



## Media Release

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For immediate release

### **Closing ceremony of the Memorial Garden: Garden of Tears followed by world premiere of *Ours***

Their Excellencies the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and Mrs. Sharon Johnston will join special guests Robert Chafe, Michael O’Keefe and Rick Mercer, among others, in the closing ceremony of Opera on the Avalon’s Memorial Garden – Garden of Tears on Friday, July 1 at 7:40 p.m. at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John’s.

The Memorial Garden – Garden of Tears art installation saw the grounds of the St. John’s Arts and Culture Centre filled with 1,500 forget-me-not flowers. The garden was designed by Newfoundland Artist Jim Maunder to celebrate lives lived and lost, and serve to honour the memories of the fallen of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during World War I.

Following the closing ceremony is the world premiere of *Ours*, a new Canadian opera commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. *Ours* plays July 1 and 2 at 8 p.m. at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John’s.

*Ours* is a two act opera by award winning Canadian composer John Estacio with libretto by renowned Canadian writer Robert Chafe. *Ours* will be the first full-length opera ever to be set in Atlantic Canada. It is based on the true story of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, who were the best and brightest of their generation and who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of their country.

“We’re honoured to pay tribute to our veterans with our Memorial Garden – Garden of Tears,” said Cheryl Hickman, Artistic Director of Opera on the Avalon. “We are also very excited to forge new artistic territory that recognizes our rich history with the world premiere of *Ours*. Newfoundland and Labrador is steeped in history and Opera on the Avalon is dedicated to transforming that history into art.”

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#### **ABOUT OPERA ON THE AVALON**

Founded in 2009 by opera singer Cheryl Hickman, Opera on the Avalon has become an undisputed leader in the cultural life of Newfoundland and Labrador, with a diverse and innovative repertoire that pushes the boundaries of opera. The company offers emerging artists the opportunity to explore new and established repertoire alongside distinguished artists.



## BACKGROUNDER

### *Ours*

#### **A New Canadian Opera Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel**

- *Ours* is a two act opera by award winning Canadian composer John Estacio with libretto by renowned Canadian writer Robert Chafe. *Ours* will be the first full-length opera ever to be set in Atlantic Canada. It is based on the true story of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, who were the best and brightest of their generation and who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of their country.
- *Ours* tracks the social, political and emotional aftermath of the battle of Beaumont Hamel through the story of Regiment Chaplain Thomas Nangle. *Ours* charts the history of Nangle and of Newfoundland through his attempts to register for the regiment at the beginning of the war, his eventual posting, his time spent on the front, his wounding at the hands of a sniper, his finding of the lost regiment in the mud fields of France after the war, his establishment of the memorial parks and his eventual departure from Newfoundland.
- Opera on the Avalon, led by Artistic Director Cheryl Hickman and based in St. John's, is Atlantic Canada's only professional opera company.
- Opera on the Avalon commissioned *Ours* to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, a WWI battle which devastated the ranks of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment on July 1, 1916.
- Internationally-acclaimed baritone Brett Polegato leads an all-Canadian cast of twelve, with full chorus, in the role of Thomas Nangle, chaplain to the Regiment. The singers and orchestra are conducted by Judith Yan with stage direction by Glynis Leyshon and design by Patrick Clark.
- *Ours* was one of only four new Canadian operas invited to present a showcase at this year's Opera America conference. To hear an excerpt from the beautiful, moving score.
- *Ours* will be presented in two performances, on July 1 and 2 at 8pm, at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's.

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