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For Immediate Release

Verdi's Masterpiece *Aida* Commands the Stage at Calgary Opera

Calgary, AB... The wait is over for one of the grandest spectacles of the opera repertoire, *Aida*, by composer **Giuseppe Verdi**. Opening on **April 9**, with two additional performances on **April 13 & 15** at the **Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium**, *Aida* is a love story as timeless and enduring as the Pyramids.

In an age when the Egyptian Pharaoh reigned supreme, the young Aida is taken prisoner from her native Ethiopia to be made a slave in the royal palace. There she falls in love with the brave Radames, captain of the Pharaoh's guard. Princess Amneris has also fallen for Radames, and when she realizes that love has bloomed between her promised and a slave girl, she does everything in her power to destroy what they have.

"Aida is a piece of extremes. On one hand we have the grandiose pageantry of the Act II Finale which contains a huge choral presence, ballet dancers, a parade of supernumeraries and the fanfare of the Egyptian trumpets," says Conductor **Joseph Mechavich**. "And on the other hand we have arias and duets of such great intimacy that the softest orchestral colour and vocal nuance is demanded. Verdi's atmospheric score of extremes is always a thrill to conduct."

Working alongside Conductor **Joseph Mechavich** is Edmonton Opera's Artistic Director and Stage Director **Brian Deedrick**, who last directed *Manon* for Calgary Opera. Alberta Ballet's Edmund Stripe choreographs Alberta Ballet dancers Mark Biocca, Nicole Caron, Patrick Doe, Davidson Jaconello, Kelley McKinlay, Anthony Pina, Blair Puente, Peter Starr and Tara Williamson for the ballet pieces traditionally included in *Aida*.

The role of Aida is performed by **Michele Capalbo**, who last performed the title role in *Tosca* (2008) with Calgary Opera. Starring alongside her is **William Joyner** as Radames, **Stacey Rishoi** as Amneris, **Alain Coulombe** as Ramfis, **Gaétan Laperrière** as Amonasro and **David Bedard** as the King of Egypt. Also performing are Emerging Artists: Soprano **Erin Armstrong** as Priestess and Tenor **Martin Sadd** as Messenger.

Tickets are available by calling Calgary Opera at 403-262-7286 or visiting www.calgaryopera.com. *Aida* is generously sponsored by **Calgary Herald** and Production Sponsor **Nexen**.

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

See bios attached

Joseph Mechavich

Conductor

(United States)

Regarded as a conductor of “authority and warmth,” and known for his thoughtful and idiomatic interpretations, Joseph Mechavich is one of North America’s foremost conductors. Recent engagements include debuts with The Washington National Opera conducting *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Des Moines Metro Opera conducting *Susannah*, and Oberlin College Conservatory of Music conducting *Candide*. In addition, he returned to the podium for Kentucky Opera’s *Of Mice and Men*, The Naples Philharmonic’s *Don Giovanni*, Opera Birmingham’s *Aida* and Dayton Opera’s *Faust*. Engagements for 2010-2011 include, *Madama Butterfly* and *L’elisir d’amore* for Kentucky Opera, *La fille du regiment* for Dayton Opera, and *Faust* at Opera Birmingham. This is his debut with Calgary Opera.

Brian Deedrick

Stage Director

(Canada)

Edmonton Opera Artistic Director Brian Deedrick, a longtime favourite of Calgary Opera, has directed past productions of *The Magic Flute*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, and *Lakmé*. Mr. Deedrick has directed for numerous opera companies, including Edmonton Opera, Pacific Opera, Opera Arizona, Opera Carolina, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Baltimore Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Austin Lyric and Vancouver Opera. He also directed for the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv and Casalmaggiore, Italy, and “escapes” from opera every year by working as a city tour guide in Berlin. His most recent Calgary Opera production was *Manon* (2009).

