

For immediate release: August 16, 2012

COC PRESENTS OPERATIC FAVOURITE, *IL TROVATORE*, WITH A WORLD-CLASS CAST IN DEBUT PERFORMANCES

Toronto – The Canadian Opera Company’s 2012/2013 season opens with the quintessential Italian opera, Giuseppe Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*, featuring internationally renowned Mexican tenor **Ramón Vargas** and acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** in role debut performances. A staple of the operatic repertoire, *Il Trovatore* has mesmerized audiences since its premiere in 1853 with its fiery, melodramatic tale of the vengeful gypsy Azucena, her son Manrico’s romance with the noblewoman Leonora, and his rivalry with Conte di Luna. Last performed by the COC in 2005, *Il Trovatore* returns with director **Charles Roubaud**’s acclaimed production from Opéra de Marseille and celebrated conductor **Marco Guidarini** leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Verdi’s rich score. *Il Trovatore* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 10 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Sept. 29, Oct. 2, 5, 10, 13, 19, 21, 25, 28, and 31, 2012**.

It’s been said that all it takes for a successful performance of *Il Trovatore* are four of the greatest singers in the world to fulfil the demanding roles of Manrico, Conte di Luna, Azucena and Leonora. The COC has brought together a world-class cast to helm Verdi’s thrilling tale of love, hate and revenge. **Ramón Vargas**, one of the leading tenors of our time, who last appeared with the COC for the company’s 60th anniversary concert, returns to make his mainstage and role debut as the rebel troubadour Manrico. He’s joined in the role by Italian tenor **Riccardo Massi**, who’s quickly gathering international acclaim following debut performances at La Scala, Glyndebourne Festival, Staatsoper Berlin and Metropolitan Opera. **Massi** makes his COC debut when he sings Manrico on Oct. 28 and 31, 2012. Cast as Manrico’s rival, the Conte di Luna, is internationally acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun**. He, too, marks a role debut with this production, returning to the company after dazzling COC audiences and critics alike in 2012’s *Love from Afar* and 2011’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Russian mezzo-soprano **Elena Manistina** makes her COC debut as the gypsy Azucena, bringing her vocal power and dramatic command to a role she reprises following performances at Gran Teatre del Liceu and Opéra national de Bordeaux. South African soprano **Elza van den Heever** makes her COC debut as the lovelorn Leonora, following a season of triumphant performances with Hamburgische Staatsoper, Oper Frankfurt, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Opéra National de Bordeaux.

Ukrainian bass **Dmitry Beloselsky**, a soloist with the Bolshoi Theatre who is quickly making a name for himself with performances at the Metropolitan Opera and Salzburg Festival, appears with the COC for the first time as di Luna’s officer, Ferrando. COC Ensemble Studio mezzo-soprano **Rihab Chaieb**, recently heard in last spring’s *Gianni Schicchi* and the Ensemble Studio performance of *Semele*, is Leonora’s confidante, Inez; rising young Mexican-American tenor **Edgar Ernesto Ramírez** has his COC debut as Manrico’s aide, Ruiz; COC Ensemble Studio graduate bass **Robert Gleadow**, recently heard as the Speaker in 2011’s *The Magic Flute*, is the Old Gypsy; and new COC Ensemble Studio tenor **Owen McCausland** makes his company mainstage debut as the Messenger.

A frequent collaborator with Opéra de Marseille, director **Charles Roubaud** makes his COC debut with this production of *Il Trovatore*. Roubaud’s staging purposefully places the action in Verdi’s lifetime, fully capturing the world of 19th-century Italy. Sculptor **Jean-Noël Lavesvre** makes his COC debut designing *Il Trovatore*’s atmospheric set that is at once castle, gypsy camp and lovers haven, as does costume designer **Katia Duflot** with designs that capture the shifting world of elegance to hardship in this period production. Lighting designer **Marc Delamézière** also works with the COC for the first time.

Last with the COC in 2009 for Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, **Marco Guidarini** returns to conduct another rich Verdi composition. He leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus through an unsurpassed score of melody and energy that features some of Romantic opera's most rousing and recognizable music.

Il Trovatore (The Troubadour) is based on the play *El Trovador* (1836) by Antonio García Gutiérrez. Within the first three years following the opera's triumphant premiere at the Teatro Apollo in Rome in 1853, 229 productions of *Il Trovatore* were given worldwide. The opera and its music were featured in the Marx Brothers' film, *A Night at the Opera*, and director Luchino Visconti used a performance of *Il Trovatore* at La Fenice opera house for the opening sequence of his 1954 film *Senso*. It continues to be one of the most performed operas in the world.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Il Trovatore* are **\$12 – \$325** (includes applicable taxes), and go on sale as of **August 27, 2012**. Tickets are available online at **coc.ca**, by calling **416-363-8231**, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts Box Office**, located at 145 Queen St. W., Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Standing Room

Sixty **\$12** Standing Room tickets are available at 11 a.m. the morning of each performance, in person only at the Four Seasons Centre Box Office. Limit of two tickets per person. Subject to availability.

Young People

Special young people's tickets are priced from **\$23** to **\$110** (includes applicable taxes). These ticket prices apply to those who are 15 years of age or under, accompanied by and sitting next to an adult.

Opera Under 30

Patrons between the ages of 16 and 29 may purchase **\$22** Opera Under 30 tickets as of **Sept. 15, 2012** at 10 a.m., online at **coc.ca**, or in person at the Four Seasons Centre Box Office. Program patrons may opt to pay \$35, whereby their tickets are automatically upgraded to the best available the morning of the performance they are attending. Opera Under 30 is presented by TD Bank Group.

Student Group Tickets

Student group tickets are **\$22** per student and may be purchased by calling **416-306-2356**.

Rush Seats

Rush seats, starting at **\$22** and subject to availability, go on sale at 11 a.m. on the morning of each performance at the Four Seasons Centre Box Office. Limit of two tickets per person.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Presenting Sponsor of SURTITLES™: **Sun Life Financial**

Official Automotive Sponsor of the COC at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts:
Jaguar Land Rover Canada

Official Media Sponsors: **CTV and The Globe and Mail**

Digital Marketing Sponsor: **Delvinia**

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.

COC ANCILLARY EVENTS AND INFORMATION

BMO Financial Group Pre-Performance Opera Chats

Free to ticket holders, the COC offers 20-minute introductions to the opera and its themes in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts 45 minutes prior to every performance.

***Il Trovatore* Interactive Features on COC Radio**

Through COC Radio, visitors to coc.ca can find, in one place, a variety of audio and digital features available for streaming, all aimed at exploring an opera and its background as well as the artists appearing with the COC. Among the resources on *Il Trovatore*, visitors will find a podcast series sponsored by Decca: The Opera Label. Hosted by the COC's Cecily Carver, Gianmarco Segato and Gianna Wichelow, the podcasts explore the opera and its background, featuring discussions with opera enthusiasts and experts as well as interviews with members of the production's cast and creative team. COC Radio podcasts are also available for free download through iTunes.

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.

- 30 -

For more information or to request production photographs, please contact:

Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca