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COC ANNOUNCES 2012/2013 SEASON OF ACCLAIMED FREE CONCERT SERIES



“There’s an intimate auditorium in this city that has few equals anywhere else. The artists are surrounded by clear glass walls that make the ever-moving feast of weather, cars, trucks, pedestrians and office buildings an integral part of every performance. There’s even more to like about this indoor-outdoor experience: the performances last a tidy 60 minutes, usually at lunchtime, and they are free.” (*Toronto Star*)

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company’s** popular **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre**, generously underwritten by **Peter A. Allen**, returns with 10 months of captivating programming that reflects the richness of Toronto’s cultural fabric and showcases established artists and rising stars from Canada and around the world. The inaugural concert of the 2012/2013 season on **September 18, 2012 at 12 p.m.** is the annual audience favourite introducing the young artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio** in a program of their favourite operatic arias.

The 2012/2013 season features over 400 artists in 77 concerts and dance performances, including world premieres of newly commissioned works by the **Canadian Art Song Project** and **Queen of Puddings Music Theatre**, and exciting new creations by **Ballet Creole** and **Nova Bhattacharya**. First-time Free Concert Series performances include appearances by: coloratura soprano **Anna Christy**; the perpetually inventive **Against the Grain Theatre**; acclaimed pianist **John Kameel Farah**; Italian saxophone sensation **Francesco Cafiso**; the dance stylings of **Jade’s Hiphop Academy**; and unique instrumentations such as the **Kaleidoscope Recorder Ensemble** and **Aruna Narayan**, the only woman in the world to professionally play the sarangi, an ancient North Indian bowed instrument considered one of the most difficult to master. Also featured for the first time in the Free Concert Series are the **Christina and Louis Quilico Awards**, in a special early evening presentation in May 2013.

From jazz to dance, classical to contemporary, and spanning the globe from China to South America, the Free Concert Series brings diverse musical experiences to 15,000 people annually from September to June in the intimate, light-filled Richard Bradshaw Auditorium at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**. Performances take place most Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon and some Wednesdays at noon or 5:30 p.m. Tickets are distributed at the door 30 minutes prior to the performance on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to availability. A full season calendar is available at coc.ca.

Artists of the highest calibre are presented in six series of diverse artistic programming running throughout the season:

VOCAL

Some of the biggest names in opera participate in 21 noon-hour recitals throughout the season, including artists featured on the 12/13 COC mainstage season, such as American soprano **Anna Christy**; German bass **Franz-Josef Selig**; and returning COC Ensemble Studio graduates sopranos **Ileana Montalbetti** and **Shannon Mercer**, mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó**, tenors **Michael Barrett**, **Adam Luther**, **David Pomeroy** and **Lawrence Wiliford**, baritones **Peter Barrett**, **Peter McGillivray** and **James Westman**, and bass **Robert Gleadow**.

In addition to the season opening concert on September 18, the rising young stars of the **COC Ensemble Studio** appear in a variety of programs throughout the year, including highlights from “waltz king” Johann Strauss II’s irresistibly enchanting and glamorous comedy *Die Fledermaus*, a selection of arias and songs by Mozart and his peer and secret rival, Antonio Salieri, and a sumptuous program of arias and art songs by Richard Strauss.

The series also features performances by **Against the Grain Theatre**, students from the **University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music and Opera Division**, artists of **Atelier lyrique de l’Opéra de Montréal**, and world premieres by **Queen of Puddings Music Theatre in Concert** and the **Canadian Art Song Project**, the latter under the direction of distinguished Ensemble Studio alumni **Lawrence Wiliford** and **Steven Philcox**.

CHAMBER

After an exceptionally popular inaugural season, the **Canadian Opera Company Orchestra** returns in a mini-festival of concerts featuring its members in various combinations, curated by COC music director **Johannes Debus**. Five special presentations include celebrations of the 200th anniversaries of the births of two renowned composers whose operas are featured on the COC mainstage this season: Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner.

