

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2025



City Opera Vancouver Set to Take Audiences on a Transformative Journey
with the Canadian Premiere of
– *Sophia's Forest* –

Blending traditional operatic storytelling with cutting-edge innovation, the poignant chamber opera explores the wounds of war and the resilience of the human spirit

Vancouver, BC – City Opera Vancouver (COV) is proud to present the Canadian premiere of *Sophia's Forest*, a powerfully evocative chamber opera by composer **Lembit Beecher** and librettist **Hannah Moscovitch**, on stage **May 29 to 31, 2025 at 7:30pm** and **June 1, 2025 at 2pm** at **Studio T at SFU's Goldcorp Centre for the Arts**. Directed by Julie McIsaac, under the baton of COV Artistic Director Gordon Gerrard, the groundbreaking one-act opera explores timely themes through the story of a young girl, Sophia, who flees civil war and settles in a new country. The titular role of Sophia will be brought to life by two performers: Canadian soprano Elena Howard-Scott as adult Sophia, and Arya Yazgan, as young Sophia.

"This is not a work that provides easy answers, but it does offer a powerful reminder of our shared humanity," says Gordon Gerrard, Artistic Director, COV. "In a time when it's easy to feel overwhelmed by global conflict, *Sophia's Forest* invites us to connect to the individual stories behind the headlines. Composer Lembit Beecher and librettist Hannah Moscovitch have created a deeply resonant story—one that speaks to empathy, resilience, and the enduring capacity for hope amidst even the darkest circumstances."

While *Sophia's Forest* is not based on a single true story, it draws inspiration from the lived experiences of many who have endured war, loss, and displacement. Through the fractured lens of Sophia's memory, the chamber opera speaks to the human cost of conflict and the strength required to overcome adversity. Its intimate setting and small ensemble help to magnify the emotional intensity, offering audiences a space for reflection and deeper understanding.

The production seamlessly integrates live performance with innovative projections by Wladimiro Woyno and an array of mechanical sound sculptures, created from bike wheels and wine glasses, that are controlled remotely in real time by the composer Beecher. These sounds and images blur the line between literal and symbolic as they conjure vivid memories and dreams from Sophia's past: the ring of a wine glass becomes a child's voice; the whirr of a bike wheel evokes fluttering wings. Accompanied by a live string quartet, the result is a haunting, immersive soundscape unlike anything else in contemporary opera.

For its Canadian premiere, Sophia will be performed by soprano Elena Howard-Scott, Anna (Sophia's mother) will be performed by Adanya Dunn, and Wes (Anna's partner) will be performed by Luka

Kawabata. Young Sophia will be performed by Arya Yazgan, and Emma (Sophia's sister) will be performed by Audrey Gao , both members of the Vancouver Bach Family of Choirs.

The chamber opera will include projection and scenic design by Wladimiro Woyno and sound design by Richard Berg with costumes by Alaia Hamer.

Sophia's Forest is COV's first project in a larger, multi-year initiative that will aim to showcase and explore the stories and experiences of newcomers to Canada, including celebrating artists who contribute to Canada's cultural diversity.

For tickets and information, visit: cityoperavancouver.com

City Opera Vancouver (cityoperavancouver.com)

Founded in 2006, City Opera Vancouver is a professional company that commissions, creates, re-discovers and presents chamber opera. The company specializes in small forms, intimate eloquence, Canadian themes and artists, and through music tells memorably bold, vivid stories that are relevant to our time and people. City Opera regularly commissions and premieres new Canadian chamber opera, including *Fallujah* (2012), *Pauline* (2014), *Missing* (2017) and *Chinatown* (2022). In 2014, City Opera commissioned and gave the world premiere of Margaret Atwood's first opera, *Pauline*, with music by Tobin Stokes. In 2017, City Opera commissioned and produced, in partnership with Pacific Opera Victoria, the world premiere of Marie Clements' and Brian Current's opera *Missing*. It has since had 22 performances in Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George, and Regina. The company is a registered non-profit society with federal tax status, governed by an elected Board of Directors. City Opera is a member of the Association for Opera in Canada, and Opera America, and is also a Community Partner of the Canadian Music Centre.

LISTING INFORMATION

City Opera Vancouver presents *Sophia's Forest*

Dates:

May 29-31, 2025 at 7:30pm
June 1, 2025 at 2pm

Address:

Studio T
SFU's Goldcorp Centre for the Arts
149 W Hastings Street, Vancouver

Ticket Prices:

Regular price: \$55 - \$85; Student price: \$25

Ticket Link:

cityoperavancouver.com

Website:

cityoperavancouver.com

For further media information, contact

Laura Murray | 604-418-2998 | lmurray@mpmgarts.com

Ariane Bell Vila | 519-362-9486 | avila@mpmgarts.com