



MEDIA RELEASE

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CHINATOWN

A Groundbreaking New Opera: Preserving the Legacy / Telling the Story

Venue: The Vancouver Playhouse Theatre / 600 Hamilton Street

Dates & Times: Tuesday, September 13 – Friday, September 16 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, September 17 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$20, \$40, and \$60 (plus taxes and service charges) [here](#)

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Interviews and photographs available upon request.

City Opera Vancouver will present *CHINATOWN*, the company's fifth commission in ten years, September 13 to 17 at the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre.

It is a ground-breaking new work. Nothing like it has been done before. *CHINATOWN* opens at a time of anti-Asian racism, a struggle to preserve Chinatown itself, and a need to tell the Canadian story it embodies.

OUR STAGED CONCERT FORMAT... Originally conceived as a full-scale production and delayed one year by COVID, City Opera recently announced that due to casting and production issues, *CHINATOWN* will now give a complete presentation of the opera, but in a staged concert format.

The company was unable to acquire the services of the additional cast members needed and to resolve related production issues. Running out of time to offer the version originally intended, this revised format is the best-possible solution available in this complicated environment. The only alternative would have been to postpone it another year.

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All the elements of this meaningful and timely opera are intact. Not a word or note will be omitted and stage director Desdemona Chiang will bring an active energy and imagination to the production.

Current *CHINATOWN* ticket-holders who would prefer not to see this revised presentation are invited to contact (toll free) 1-888-961-6111 x 101 to arrange their choice of a full refund, or a voucher of identical value for a future production.

ABOUT THE OPERA - *CHINATOWN* builds on the eloquence of one of Canada's greatest writers, Madeleine Thien, the music of award-winning composer Alice Ping Yee Ho, and the subtle and brilliant translations of Paul Yee.

"Although a Western opera," says City Opera's artistic director Charles Barber, "it incorporates traditional Chinese themes, sounds and sensibilities. It is a story of racism and resistance, neighbourhood and family. And it is a love story. It will have wide appeal.

"In two acts and two hours it examines six characters, two families, and a chorus of ghosts, from the building of the CPR through to our own times. It deals with violence and despair, the Head Tax, the Exclusion Act, paper sons, and paper promises. This opera is a story of family and neighbourhood, racism and resistance, history and tomorrow" says Barber.

The fusion orchestra plays both Chinese and Western instruments. English and Chinese supertitles will be provided throughout.

CHINATOWN is the first opera written about any Chinatown in Canada and is believed to be the first opera written in English, Cantonese, and Hoisan combined. It is the first opera of librettist Madeleine Thien and translator Paul Yee and the the third opera by composer Alice Ping Yee Ho. This will be City Opera's first presentation at the Playhouse Theatre, chosen partly because of its proximity to Chinatown.

THE PRINCIPAL CAST - Appearing in *CHINATOWN* will be: tenors Spencer Britten and Derek Kwan; soprano Vania Chan; mezzos Erica Iris Huang and Emma Parkinson; and bass Matthew Li.

THE ORCHESTRA - Music director and conductor Mary Chun will lead an orchestra comprised of: concertmaster and violinist Mark Ferris; dizi player Charlie Lui; erhu and gaohu player Jun Rong; guzheng player Dai-Lin Hsieh; harpist Albertina Chan; percussionist Martin Fisk; oboist Emma Ringrose; pianist Roger Parton; violist Peter Ing; and cellist Jonathan Lo.

ABOUT THE COMPANY - City Opera Vancouver is a professional chamber opera company, founded in 2006 in tandem with efforts to restore the century-old, 650-seat Pantages Theatre in the Downtown Eastside. The company produces opera, commissions new opera, and year-round presents recitals and concerts around the Metro Vancouver region.

City Opera Vancouver has previously commissioned and produced the world premieres of: *Fallujah* (Heather Raffo and Tobin Stokes) in 2012; *Pauline* (Margaret Atwood and Tobin Stokes) in 2014; *The Lost Operas of Mozart* (Maria Reva and WA Mozart) in 2016; and *Missing* (Marie Clements and Brian Current) in 2017 with Pacific Opera Victoria.

The company commissions and creates, re-discovers, and presents chamber opera, specializing in small forms, intimate eloquence, and Canadian themes and artists. The company's vision includes telling stories in music that are relevant to our time and people, emphasizing stories that are bold and vivid and memorable.

COMING NEXT - City Opera's next mainstage, *The Book of My Shames*, a one-man show, is a Vancouver premiere starring and created by the gifted Isaiah Bell which opens in May of 2023.

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