Rounding out the series of 15 concerts are notable local and international artists and ensembles, including **Array Music**, **Kaleidoscope Recorder Ensemble**, ensembles of **The Glenn Gould School** and **University of Toronto Faculty of Music**, and artists of the **Toronto Symphony Orchestra**.

PIANO VIRTUOSO

The 13 concerts boast an astonishing wealth of talent from Canada and around the globe, offering opportunities to hear some of the series’ returning favourite rising stars, including **Alexander Seredenko**, **Mehdi Ghazi**, **Ryan MacEvoy McCullough**, and Ensemble Studio graduate **Christopher Mokrzewski**. This season also welcomes for the first time two of Canada’s most acclaimed contemporary specialists, **Christina Quilico** and **John Kameel Farah**, as well as talented young artists from around the world, including Chinese pianist **Sijing Ye**, Albanian-Canadian **Rudin Lengo**, and Italian **Mauro Bertoli**.

JAZZ

This series kicks off with a rare Toronto appearance by Canadian jazz great **Phil Dwyer**, performing a smooth autumn serenade with bassist **Don Thompson**. Featuring jazz legends as well as the stars of tomorrow, the 12 concerts in the jazz series offer soulful, swinging performances, with repertoire spanning the spectrum from jazz standards to cutting-edge original compositions.

This season presents powerhouse pianist **Robi Botos** with his sizzling trio, the **Dave Young Quartet** in a tribute to Oscar Peterson; Italian saxophone sensation **Francesco Cafiso** on his first Canadian tour; and several exciting ensembles; including **Alex Pangman and the Alleycats**; **Myriad Trio**; **Humber Groove Merchants** and **Latin Big Band**; and the talented trio of **Heather Bambrick**, **Julie Michels**, and **Diane Leah**.

DANCE

In collaboration with Dance Ontario and DanceWorks, this electrifying program of seven events brings some of the most dynamic members of Toronto’s dance community into an equally dynamic space to perform against the backdrop of the bustling urban streetscape. Programs range from the fierce physicality of **Susie Burpee** and **Linnea Swan**, to the Spanish passion of the **International Flamenco Festival**, a diverse program of classical and contemporary ballet by **Ballet Jörgen**, the popping and locking of **Jade’s Hiphop Academy**, and an exhilarating performance of a new work by **Ballet Creole**, celebrating the songs, dance and rhythms of West Africa.

WORLD MUSIC

Bringing sounds and rhythms from around the globe to the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, the nine world music programs range from the majesty and mystery of Imperial China with the **China Court Trio**, to the raw and spine-tingling vocal music of Georgia with the **Darbazi Georgian Choir**, and traditional rhythms of Korean drum and dance with the **Jeng Yi Korean Drumming Ensemble**. The series also features classical Indian ragas by **Classical India 3**; a unique fusion of dance music from China, Spain, and the Middle East by **Wen Zhao** and **Roman Smirnov**; and a one-of-a-kind performance by **Aruna Narayan**, the only professional female sarangi player in the world.

For a full calendar of events, please visit coc.ca.

The Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre is a focal point of the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, with its striking glass wall allowing for natural lighting and a view of University Avenue. Linking Ring 3 and Ring 4, the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre provides seating for 100 patrons. Additional seating and standing locations on the walkway and the upper floor are also available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The COC Ensemble Studio is Canada's premier training program for young opera professionals and provides advanced instruction, hands-on experience, and career development opportunities. The Ensemble Studio is supported by the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, RBC Foundation and other generous donors.

About the Canadian Opera Company

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the largest in North America. The COC enjoys a loyal audience support-base and one of the highest attendance and subscription rates in North America. Under its leadership team of General Director Alexander Neef and Music Director Johannes Debus, the COC is increasingly capturing the opera world's attention. The COC maintains its international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation by creating new productions within its diverse repertoire, collaborating with leading opera companies and festivals, and attracting the world's foremost Canadian and international artists. The COC performs in its own opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. Designed by Diamond and Schmitt Architects, the Four Seasons Centre opened in 2006, and is also the performance venue for The National Ballet of Canada. For more information on the COC, visit its award-winning website, coc.ca.

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