

January 4, 2011
For Immediate Release

Calgary Opera presents the World Premiere of *The Inventor*

Calgary, AB... The four-year journey to the stage has entered its final stretch as rehearsals began this week for the world premiere of *The Inventor*, by composer **Bramwell Tovey** and librettist **John Murrell**. Opening on **January 29**, with two additional performances on **February 2 & 4** at the **Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium**, *The Inventor* is the stranger than fiction true story of the charming rogue who did it all, even murder.

This historical opera delves deep into the rich Canadian history prior to the American Civil War with a young Sandy Keith Jr., nephew to the famous Alexander Keith. As he attempts to make his way in the world, and surpass his uncle, he turns to criminal endeavours. Armed with only his charisma and business savvy he was able to con tens of thousands of dollars from his victims. The fact that Sandy Keith Jr. was a real man only makes his story that much more compelling and unbelievable.

"This is a story rooted in Canadian history, but with an International scope," says *The Inventor* producer W.R. (Bob) McPhee, General Director & CEO of Calgary Opera. "It is an enormous pleasure for us to be able to re-envision this piece of history for the opera stage."

Heading the creative team is returning Stage Director **Kelly Robinson**, who directed both *Filumena* and *Frobisher*. Also returning is Set and Costume Designer **Bretta Gerecke** who last designed Calgary Opera's critically acclaimed productions of *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni*. Lighting Designer **Harry Frehner**'s award-winning work is well-known to Calgary audiences, and conducting his opera is Maestro **Bramwell Tovey**. Also, Scenic Projection Designer **Scott Reid** returns; his last design for Calgary Opera was the Canadian premiere of *Little Women* (2010).

An all-Canadian cast will take the stage to create the roles of *The Inventor*, headlined by Baritone **James Westman**, who last performed in *Carmen* (2007), in the role of Alexander "Sandy" Keith Jr. Soprano **Laura Whalen**, who created both the leading roles in *Filumena* (2003) and *Frobisher* (2007), returns in the role of Mary, Sandy Keith's first love. In her debut with Calgary Opera, Soprano **Erin Wall** performs the role of Cecelia, Sandy Keith's wife. Tenor **Roger Honeywell**, who was last seen in Calgary Opera's *Carmen* (2007), performs the role of Luther Smoot, a man driven by vengeance to apprehend Sandy at any cost. Mezzo-Soprano **Judith Forst** is Cecelia's strong-willed mother, Louise and finally making his Calgary Opera debut is Bass **Phillip Ens** performing a spectrum of roles following Sandy Keith throughout his various transformations like a shadow.

Tickets are available by calling Calgary Opera at 403-262-7286 or visiting www.calgaryopera.com. *The Inventor* is generously sponsored by Calgary Herald and CBC Radio Two.

- 30 -

For further information, please contact: Alex Bonyun, Calgary Opera
403-802-3403, or abonyun@calgaryopera.com.

See bios attached

Bramwell Tovey

Composer and
Conductor
(Canada)

Bramwell Tovey enjoys parallel careers as a conductor and composer. As a composer, he has been commissioned by the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the Toronto Symphony, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and Canadian Brass among many other groups. He won the 2003 Juno Award for Best Classical Composition for *Requiem for a Charred Skull*, written for the Amadeus Choir and the Hannaford Band. In 2004 he wrote the score for director Richard Bell's film *Eighteen*, which included the song *In a Heartbeat*, which was nominated for the Genie award for best song in a Canadian film.

His catalogue of works includes a trumpet concerto, *Songs of the Paradise Saloon*, written for Andrew McCandless and the Toronto Symphony which premiered in December 2009. Other works include viola and cello concertos, *The Snow Queen* ballet for Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, *Manhattan Music*, a concerto for Canadian Brass with symphony orchestra (also recorded in a wind band version by the Eastman Ensemble which received a nomination for the 2007 Juno award for Best Classical Composition) and numerous chamber works including *Fugitive Voices* for string septet and three women's voices commissioned by the Sweetwater Festival in 2007. A new recording of Bramwell Tovey's works for brass and percussion, which included *Nine Daies Wonder* for solo violin, brass and percussion, written for Canadian violinist Mark Fewer and The Lincoln Tunnel Cabaret for New York Philharmonic principal trombone Joe Alessi was voted CD recording of the year by the readers of the online magazine 4barsrest.com.

He has been Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony since 2000 and recently extended his contract to 2015. In 2008 Mo. Tovey and the VSO with violinist James Ehnes, won a GRAMMY for their recording of Barber, Korngold and Walton violin concertos. The same recording won the Juno classical album of the year. In 2008-09 the VSO toured Eastern Canada and to South Korea and China, appearing at the Beijing International Music Festival. In 2011-12 he will debut with the symphony orchestras of Boston, Sydney and Cleveland.

