

September 13, 2011  
For Immediate Release

### **Innovative New Community Opera Project Champions Grassroots Storytelling**

Sept 13, 2011, Calgary Opera announces a new arts initiative, *What Brought Us Here – A Community Opera Project*. This ground-breaking grassroots project focuses on emotional and often heroic stories collected from individuals who have immigrated to Calgary. The final presentation of these stories will be a free opera performance at the Arrata Opera Centre – date and time to be announced.

Award-winning playwright Clem Martini is charged with the task of interviewing the individuals and integrating their stories into a larger framework of the opera libretto. He has collected numerous stories from 22 people who have immigrated from countries as varied and diverse as Uganda, Sudan, China, Serbia, Vietnam, Nigeria, Iran, Columbia, Pakistan, Liberia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, India, the Soviet Union and more.

“Regardless of the ethnicity, each of these stories has tremendous narrative power and consequently the ability to speak to anyone,” says Martini. “Struggles that are encountered by one person are ultimately significant to everyone.”

Development of *What Brought Us Here – A Community Opera Project* will continue into the winter of 2012 with a performance slated for spring 2012. Members from the source communities will be encouraged to contribute visual artists, performers and musicians, and will also be invited to the final presentation.

“This project is an avenue for us to share the art form of opera with non-traditional opera audiences to allow them to tell their stories in a new way,” says General Director and CEO W.R. (Bob) McPhee. “It also creates a forum for a cultural exchange with our traditional audience and allows us to share new and diverse experiences with the community-at-large.”

- 30 -

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