



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

A world premiere, a major art installation and a legendary thriller highlight Opera on the Avalon's 2016 Festival Season

ST JOHN'S NL — Newfoundland and Labrador's Opera on the Avalon is forging new artistic ground by honouring the past with its 2016 festival season.

On July 1 and 2, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians along with visitors to the province will have a rare historical opportunity to witness the world premiere of a new opera commissioned by Opera on the Avalon to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. *Ours* is by Juno-nominated Canadian composer John Estacio with a libretto by Governor General Award-winning playwright Robert Chafe.

Leading up to the premiere of *Ours*, Jim Maunder's art installation "Garden of Tears" fills the lawns of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's throughout June, with over 1,500 forget-me-not flowers.

Opera on the Avalon also performs at The Garrick Theatre in Bonavista with *We'll Meet Again: Music of World War I* on the afternoon of June 12. A special "Pre-Opera Champagne Brunch" at the Fisher's Loft Inn in Port Rexton will precede the presentation of beloved songs from the era.

The first main stage show of the season will be the legendary musical thriller *Sweeney Todd* on June 17 and 18 at the Holy Heart Theatre.

"This year's season is exciting and particularly significant as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel," says Artistic Director Cheryl Hickman. "Our 2016 season is designed to honour the memories of the past while offering artistic inspiration for the future. Newfoundland and Labrador is steeped in history and Opera on the Avalon is dedicated to transforming that history into art."

The Season

Pre-Opera Champagne Brunch (10:30 a.m. June 12, Fisher's Loft Inn, Port Rexton)

A sort of "opera primer", leading up to the afternoon's performance of *We'll Meet Again: Music of World War I*, the brunch will feature spontaneous operatic performances by outstanding voices. Again this year Cheryl Hickman, the Artistic Director of Opera on the Avalon, and members of the company have invited participants to a pre-brunch session to explore aspects of opera performance.

We'll Meet Again: Music of World War I (2:30 p.m. June 12, Garrick Theatre in Bonavista)

During the First World War, music was heard on the battlefield, in concert halls, in camps and in churches. Music reflected and affected all the emotions of war - pride and jingoism, sorrow and consolation - with everything from requiems to rousing choruses. Join us for a touching collection of beloved songs sung by Opera on the Avalon's emerging artists as they commemorate the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and its sacrifice during "The Great War".

Sweeney Todd (June 17 & 18, Holy Heart Theatre in St. John's)

Opera on the Avalon will be presenting the musical *Sweeney Todd* directed by Newfoundland's own Jonathan Monro. Set in 19th century England, the musical details the return of barber Sweeney Todd to London after 15 years of exile, in order to take revenge on the corrupt judge who banished him, by conspiring with a local baker, Mrs. Lovett, who is in desperate need of fresh meat for her pies. *Sweeney Todd* opened on Broadway in 1979 and in the West End in 1980. It won the Tony Award for Best Musical and Olivier Award for Best New Musical.

World Premiere of *Ours* (July 1 & 2 at 8pm, Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's)

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. *Ours* tracks the social, political, and emotional aftermath of the battle through the story of Thomas Nangle, whose dedication, sacrifice, and renewal is the human embodiment of Newfoundland's journey through the war, its horrific aftermath, and its re-emergence as a province of Canada.

Forget-Me-Not Memorial Garden: Garden of Tears (June 1 – July 1, Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's)

Today, July 1 remains an official day of remembrance in Newfoundland and Labrador. Coinciding with the world premiere of *Ours*, Jim Maunder's art installation "Garden of Tears" will fill the lawns of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's with over 1,600 forget-me-not flowers. The official launch of this ongoing project happened on June 1, 2016.

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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.