From 2002 to 2006 Mo. Tovey was Music Director of the Luxembourg Philharmonic where he made several recordings, including Jean Cras's 1922 opera *Polyphème* which won the Orphée d'Or of the Academie Lyrique Francaise. In 2006 he conducted the world premiere of Penderecki's 8th Symphony for the opening of Luxembourg's new Philharmonic Hall. From 1989 to 2001 he was Artistic Director of the Winnipeg Symphony.

In 2008 he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, leading LA Phil's summer classical season which includes an annual concert opera presentation each summer at the famous California venue, *Carmen* in 2008, *Porgy and Bess* in 2009 and *Candide* in 2010. Since 2004 he has been conductor and host of the New York Philharmonic's Lincoln Center festival *Summertime Classics*. Mo. Tovey has conducted Calgary Opera twice before, in a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in 1994 and in the world premiere performances of *Filumena* by John Estacio and John Murrell in 2003.

**John Murrell, OC, AOE,
LLD (Hon.)**
Librettist
(Canada)

During the past 35 years, John Murrell has become one of Canada's most beloved and most frequently produced playwrights, as well as a highly respected arts advocate, mentor, and consultant. His plays have been translated into more than 15 languages and performed in more than 30 countries around the world. Among his best-known plays are *Waiting For The Parade* (about five Calgary women during World War II), *Memoir* (about the old age of legendary French actress Sarah Bernhardt), *Farther West* (detailing a prairie prostitute's search for absolute freedom), and *The Faraway Nearby* (about American painter and feminist icon Georgia O'Keefe). His play *Death In New Orleans*, commissioned by One Yellow Rabbit of Calgary, was premiered by that company at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre during the 1998 International Festival of the Arts, and won a prestigious Fringe First Award for outstanding new writing. Murrell also wrote the screenplays for television versions of *Waiting For The Parade* and *Farther West*, and for *The Secret of the Nutcracker*, a film produced by Joe Media in Calgary, with music by John Estacio, which is establishing itself as a Christmas tradition on CBC-TV.

As a translator, he has created critically acclaimed and frequently revived versions of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, *The Seagull*, and *The Cherry Orchard*, of Ibsen's *The Doll House* and *The Master Builder*, of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and of several plays by celebrated Quebec playwright Carole Fréchette.

Murrell is also the librettist for three operas by Canadian composer John Estacio: *Filumena* (premiered by the Calgary Opera and The Banff Centre in 2003, and later invited as the opening night event of "The Alberta Scene" at the National Arts Centre of Canada in Ottawa, as well as being filmed for CBC television), *Frobisher* (first presented by the same two companies in 2007), and *Lillian Alling* (which had its warmly received premiere at Vancouver Opera in October 2010). He has also written ballet scenarios, choreographed by John Alleyne, for Ballet British Columbia and the National Ballet of Canada.

Murrell has worked as Playwright-in-Residence at both Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Calgary, as an Associate Director of the Stratford Festival of Canada, as Head of the Banff Playwrights Colony (1986-1989), as Head of the Theatre Section of the Canada Council For The Arts (1988-1992), as Artistic Director/Executive Producer of Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre (1999-2005), and as Executive Artistic Director of Performing Arts at The Banff Centre (2005-2007).

He is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, a winner of the esteemed Walter Carsen Prize for excellence in the performing arts, an inaugural recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta's Distinguished Artist Award, and, in 2009, was honoured with the Governor General of Canada's Performing Arts Award for lifetime artistic achievement.

Kelly Robinson

Stage Director (Canada)

Kelly Robinson is a director and choreographer whose career spans opera, theatre, film and television. Mr. Robinson's work has been seen at Opéra de Montréal, The Minnesota and The Dallas Opera, The Melia Theatre in Havana, The Shaftesbury Theatre in London's West End, The Stratford and Shaw Festivals, and Mirvish Productions in Toronto. Currently Director of the Opera as Theatre Program and Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre, Mr. Robinson has a long history with Calgary Opera, best known for directing new works and new productions including both *Filumena* (2003) and *Frobisher* (2007). For Calgary Opera he last directed *Little Women* (2010).

