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THE GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER SUNG! *LA BOHÈME* RETURNS TO CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** launches its 2013/2014 season with a new production of one of the world’s greatest love stories, *La Bohème*. Puccini’s masterpiece of youthful flirtation, passionate love and heartbreaking tragedy returns to the COC for 12 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **October 3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29, 30, 2013**.

Canadian-born Tony Award-winning director **John Caird** (*Les Misérables*, *Nicholas Nickleby*), last with COC in 2007 to stage the monumental *Don Carlos*, premieres for the company this new production of one of opera’s favourite love stories. He’s joined by one of world’s best Puccini conductors, Italian **Carlo Rizzi**, who makes his company debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through a score of soaring and impassioned orchestrations filled with dramatic intensity and beautiful melodies.

La Bohème is set in the raucous streets of Paris’s Latin Quarter in the late 19th century and explores the loves and lives of a group of young Bohemians. The COC production has cast an equally young group of singers, many Canadian, who are making names for themselves internationally.

Already acclaimed for their renditions of this starring role, two recent graduates of the Metropolitan Opera’s prestigious Lindemann Young Artist Development Program make their COC debuts as the fragile seamstress Mimì: Italian soprano **Grazia Doronzio** and Canadian soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30). **Doronzio**, called “splendid” by the *New York Times* and a “fascinating discovery” by the *Chicago Tribune*, has made recent notable engagements at Oper Frankfurt, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Angers Nantes Opéra, Seattle Opera and the Metropolitan Opera. **El-Khoury** has earned praised from *Opera News*, *Washington Post* and *The Financial Times*, among other publications, for performances across North America and Europe, and recently made her recording debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at London’s Barbican Hall.

El-Khoury is double-cast in *La Bohème*. In addition to Mimì, she sings the role of the flirtatious singer Musetta for eight of the 12 performances of the COC’s production. Sharing the role of Musetta is COC Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Simone Osborne** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30). A favourite with audiences and critics, **Osborne** returns to the COC after recent engagements with Opera Hamilton, Vancouver Opera and Carnegie Hall, appearing in the world premiere of the classical music show *Viva Verdi!* in Zurich and in the Saito Kinen Festival with renowned maestro Seiji Ozawa, as well as a debut performance with the LA Philharmonic.

The role of the poet Rodolfo, Mimì’s lover, is sung by three rising young tenors: American **Dimitri Pittas** (Oct 3, 6, 9, 12), American **Michael Fabiano** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30) and Italian-American **Eric Margiore** (Oct. 18, 22, 25, 29). **Pittas** has been called a “rising young singer of unaffected charm” by the *New York Observer* and compared in look and sound to a young Plácido Domingo. He made his COC debut in 2011 as the Duke in *Rigoletto* and is scheduled to appear with the company this winter in a role debut performance as Riccardo starring opposite Canada’s great diva soprano Adrienne Pieczonka in *Un ballo in maschera*. **Fabiano** makes his COC debut as Rodolfo. **Fabiano** has appeared with the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, English National Opera, La Scala and Dresden Semperoper, and received glowing praise from the *New York Times* for “his soaring, thrilling singing”, most recently for a concert at New York’s Avery Fisher Hall and a

“superlative performance [that] elicited unbridled responses from the audience.” **Margiore** recently made his European debut with Deutsche Oper am Rhein and is quickly establishing himself as an international contender in the principal Italian *bel canto* and romantic tenor repertoire. He makes his COC debut as Rodolfo, a role for which Margiore’s been called “an ideal fit” (*Opera News*).

In the role of the painter Marcello, Musetta’s lover, are two standout Canadian baritones: **Joshua Hopkins** and, in a company debut, **Phillip Addis** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30). Last with the COC in 2005 in *Carmen*, **Hopkins** has been hailed as “an outstanding young baritone with a virile, vigorous yet velvety sound and an immediately evident dramatic authority” (*Globe and Mail*) and was chosen by *Opera News* in 2012 as one of 25 artists poised to break out and become a major force in the coming decade. A rising star on the international stage, **Addis** has performed in opera, concerts and recitals throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Japan. He’s been called “a star in the making” (*MusicOMH*) and praised for his creamy, bright, smooth voice as much as for his spell-binding, daring, yet sensitive interpretations.

