



News Release

For immediate release

Jorinda to feature dance and puppetry

Jorinda puppet master, Simone Varey, was dreading what might happen at the opera's production team meeting last January. "Over Christmas I'd finally found the time to do a painstaking analysis of every word of composer Doug Jamieson's libretto in order to block out each movement that the opera's puppet characters would need to make in order to animate the story line," Varey explained. "Now I knew it wouldn't work. There were just too many movements essential to the story line that couldn't be done using puppets."

"So now I was obliged to go to this meeting to tell my colleagues we either re-write the story line to eliminate the problematic movements or we find some way other than puppets to animate the four principal characters'," said Varey.

"Re-writing the story line was a non-starter because all the opera's music had been created to fit the libretto as it was," recalled Jamienson "I would have had to write some entirely new musical segments if we changed the story line."

"You could almost taste the relief when Simone then suggested using dancers wearing masks for the principal characters and puppets for everything else," said the opera's producer Marty Horswill. "Each of the directors and designers in the room that evening immediately began to visualize how they would incorporate dancers in place of puppets into their particular aspect of

the show. It was amazing how quickly and enthusiastically the whole team adjusted to this enormous change in the show's artistic direction," Horswill noted.

"Within a half hour we were completely on board with the concept and were sharing ideas across the table about possible choreographers and principal dancers for the main parts," said Stage Director, Geoff Burns. "I left that meeting excited about the new direction but knowing that we now had a big new task of finding a skilled choreographer and four versatile dancers. We would need to find dancers who could not only bring these characters to life on the stage but do so in close artistic collaboration with the singers who would be simultaneously voicing the thoughts and emotions of the same four characters. By May we had found our choreographer, Slava Doval, the founder of *DanceFusion*, a local dance school with over a hundred and fifty students and six teachers.

"When Geoff first approached me about becoming *Jorinda's* choreographer I was quite surprised as opera is completely outside my usual musical styles," said Doval. "I'm excited by this new and welcome challenge but also a little nervous to be working with such a talented cast of dancers and musicians".

"It will be tricky to switch from my regular studio teaching mode into movement exploration and character development', Doval noted. "Another huge learning curve will be working with masks for the dancers and finding a movement language unique to each character. The four roles are so distinct, and so archetypal to fairy tales. Luckily our dancers are very experienced with creating choreography themselves so I mainly hope to just not get in their way."

In June choreographer Doval, stage director Burns and musical director Jamieson auditioned a number of local dancers to fill the four lead roles in *Jorinda*. "We were bowled over by the professional experience of many of the dancers who auditioned for the show," Burns observed. "I'm sure Nelson opera goers will be amazed and delighted by what they are going to see on the Capitol Theatre stage next November."

Hiromoto Ida, in the signature role of the Witch, is no stranger to Nelson dance enthusiasts. He moved here in 2006 to start his own dance company, *Ichigo-Ichieh*, where he has created his own dance productions that have been featured not only at Nelson's Capitol Theatre but in festivals in Vancouver and Toronto. Born in Tokyo, he relocated to Vancouver in 1987 where he joined the Karen Jamieson Dance Company for the next 7 years. He has had a wide-ranging career in

Canada including roles in dance, theatre, TV and film including playing the leading role in the award-winning movie *Tokyo Cowboy*. **Nelson Community Opera** fans will remember Mr. Ida's performance as the solo dancer in NCO's premiere of Don Macdonald's new opera, KHAOS. He was appointed Nelson's Cultural Ambassador for 2012.

"It's been a while since I danced under a choreographer other than myself so I'm looking forward to the change." commented Ida. "I'm excited by the big challenges of the Witch role and by the technical adjustment to working with a mask."

In the role of Jorinda is Carly Brandel, a graduate of the Capilano College Theatre Program where she specialized in musical theatre and danced in numerous shows including *Anything Goes* and *Darn that Dream*. Since moving to Nelson Carly has appeared on the Capitol Theatre stage in *Chicago* and in *Cabaret*.

"When I found out the lead roles in **Jorinda** were being cast as dancers in mask, I knew that was something I would have to audition for," Brandel said. "I love mask work as well as dance, so bringing them together as one will be very exciting. It will be interesting to see how well we will be able to physicalize a range of emotions through dance, without the use of facial expression.

Jorinda's hero, Jaren, will be danced by West Kootenay native, Mackenzie Hope. Born in Trail, BC, Mackenzie grew up dancing and since then he has studied and danced across North America. Mackenzie moved to Nelson over 8 years ago where he has been immersed in the musical theatre world choreographing and performing in many local shows including: *Into the Woods*, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*, *Reefer Madness*, *Songs for a New World*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago* and many others.

"I was attracted to **Jorinda** because it offered the chance to do a role that is strictly dancing. There aren't many opportunities like that in the Nelson area," observed Hope. "I think it will be a huge challenge for everyone in the show to find ways to bring all the diverse parts of this production - puppets, voices, dancers, orchestra etc. - together to create a cohesive show."

The comic role of the Witch's toady, Grungella, will be performed by Lindsay Clague. After growing up in Vancouver where she danced from a very early age, Ms Clague trained in New York at the Neighborhood Playhouse, graduating in 1997, and at the Martha Graham School. She has worked professionally in both Canada and the US as a dancer, singer and actor and some of her favourite roles were in *A Chorus Line*, *The Just So Stories* and *The Wedding Pool*. Clague moved to

Nelson in 2009 to raise her family and says she has found herself embraced by a wonderful arts community here. Her late mother, Barbara Clague, was a keen, long-distance supporter of the performance arts in Nelson and, though living in Vancouver, nevertheless became a founding director in 1999 of the Amy Ferguson Institute, the parent body of **Nelson Community Opera**.

“It was the opportunity to work with such a talented group of people that attracted me to *Jorinda*,” Clague noted “and bringing a new work to life right here in our town. I’m also intrigued by the variety of the musical styles in Jamieson’s score and by the challenge of bringing it all together while still honouring the composer’s intention.”

Nelson Community Opera’s world premiere production of *Jorinda* will be presented at Nelson’s Capitol Theatre beginning November 12, 2015. Written and composed by Nelson-based composer Doug Jamieson, the opera is loosely based on a Brothers Grimm fairy tale and features soprano Allison Girvan as Jorinda, mezzo soprano Bessie Wapp as the Witch, tenor Roger Ley as the hero, Jaren, and alto Sydney Black as Grungella.

“During all the years that I was writing *Jorinda* I never dreamed of having dancers in the principal roles,” Jamieson mused. “Yet here we all are enthusiastically engaged in a radically different approach. Now we have a show that features both dancers and puppets in dramatic roles as vital to the opera’s full realization as those of the vocal soloists. I think Nelson audiences are in for a rare treat.”

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Note: If you require photos in a higher resolution, please e-mail.



Jorinda dancers (left to right) Front row: Mackenzie Hope and Carly Brandel; Back row: Hiromoto Ida, Lindsay Clague and choreographer Slaa Doval. Photo courtesy of **Julie Castonguay**



Jorinda dancers. (Left to right) Front row: Hiromoto Ida, choreographer Slava Doval (seated) and Carly Brandel. Back row: Lindsay Clague and Mackenzie Hope. Photo courtesy of **Julie Castonguay**