Bretta Gerecke

Set Designer (Canada)

Bretta Gerecke grew up in Winnipeg and has lived in Edmonton for the past 15 years. She is resident designer at Catalyst Theatre where she has designed many world premieres that have toured internationally. She also works regularly with Citadel Theatre, Canadian Stage, Edmonton Opera, Theatre Calgary and the Globe Theatre. Ms. Gerecke is the recipient of 16 Elizabeth Sterling Haynes awards, 2 Jessie awards and a SA TA award for Outstanding Achievement in Set, Lighting and Costume Design, the Enbridge Emerging Artist Award, Edmonton's Top 40 under 40, and was twice short-listed for the Siminovitch Prize. Ms. Gerecke previously designed *Rigoletto* (2007) and *Don Giovanni* (2010) for Calgary Opera.

Harry Frehner

Lighting Designer (Canada)

Harry Frehner has designed more than 40 productions for Calgary Opera dating back to 1992. In the past five years, four of these productions have been nominated for Betty Mitchell Awards, of which, two have won. This year he is lighting three world premieres: *Before Night Falls* with Fort Worth Opera, *Lillian Alling* with Vancouver Opera and *The Inventor* here in Calgary. He has lit productions for Edmonton Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Lyra, Vancouver Opera, Opera Colorado, Utah Opera, Opera Ontario, Manitoba Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria. His work has been seen across the country at such companies as The Banff Centre, Theatre Calgary, Alberta Theatre Projects, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, The Stratford and Shaw Festivals, Ballet BC and Neptune Theatre.

Scott Reid

Scenic Projection
Designer (Canada)

Scott Reid is a well-known Calgary designer, whose credits include *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dido & Aeneas* (The Banff Centre – Opera Program); *Losing Ground* (The Banff Centre – Dance Program); *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *Songs of a Wayfarer*, *Requiem* (Alberta Ballet/Edmonton Opera); *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Sherlock Holmes* (Theatre Calgary); 11 playRites Festivals, *East of Berlin*, *Half Life*, *Oliver Twist* (ATP); *Blood Relations*, *Rebecca*, *Noirville* (Vertigo Theatre). Past design work for Calgary Opera includes *Little Women*, *Faust*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and *Turtle Wakes*.

CALGARY
opera

James Westman

Baritone (Canada)
Sandy Keith

This season, Mr. Westman returns to Opéra de Montreal for Nottingham in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*, and Germont in *La Traviata* for his debut with Vancouver Opera. Future engagements include a return to the Canadian Opera Company. Career highlights include: Germont in *La Traviata* at English National Opera, Dallas Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Opera Koeln. Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Santa Fe Opera, Dallas Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Edward Gaines in Richard Danielpour's *Margaret Garner* with Michigan Opera Theatre, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Minnesota Opera, and Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Opéra de Bordeaux. He last performed in *Carmen* (2007) with Calgary Opera.

Jennifer Sproule

Mezzo-Soprano (Canada)
Christian Keith

Jennifer Sproule studied voice through the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Manitoba. Recent operatic roles include Woodsman's wife, Bootlegger's wife and Owl in *The Cunning Little Vixen* at The Banff Centre; Dorabella in excerpts from *Così fan tutte* (Banff), and Kate in *Madama Butterfly* with Manitoba Opera. Other appearances include Mahler's *Kinder-Totenlieder*, Mrs. Nolan in *The Medium*, and a tour production of *Hänsel und Gretel*.

Phillip Ens

Bass (Canada)
Alexander Keith the Elder, Julius Hammer, the Man Who Scratches and Smells, J.J. Fuchs, Bremerhaven Policeman

Phillip Ens has been heard throughout the world in the most important theatres including the Metropolitan Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Opéra National de Paris and many more. Recent engagements for Mr. Ens include Claggart in *Billy Budd* for the Glyndebourne Festival, Jorg in *Stiffelio* at the Metropolitan Opera, Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* for the Bayerische Staatsoper and Ramfis in *Aida* at the Canadian Opera Company. Among his engagements during the 2010/2011 season are his return to Munich as Il Commendatore, *Das Rheingold* with the Montreal Symphony, and Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* with Manitoba Opera. This is his debut with Calgary Opera.

Laura Whalen

Soprano (Canada)
Mary

Laura Whalen's recent operatic engagements include the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Arizona Opera, Violetta in *La Traviata* and Mimi in *La Bohème* with Edmonton Opera, Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Norina in *Don Pasquale* with Opera Ontario, and Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera Lyra Ottawa. With Calgary Opera, she has performed Marguerite in *Faust*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and two world premieres by composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell: the title role in *Filumena* and Anna in *Frobisher*.

Roger Honeywell

Tenor (Canada)
Smoot

Tenor Roger Honeywell has been acclaimed as a performer “with the right kind of heroic mettle to his voice.” (Opera Now) Mr. Honeywell’s 2010/11 season began with the role of Jimmy in the world premiere of *Lillian Alling* by John Estacio and John Murrell. Additional operatic appearances include Narraboth in *Salome* with Opéra de Montréal, and The Officer, as well as the cover of Bacchus, in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Canadian Opera Company. He was also heard with the Vancouver Symphony in performances of Verdi’s *Requiem* and for Calgary Opera he last performed in *Carmen* (2007).

