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For Immediate Release

## Old Wesley Church Turns 100 Years Old

**This July**, Calgary Opera's home, the Arrata Opera Centre, formerly known as the Wesley United Church, celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. To mark the occasion, **throughout the month of July**, Calgary Opera is opening our doors to anyone who would like a **free tour** of the building.

"The Arrata Opera Centre has been a great home for Calgary Opera and a valuable space for the arts community," says W.R. (Bob) McPhee. "And we're happy to be able to open our doors to the broader community who may want to come back and share their memories and stories with us."

**In July of 2005**, Calgary Opera moved into the Wesley United Church, converting it into the Calgary Opera Centre. Two years later, the Centre was renamed the Arrata Opera Centre in honour of naming benefactor Said Arrata. Located in the busy Beltline District, at the corner of 13th Avenue and 7th Street SW, this beautiful heritage building has taken Calgary Opera to a whole new level, bringing the administrative offices and rehearsal space side together under one roof, and creating opportunities for new community outreach efforts.

The church has also provided much needed arts space in Calgary for companies like **Mob Hit Productions, IGNITE! Festival, Calgary Animated Objects Society, Elephant Artist Relief, Fairy Tales Queer Film Festival, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, Magnetic North Theatre Festival, Red Deer Symphony and The Shakespeare Company** to name just a few, as well as provided office space **Sage Theatre, Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Spiritus Chamber Choir, Bottomline Productions, Ground Zero Theatre** and **Hit or Myth Productions**.

The corner stone for The Wesley United Church was laid on July 14, 1911. Significant contributors to the church fund included Senator James A. Lougheed, former mayor and provincial cabinet minister William H. Cushing, future mayor Herbert A. Sinott, and future Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. The church has a rich heritage and for many years was a house of worship, a Sunday school, and an important venue for ceremonies that marked the most momentous occasions in thousands of peoples' lives. Calgary Opera would love to welcome members of the community back to share their stories about the building, and its place in their personal history.

For a **free drop-in tour**, please visit the **Arrata Opera Centre** at **1315 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW**, between the hours of 9am – 5pm.

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