legends of modern conducting. Dr. Barber is one of only three persons known to have studied with him, and did so from 1989 to Mr. Kleiber's death in 2004. Barber also received more than 200 letters, faxes, postcards and cartoons from Mr. Kleiber during the course of their long correspondence, and acknowledges Mr. Kleiber's enormous influence on his own work.

Dr. Barber's operatic and concert repertoire numbers some 220 works, and includes theatre music of Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, Gilbert & Sullivan, Menotti, major work of Haydn, Handel, Banchieri, and Busoni, and principal composers of the Silver Age in Russia. Dr. Barber's mentors in opera were Carlos Kleiber and Sir Charles Mackerras; his apprenticeship included *Semele* and *Der Rosenkavalier* (San Francisco Opera), and *Makropoulos Case* and *Otello* (Metropolitan Opera).

Dr Barber has conducted in Canada and the United States, and on tour in South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Morocco and Spain. His popular repertoire includes *Fledermaus*, *Merry Widow*, *Countess Maritza*, *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Most Happy Fella*, *Fanny*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Crazy for You*, and *Kiss Me Kate*.

For ten years he served as student and assistant to legendary Los Angeles composer and arranger Marty Paich, working on record projects with Linda Ronstadt, Carly Simon and Mel Tormé, and on the films *Prince of Tides*, *Alive*, *Flatliners*, *Grand Canyon*, *Dave*, *The Fugitive*, and *Wyatt Earp*. Dr. Barber has also conducted for Stan Getz, Dan Hicks, Weslia Whitfield, Francis Ford Coppola, and Sarah Vaughn.

He has been published by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Greenwood Press, and Carnegie Hall, and authored or co-authored more than 90 entries in New Grove 2000. His book *Lost in the Stars: The Forgotten Musical Life of Alexander Siloti*, was published to wide critical

acclaim by Rowman and Littlefield in 2002. His latest book, *Corresponding With Carlos: A Biography of Carlos Kleiber*, is currently in preparation in London.

Dr. Barber served as Music Advisor to the BBC in its award-winning film documentary set, *The Art of Conducting*. Together with Thomas Durrie he co-founded City Opera of Vancouver in 2005.

Dr. Barber has also served as producer to Naxos Records, the world's largest classical company. In 1997 he created *American Classics*, a series that has now over 100 CDs in release. In August of 2007 he created *Canadian Classics*, also for Naxos, and will lead a long-term survey of Canadian art music from 1800 to the present, in five genres: symphonic, wind band, chamber, instrumental, and vocal / choral / operatic music.

In early 2006, Barber conceived City Opera's first commission, *Pauline*.

"I never write letters of recommendation, so this is an exception. Charles Barber is a scholar and a conductor who adores and understands music. We have become friends, and he pretends to believe that I have taught him something."

Carlos Kleiber, 1997

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