Edmund Stripe

Choreographer

(Canada)

An award-winning choreographer, Mr. Stripe has created over 30 major works for many international companies and is in his ninth season with Alberta Ballet. He has created five critically acclaimed works for Alberta Ballet including *Piano Concerto No. 2, Opus 102*, *The Nutcracker* and the hugely popular *Alice in Wonderland*. Edmund Stripe has previously been Ballet Master with West Australian Ballet and Singapore Dance Theatre. He has assisted in the mounting and re-creation of works by choreographers such as Jiri Kylian, Nacho Duato, George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, and Christopher Wheeldon.

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.

Michele Capalbo

Soprano
(Canada)
Aida

Excelling as an interpreter of Verdi and Verismo roles, in the 2008-2009 season Soprano Michele Capalbo performed Leonora in *Il Trovatore* with Manitoba Opera, *Lady Macbeth* with Opéra de Montréal, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with National Chorale, Verdi's *Requiem* with Eugene Symphony, and the title role in *Aida* with Opera de Nice. Future engagements include debuts with San Francisco, Colorado and Canadian Opera Companies. Ms. Capalbo's other recent operatic engagements include the title role of *Aida* and Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* with Houston Grand Opera, as well as Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Opera de Quebec. She was last with Calgary Opera for *Tosca* (2008).

Stacey Rishoi

Mezzo-Soprano
(United States)
Amneris

Stacey Rishoi has garnered an international reputation for the beauty and power of her instrument. *The Washington Post* stated, "It was Rishoi's Adalgisa, however, who nearly stole the show with a performance that was convincing and unwavering from start to finish." In 2010-11 Ms. Rishoi performs Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with Cincinnati Opera, Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Toledo Opera, and appears as soloist with both the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra and Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra in Verdi's *Requiem*, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra in Handel's *Messiah*, and the Toledo Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. She last performed with Calgary Opera in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2009).

Alain Coulombe

Bass
(Canada)
Ramfis

Praised for "his deep stentorian bass voice" and "his powerful stage presence," Bass Alain Coulombe last appeared for Calgary Opera in *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Performances this season include Il Re in *Aida* with the Canadian Opera Company, Verdi's *Requiem* for the Vancouver Symphony, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* for Michigan Opera Theater, Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Le Bailli in *Werther* for Opéra de Montréal. He has worked internationally with conductors including Seiji Ozawa, Richard Bonyngé, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Miguel Harth-Bedoya and Helmut Rilling in repertoire such as Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, *Norma*, *Rigoletto* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

William Joyner

Tenor
(United States)
Radame s

Over the course of his career, Tenor William Joyner has given over 500 performances of 55 different roles, in ten countries on three continents. Notable theatres including Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Bologna's Teatro Comunale, Venice's Gran Teatro la Fenice, Paris' Opéra National (Bastille), Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Berlin's Deutsche Oper and Deutsche Staatsoper, The Washington National Opera, Miami's Florida Grand Opera, New York City Opera, and Santa Fe Opera. Mr. Joyner has performed with Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and Münchener Rundfunkorchester. For Calgary Opera he last performed in *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2004).

Gaétan Laperrière

Baritone
(Canada)
Amon asro

Gaétan Laperrière performs to critical acclaim with prestigious companies throughout the world including Opéra de Paris Bastille, Opéra de Nice, Opéra de Marseille, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Netherlands Opera, Spoleto Festival in Italy, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro La Fenice, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, Minnesota Opera, Dallas Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Colorado, Boston Lyric Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Opéra de Montreal, among others. For Calgary Opera, he last performed *Scarpia* in *Tosca* (2008).

David Bedard

Bass-Baritone
(Canada)
King of Egypt

Canadian Bass-Baritone David Bedard started his opera career as a member of the Calgary Opera Chorus. In the past decade, he has performed with opera houses such as Houston Grand Opera, Vancouver Opera, Opera Ontario, Manitoba Opera, Opéra de Montreal, and the New National Theater in Tokyo. Mr. Bedard last performed with Calgary Opera in the role of Stephen Wagman in the world premiere of *Frobisher* (2007).

Martin Sadd

Tenor
(Canada)
Messenger

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*.

Erin Armstrong

Soprano
(Canada)
Priestess

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).