Vasil Garvanliev

Baritone (Canada)
Bartender, Southerner

Born in Macedonia, Vasil Garvanliev studied at the Glenn Gould School and the University of Toronto Opera School. Roles include Pangloss (*Candide*), Geronimo (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*) and Don Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*) with U of T Opera School; Harasta (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) at The Banff Centre; Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Alcindoro/Benoit (*La Bohème*) and Signor Deluso with Highlands Opera Studio; Antonio (*Marriage of Figaro*), Grand Priest (*Idomeneo*) and Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) for Opera Atelier; Figaro (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at Glenn Gould School; and Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) for Britten-Pears Young Artists Programme.

Adam Fisher

Tenor (Canada)
Waiter, Southerner

Tenor Adam Fisher is from Vancouver and graduated with a Bachelor’s of Music in Opera Performance from the University of British Columbia. A dam’s previous roles include Don Ramiro in Opera NUOVA’s *Cenerentola*, Alfred with Opera NUOVA and Eisenstein with UBC Opera ensemble in *Die Fledermaus*. Mr. Fisher spent the last two years touring with Vancouver Opera’s school production as Al in *The Barber of Barkerville* and as Jackson in *Jack Pine*.

Martin Sadd

Tenor (Canada)
Saloon Singer, Southerner

Originally from Victoria, Martin Sadd holds Bachelors of Music in Performance from the University of Victoria and his Masters of Music in Opera from the University of British Columbia. In 2006 he participated in Pacific Opera Victoria’s Young Artist Programme and during the 2007/2008 season he performed in Vancouver Opera in School’s production, *The Barber of Barkerville*. Mr. Sadd has performed such roles as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*.

CALGARY
opera

Cassandra Warner

Mezzo-Soprano (Canada)
Saloon Singer

Mezzo-Soprano Cassandra Warner made her principal stage debut with Opera Atelier as First Priestess in *Iphigenie en Tauride*. Other roles include Cendrillon in *Cendrillon*, Prince Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel*. Ms. Warner has toured China, performed on CBC television & radio, attended Vancouver Opera's Young Artist Coaching Intensive Program, the Glenn Gould School, the International Vocal Arts Institute, and won the Lily Kertes Rolin International Prize in Vocal Studies.

Erin Armstrong

SOPRANO (Canada)
Woman with a Feather Fan

An Ontario native, Erin Armstrong received her Honours Bachelors Degree from the University of Windsor and Masters Degree from the University of British Columbia. She has performed Beth in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* with Banff's Opera as Theatre Program. Other roles include: Juliet in *Roméo et Juliette* (Opera NUOVA); Angelica in *Suor Angelica* (UBC Opera); Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (Opera NUOVA); Alice Ford in *Falstaff* (UBC Opera); Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (European Music Academy) and Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus* (UBC Opera).

Erin Wall

Soprano (Canada)
Cecelia

Erin Wall's current season marks her return to some of her best roles: the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Bavarian State Opera, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Violetta in *La Traviata* with Vancouver Opera. Career highlights include: Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Met, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Vienna State Opera, and Bavarian State Opera. Countess in *Capriccio* with Pacific Opera, Victoria, Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at Los Angeles Opera, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at La Scala.

Judith Forst

Soprano (Canada)
Louise

Judith Forst is one of Canada's most distinguished artists, having been honoured with the Order of Canada, and highly acclaimed for her performances throughout the world in many of the most prestigious theatres including the Met, San Francisco Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Netherlands Opera, Washington Opera, and Vancouver Opera. She has recently been heard as Kabanicha in *Kat'a Kabanova* for Lyric Opera of Chicago, and The Countess in *Pique Dame* for Houston Grand Opera. This season she returned to Vancouver Opera for the world premiere of *Lillian Alling* and returns to Opéra de Montréal for the role of Herodias in *Salome*. She last performed for Calgary Opera in *Dead Man Walking* (2006).

CALGARY

opera

Allison Cecilia Arends

Soprano (Canada)

Wealthy-Looking Woman

Allison Cecilia Arends holds a Masters Degree from the University of Toronto Opera School and studies with Mary Morrison. Recent engagements include: Cleopatra with the Centre for Opera Studies, Musetta with Highlands Opera Studio and Colours of Music Festival, Donna Anna with Wish Opera, Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with the Toronto Philharmonia, and Brahms' *German Requiem* with Tallis Choir. She was a laureate of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques and finalist in the Spazio Musica International Competition.