In addition to Marcello, **Addis** takes on the role of the musician Schaunard for eight of *La Bohème*’s 12 performances. He shares the role with COC Ensemble baritone **Cameron McPhail** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30), whose “impressive voice” (*barczablog*) had its company mainstage debut last season in the acclaimed production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

The role of the philosopher Colline is shared by two celebrated bass-baritones: American **Christian Van Horn** and Canadian **Tom Corbeil** (Oct. 16, 19, 27, 30). Quickly becoming a regular in the world’s most prestigious opera houses with a voice described as “a true balm of vocal happiness” (*ResMusica*), **Van Horn** returns to the COC after his 2012 debut in *Tosca*. **Corbeil** is praised throughout North America for his vocal presence and stage craft. Last with the COC in 2010’s *Death in Venice*, he returns after spending a recent season singing Lurch with the first national tour of Broadway’s *The Addams Family Musical*.

Rounding out the cast is acclaimed American bass-baritone **Thomas Hammons** (an impressive Henry Kissinger in the COC’s recent *Nixon in China*) as the Bohemians’ landlord Benoît and as Musetta’s wealthy gentleman suitor Alcindoro. COC Ensemble tenor **Owen McCausland** is the toy vendor Parpignol, Ensemble Studio baritone **Clarence Frazer** makes his mainstage debut as the Customs House Sergeant, and Ensemble Studio bass-baritone **Gordon Bintner** makes his mainstage debut as a Customs Officer. He shares the role with Ensemble Studio graduate baritone **Doug MacNaughton** (Oct. 12, 16).

In creating this new production of *La Bohème*, Olivier Award-winning and Tony Award-nominated set and costume designer **David Farley** has taken inspiration from France’s *Belle Époque* to capture the romance and artistic brilliance at the heart of this opera. The set design, in particular, is conceived as a collage of canvases by the painter Marcello that frame the action within the opera’s changing Parisian locales. **Michael Clark** creates the romantic lighting design.

La Bohème is based on the 1851 Henri Murger novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, a collection of stories about bohemian life in Paris. While the opera was not a great success at the time of its 1896 premiere, it has since become Puccini’s best-known work and one of the most loved and performed operas in the world. The tale of doomed romance in Paris has inspired many books, films and theatrical productions. The most notable adaptation in recent history is the rock musical *RENT*.

This new production of *La Bohème* is a COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera. The opera was last performed by the COC in 2009, and is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *La Bohème* are \$12 – \$365 (includes applicable taxes). 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.

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 \$26 to \$365 (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 **September 21** 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 seats are automatically upgraded to the best available on 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 \$25 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

The COC's new production of *La Bohème* has been generously underwritten by **Jerry and Geraldine Heffernan**

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The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb and The Slight Family Foundation, 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 also supported by the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, RBC Foundation and other generous donors.

COC ANCILLARY EVENTS AND INFORMATION

Opera Connect: *La Bohème* – October 2, 2013

The **Canadian Opera Company** hosts an instalment of its **Opera Connect** program on **October 2, 2013** at the Waterfall Stage at First Canadian Place (100 King St. W., Toronto). Taking place at 12:15 p.m. and 1:15 p.m., this **FREE**, lunch-time event, features CBC Radio's **Brent Bambury** interviewing a roster of COC artists as they explore Puccini's beloved romantic masterpiece *La Bohème* as well as a performance of the opera's most popular arias and duets. For more details, visit coc.ca/OperaConnect.

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.

La Bohème 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 *La Bohème*, visitors will find episodes of *The Big COC Podcast*, hosted by the COC's Gianmarco Segato, which feature 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 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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For more information or to request production photographs, please contact:
Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca