

For immediate release: June 26, 2012

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY CLOSES 2011/2012 SEASON WITH 91% ATTENDANCE

Toronto, Ontario – The **Canadian Opera Company** has closed another successful opera season with 2011/2012 recording an average attendance of **91%**. A total of **125,238** patrons attended the **67** performances of the company's seven mainstage productions in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts: Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Saariaho's *Love from Afar*, Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, the double bill of Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy* and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, and Handel's *Semele*.

This season, the COC recorded **77,509 subscription tickets** and **42,216 single tickets** – the fourth highest number of single tickets sold in the COC's 62-year history – generating a **total ticket revenue of \$11.8 million**. The 11/12 season saw **9,777** of these tickets sold to people under the age of 30.

“Our objective as an arts organization is to expose people to works that they haven't experienced before. Looking back on the past season, we've explored new operatic territory, welcomed new artists, nurtured the careers of Canadian artists, and pushed the artistic boundaries of the art form to show the infinite possibilities, liveliness and relevance of opera in our time,” says **Alexander Neef, General Director of the Canadian Opera Company**. “I couldn't have wished for a more inspiring season, and none of it would have been possible without the commitment and dedication to the art form and the company that is shown by the COC's board of directors, staff and volunteers, patrons, subscribers and generous donors.”

The COC received **14 Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations** (presented by the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts) for its artists and productions this season, taking seven of the 10 nominations in the opera division and another seven in the general theatre production division. On June 25, 2012, the COC and its artists were recognized with three Dora Mavor Moore Awards: in the opera division, *Iphigenia in Tauris* won outstanding production and mezzo-soprano Susan Graham won outstanding performance for *Iphigenia in Tauris*; and in the general theatre production division, Wilson Chin won outstanding set design for *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi*.

Success was also seen beyond the mainstage for the 11/12 season, where the COC presented a variety of activities and events aimed at opera enthusiasts, and engaged local patrons and visitors in new and exciting entertainment opportunities.

The COC's **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre** welcomed **almost 15,000** people of all ages to its **76** free events. This season, the Free Concert Series, with programming that spans classical, jazz, world music and contemporary dance, featured **four world premieres**, highlighted **438** artists – **388 of them Canadian** – and presented **14** works by Canadian classical composers, **42** works by living composers and **26** works by female composers. The full 2012/2013 performance schedule will be available later this summer at www.coc.ca.

The **Ensemble Studio Competition** was launched this season, opening the final round of auditions for the COC's training program for young opera professionals to public attendance for the first time. Ten finalists performed before a sold-out audience in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre on November 28, 2011, with four singers ultimately selected to join the illustrious Ensemble Studio program in the 12/13 season.

The COC also launched the **Ensemble Circle**, an exciting new membership initiative for young patrons. With enrolment capped at 100 patrons, the Ensemble Circle offers its members a personalized introduction to the world of opera and the COC, creating a stronger connection between the company and its audience. In addition to receiving tickets to three operas, Ensemble Circle patrons attend a special backstage tour of the Four Seasons Centre, attend a private rehearsal of

a COC production, receive a ticket to the company's premier annual fundraiser, *Operanation* presented by TD Bank Group, and are invited to a host of special events offered throughout the year.

In the 11/12 season, the **Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour** introduced opera to **18,772** children from kindergarten to Grade 6 across Ontario with performances of Dean Burry's *Isis and the Seven Scorpions* and *Hansel and Gretel*, a specially adapted version of Engelbert Humperdinck's classic fairytale opera. In the GTA, the COC's popular **After School Opera Program** presented by Scotiabank provided close to **400** children between the ages of seven to 12 with creative and interactive after-school activities emphasizing the core elements that make up opera. Plans for the 12/13 season will see the program expand its numbers to reach anywhere from 475 to 490 children annually.

An illustrious list of COC artists took part in the company's 11/12 season public adult education and outreach programs, **Opera 101** and **Opera Exchange**, offering those in attendance both informal and entertaining perspectives on a production, as well as in-depth exploration. Included among the artists who took part were composer Kaija Saariaho, directors Christopher Alden, Paul Curran and Catherine Malfitano, conductor Sir Andrew Davis, designer Michael Levine and singers Jane Archibald, Russell Braun, Mark Delavan, Susan Graham, David Lomelí, Julie Makerov, Simone Osborne, John Relyea, Russell Thomas, Krisztina Szabó and Erin Wall.

In total, **47,652** adults, youths and families were introduced to opera and engaged with the COC this past season, through the company's **20** education and outreach programs for children, young adults, school groups and adults, which include the Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour, After School Opera Program, March Break Opera, Summer Opera Camp presented by Scotiabank, Summer Youth Intensive, Youth Opera Lab, Living Opera, Opera Creation Program, Opera 101, Opera Exchange, Opera Talks, BMO Financial Group Pre-Performance Opera Chats, BMO Financial Group Student Dress Rehearsals, custom workshops, opera appreciation courses and tours, and building tours.

The COC's upcoming 12/13 season will mark Alexander Neef's fifth as general director and is a celebration of opera's greatest masterpieces, featuring the return of works both long absent and familiar to the COC stage: Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* in a new COC production, Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Richard Strauss's *Salome* and Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Joining the COC for these productions are the opera world's leading artists, no less than 33 of whom will be making their mainstage debuts, including singers **Anna Christy**, **Stephen Costello**, **Melanie Diener**, **Elza van den Heever**, **Isabel Leonard**, **Brian Mulligan**, **Franz-Josef Selig**, **Erika Sunnegårdh** and **Ramón Vargas**; conductor **Jiří Bělohlávek**; director **Peter Sellars**; and visual artists **Jean-Noël Lavesvre** and **Bill Viola**. Returning artists include singers **Isabel Bayrakdarian**, **Russell Braun**, **Judith Forst**, **Alan Held**, **Ben Heppner**, **Richard Margison**, **Adrienne Pieczonka**, **Michael Schade** and **Tamara Wilson**; conductor **Stephen Lord**; directors **Christopher Alden**, **David Alden**, **Robert Carsen** and **Atom Egoyan**; and designer **Michael Levine**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BMO Financial Group Pre-Performance Opera Chats; BMO Financial Group Student Dress Rehearsals;
Production Sponsor of *Love from Afar* and *Tristan und Isolde*: **BMO Financial Group**

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

Major Supporter, Ensemble Studio; Production Co-sponsor of *Semele*: **RBC**

Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour: **Xstrata**

Presenting Sponsor of Opera Under 30 and *Operation 8: A Muse Ball*: **TD Bank Group**

Presenting Sponsor of After School Opera Program and Summer Opera Camp: **Scotiabank**

The COC's new production of *Rigoletto* was generously underwritten in part by **Tim and Frances Price, Judy and Wilmot Matthews, and Gail and Bob Farquharson**

The COC's production of *Tosca* was originally made possible through a generous gift from **Delia M. Moog**

The COC's new double bill production of *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi* was generously underwritten in part by **Riki Turofsky and Charles Petersen**

Production Co-sponsors of *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*: **CIBC and CIBC Mellon**

The COC's Ensemble Studio performance of *Semele* was generously underwritten in part by **Wendy J. Thompson and the late Samuel A. Rea**

The COC's new production of *Die Fledermaus* has been generously underwritten by the **Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation**

The COC's production of *Tristan und Isolde* has been generously underwritten by **Lisa Balfour Bowen and Walter M. Bowen, Philip Deck and Kimberley Bozak, Donald O'Born, Tim and Frances Price, Colleen Sexsmith and Sandra L. Simpson**

The COC's production of *Salome* has been generously underwritten in part by **Mark and Gail Appel**

The COC's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites* has been generously underwritten in part by **Tim and Frances Price**
2011/2012 Spring Season Supported by the **Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund**

Broadcast Partner: **CBC Radio 2**

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.

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, 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca
Maria Lioutaia, Publicist, tel: 416-306-2363, e-mail: marial@coc.ca