

## CALGARY OPERA ANNOUNCES NEW, ALL-CANADIAN LEADERSHIP TEAM

*'Dream team' of Bramwell Tovey and Heather Kitchen will take the reins of the 45-year old arts company in 2019.*

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**November 17, 2018 (Calgary, Alberta)** – Following their announcement in August that current General Director and CEO Keith Cerny will be leaving the company, [Calgary Opera](#) announced today that the board of directors has selected two Canadians as its new leaders. Grammy® and Juno award-winning conductor and composer Bramwell Tovey will become the company's Artistic Director, and veteran international arts executive Heather Kitchen will become the company's administrative leader as Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, beginning in January 2019.

Tovey is no stranger to Canadian opera and classical music fans. From 2000 to 2018 he was the highly esteemed Music Director of Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and he is now the company's Music Director Emeritus. His association with Calgary Opera dates back to 1994 when he conducted Mozart's *The Magic Flute* during David Speers' tenure as General Director. He returned several times under General Director & CEO Bob McPhee, most notably to conduct the world premiere of *Filumena* in 2003, and again to conduct the world premiere of his own composition with librettist John Murrell, *The Inventor*, in 2011. Most recently he conducted Calgary Opera's 2016 Canadian premiere of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*. He is also the Principal Conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra in London, England, as well as Artistic Advisor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra.

Of the news of his appointment, Tovey stated, "Bob McPhee's vision of a creative and vibrant opera company in one of Canada's most important cities has left a lasting impression on all of us and has inspired me to accept the position of Artistic Director of Calgary Opera. I look forward to working in tandem with my esteemed colleague, Heather Kitchen, who is one of Canada's most celebrated arts administrators."

Kitchen's illustrious career has taken her from Nova Scotia to San Francisco, with stops in Dallas, Toronto and Edmonton, working as a leading arts administrator with a variety of theatre and arts companies including American Conservatory Theater, the Dallas Theater Center, the Citadel Theatre and, most recently, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. With a solid track record for fundraising and financial management, the board is confident she has the skills and knowledge

to bring the company's administrative and financial model into better alignment with the challenging current economic environment for professional not-for-profit arts companies.

"I'm very excited to be taking on the role of Managing Director & CEO with Calgary Opera," said Kitchen. "There is a great deal of work ahead of us to ensure the company reaches the height of its potential, but I have no doubt that with an engaged board, capable staff and an enthusiastic base of community partners and supporters, together we will be able to accomplish great things." She continued, "Bramwell and I have been in conversation over the last month and we are thrilled to be working together at such an exciting point in Calgary Opera's history."

Jackie Pyke, Chair of Calgary Opera's board of directors said of the appointments, "We are delighted to have Bramwell and Heather lead Calgary Opera into an exciting next phase for the company. Calgary Opera, along with many other arts organizations, is facing a difficult economic environment and given Bramwell and Heather's experienced leadership, including fundraising, we are confident we will be able to face these challenges. We expect the company to reach new levels of artistic achievement, community support and financial sustainability".

Pyke continued, "We are pleased to have such an experienced and proven team coming on board which ensures an orderly transition and would like to thank Searchlight Recruitment for their assistance."

Cerny will continue to lead the company until his departure in early January 2019. Tovey and Kitchen have already been in discussions with staff and board in preparation for the transition.

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### **About Calgary Opera**

Founded in 1972, Calgary Opera is one of Canada's leading professional opera companies. For 45 years the not-for-profit arts company has made a name for itself nationally and internationally for its commitment to the development of Canadian talent and the creation of new opera works, including six world premieres. Through education and community outreach, Calgary Opera fosters a love of music and theatre in young people and provides opportunities for young artists to develop skills for successful professional careers in the performing arts industry.

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### **About Bramwell Tovey**

Following an exceptional 18-year tenure as Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, where he is now Music Director Emeritus, Grammy® and Juno award-winning conductor and composer Bramwell Tovey now joins Calgary Opera as its Artistic Director.

Under his leadership the VSO toured China, Korea, across Canada and the United States. His VSO innovations included the establishment of the VSO School of Music for which he served as Artistic Advisor from 2011 to 2018, the VSO's annual festival of contemporary music and the VSO Orchestral Institute at Whistler, a comprehensive summer orchestral training program for young musicians held in the scenic mountain resort of Whistler in British Columbia. At Bramwell's final concert as Music Director, the board of directors announced that the school building immediately behind the orchestra's historic Orpheum home will be renamed The Tovey Family Centre for Music thanks to generous financial support from several prominent VSO donors.

Bramwell made his operatic debut conducting the legendary Leonie Rysanek's final appearance as Puccini's *Tosca* with Cape Town Opera. In 2015 he led Sondra Radvanovsky, Bryn Terfel and Brandon Jovanovich in *Tosca* at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Festival. He has appeared with the Canadian Opera Company and opera companies in Manitoba, Edmonton and Vancouver. He has conducted for Calgary Opera many times since his debut in 1994 and his own opera, *The Inventor*, written with librettist John Murrell, was commissioned by Calgary Opera and premiered in 2011. As Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl he conducted annual operatic performances, including Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Bernstein's *Candide* and Bizet's *Carmen*.

From 2002 to 2006 Bramwell was Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. His recording of Jean Cras' 1922 neglected opera *Polyphème* with OPL won the prestigious Academie Lyrique Française Prix d'Or.

Bramwell is also Principal Conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra and Artistic Advisor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra. During the 2018/2019 season his guest appearances include the Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Indianapolis, and Toronto symphonies, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra and the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonic Orchestras. In January 2019 he will return to the Winnipeg Symphony's New Music Festival which he founded in 1992 during his tenure as Artistic Director there.

Bramwell has twice conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra on the PBS television program *Live at Lincoln Center*, most recently this past New Year's Eve when he was interviewed about Leonard Bernstein's influence on his own career. He met and worked with Bernstein in 1986.

In 2013 he was appointed an honorary Officer of the Order of Canada for services to music. Since 2006 he has been Artistic Director of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, one of the British Arts Council's leading youth music groups.

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### **About Heather Kitchen**

Heather Kitchen is an arts administrator with more than 40 years of professional experience, specializing in strategic and program planning, fundraising, financial analysis, board development, and union negotiations.

Most recently she served as the Interim Executive Producer, Performing Arts at Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity. From 2011 to 2015 Ms. Kitchen was the Managing Director of Dallas Theater Center (DTC). During her tenure at DTC, the theatre grew its budget from \$7M to more than

\$12M and successfully completed a \$13.1M capital campaign. As Executive Director of American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) in San Francisco for 14 seasons, Ms. Kitchen grew the organization's budget from \$11M to \$20M. Ms. Kitchen was instrumental in the further development of the famed Conservatory at A.C.T. and its top-five ranked Master of Fine Arts program.

Ms. Kitchen was the General Manager of the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton for four seasons and worked in stage management for 15 years in many of the major regional theatres across Canada, including the Stratford Festival, The Neptune Theatre, and Canadian Stage Company.

Ms. Kitchen is a noted teacher of stage, production, and arts management, having taught and guest lectured at more than 20 universities and colleges throughout Canada and the United States, including the University of Connecticut, Stanford University, Ryerson University, University of California, Berkeley, and the Universities of Waterloo, Western Ontario, Guelph, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, among others.