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COC GENERAL DIRECTOR ALEXANDER NEEF RENEWS CONTRACT THROUGH TO 2020/2021

Toronto – Canadian Opera Company General Director Alexander Neef has signed a new contract with the COC that extends his tenure as General Director through the 2020/2021 season.

“The relentless improvement in the artistry we are witnessing on the stage of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts is the best evidence of Alexander Neef’s unique ability to fit the right artists to the works that can best show their talents,” says **Philip C. Deck, President of the Canadian Opera Company Board of Directors**. “He has harnessed all the assets that the COC has built over time – our fantastic opera house, our terrific orchestra, our fabulous chorus, great production teams and an audience that supports our innovations – and woven them into a package that attracts the finest artists in the world. Our Canadian opera community demands the best and they have enthusiastically embraced the artistic vision that Alexander’s leadership has created.”

“From the range of operatic repertoire presented under his leadership to date to the incredible opera stars now being seen and heard with the COC, he has already left an indelible mark on the culture of this city,” adds Deck. “Alexander has truly made the COC home to the best, and I look forward to the continued growth in artistic excellence that his tenure will bring.”

“I’m very proud of what the COC has accomplished in my first four seasons as General Director. When I was given the opportunity to lead this company, sights were set very high on taking it to a new international standard following the achievements of opening the opera house and the premiere of Canada’s first *Ring Cycle*. With that aim, the COC has become a destination for artists of truly remarkable calibre, drawing the most exciting, emerging artists to our stage as well as opera’s well-known and celebrated stars,” says **Alexander Neef, General Director of the Canadian Opera Company**. “This kind of achievement has only been possible through the unwavering support of the COC’s Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, patrons and donors.”

“At the time of my appointment in 2008, my promise was to make the COC one of the best companies in the world. The last four years have been about increasing the company’s international reach and reputation, and that will continue to be a priority, but they’ve also been about taking the necessary time to form relationships and deep roots within our community,” adds Neef. “I am very excited about what the commitment of the next nine years will allow the COC to achieve and the contribution we’ll be able to make to the creation and development of the operatic art form in this country.”

Since commencing his appointment as General Director in October 2008, Neef has overseen the presentation of one world premiere (*The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*, 2009), three Canadian premieres (*Maria Stuarda*, 2010; *Love from Afar*, 2012; *A Florentine Tragedy*, 2012) and six COC premieres (*Rusalka*, 2009; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2009; *Nixon in China*, 2011; *Orfeo ed Euridice*, 2011; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 2011; *Semele*, 2012), as well as adding 10 new productions to the COC’s repertoire (*Fidelio*, 2009; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2009; *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*, 2009; *Otello*, 2010; *Idomeneo*, 2010; *Aida*, 2010; *The Magic Flute*, 2011; *Rigoletto*, 2011; *Love from Afar*, 2012; *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi*, 2012). He’s been instrumental in the COC debuts of numerous Canadian and international artists, and it was under his leadership that the company returned to the world-renowned Brooklyn Academy of Music for the first time since 1993 with its spectacular production of Robert Lepage’s *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* in March 2011.

Neef's many credits for the company also include increasing the public profile and professional development opportunities of the COC's Ensemble Studio program, a training program for young opera professionals. In 2010, an Ensemble Studio performance of a COC mainstage production was introduced as part of the annual season, with the program's young singers cast in the title roles. Although many Ensemble members perform smaller roles or are understudying roles in the COC's productions, this special performance allows them greater opportunity to showcase their talents as well as gain valuable practical experience by working under the direction of the same creative team as the mainstage cast and performing with the full COC Orchestra and Chorus. In 2011, the Ensemble Studio Competition was launched, inviting the public to be part of the singers' professional journeys by opening the final round of auditions to an audience for the first time.

Alexander Neef's new contract extends his tenure with the Canadian Opera Company through to the end of September 2021. The COC's upcoming 2012/2013 season will mark Neef's fifth as General Director.

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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