

For immediate release: January 2, 2013

RIISING OPERA STARS OF COC'S ENSEMBLE STUDIO STEP INTO SPOTLIGHT IN SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OF *LA CLEMENZA DI TITO*

Toronto – The young artists of the **Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio** take to the mainstage for their own performance of Mozart's final opera, *La clemenza di Tito*, on **Wednesday, February 6, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.** at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**. This special performance of a production described as "modern music theater you mustn't miss" (*Chicago Tribune*) is a rare showcase of these young singers' talent and an important step in their careers as they develop into the next generation of Canadian opera stars. All tickets to the February 6 performance are affordably priced at only **\$25 or \$55**. *La clemenza di Tito* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

The Ensemble Studio artists perform under the direction of the same artistic team as the mainstage cast, including visionary American director **Christopher Alden** and young Israeli conductor **Daniel Cohen** leading the full COC Orchestra and Chorus. Members of the Ensemble Studio frequently appear in smaller roles or understudy leading roles in COC mainstage productions. This special performance of *La clemenza di Tito* is an exciting opportunity for audiences to see these young Canadian artists featured in principal roles.

Written in the last year of Mozart's life and considered to be one of his masterpieces, *La clemenza di Tito* depicts the attempted assassination of Roman Emperor Tito, and his subsequent choice to forgive rather than punish the two conspirators, Vitellia and Sesto. Composed in honour of the 1791 coronation of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia, Mozart's sublimely beautiful score showcases his sophisticated understanding of human nature. *La clemenza di Tito* delivers the kind of emotional immediacy that only great art possesses, and depicts its complex characters with both realism and powerful drama.

Sharing the title role of the benevolent, forgiving Tito are two young tenors: **Christopher Enns** and **Owen McCausland**. Manitoba-born Enns, a third-year member of the Ensemble, has appeared in several mainstage productions with the COC, including *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2012) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2011), and was praised for his "large, expressive voice" (*NOW*) in the 2010 Ensemble Studio performance of *The Magic Flute*. New Brunswick's McCausland, a Dalhousie University graduate and first-year member of the Ensemble, was recently seen as the Messenger in the COC's fall 2012 production of *Il Trovatore* and has been praised for his "impressively ringing tone" (*La Scena Musicale*).

This fall, soprano **Ambur Braid** was a hit as the "sexy, sparky, sensational" (*Toronto Star*) Adele in the COC's production of *Die Fledermaus*. She brings her three years of Ensemble experience to her last mainstage performance as a member of the Ensemble Studio, the challenging role of the scheming Vitellia. Mezzo-soprano **Rihab Chaieb**, praised for her performance as the "deliciously evil Ino" (*Opera*) in the 2011 Ensemble Studio performance of *Semele* and her ability to "[command] the stage with authority" (*La Scena Musicale*), returns to the mainstage as Vitellia's lovesick co-conspirator, Sesto.

In her COC mainstage debut, soprano **Sasha Djihanian**, first-year Ensemble Studio member and first-place winner of the 2011 Ensemble Studio Competition, portrays Tito's loyal friend Annio. Fellow Ensemble newcomer soprano **Claire de Sévigné**, last seen as Ida in *Die Fledermaus*, sings the role of Servilia, Annio's lover. Rounding out the cast as captain of the guard Publio is bass-baritone **Neil Craighead**, who is in his final season with the Ensemble Studio and was previously seen in the COC's productions of *Tosca* (2012), *Rigoletto* (2011) and *Idomeneo* (2010).

In addition to the special Ensemble Studio cast production of *La clemenza di Tito* on February 6, there are eight performances of the *La clemenza di Tito* mainstage production running from **February 3 – 22, 2013** at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. This is a production from Chicago Opera Theater, with costume design by **Terese Wadden**, set design by **Andrew Cavanaugh Holland** and lighting design by **Gary Marder**.

About the Ensemble Studio

The members of the Ensemble Studio are the COC's resident artists and are important ambassadors for the company. Since its inception in 1980, over 150 young professional Canadian singers, opera coaches, stage directors and conductors have acquired their first major professional operatic experience through the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio. Former members include Ben Heppner, Isabel Bayrakdarian, John Fanning, Wendy Nielsen, David Pomeroy, Joseph Kaiser, Allyson McHardy and Krisztina Szabó.

Members of the Ensemble Studio receive a blend of advanced study and practical experience through an individually tailored, multi-year program, involving understudying and performing mainstage roles, intensive vocal coaching, language and acting studies, and career skills development, as well as participation in masterclasses with internationally renowned opera professionals.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for the Ensemble Studio performance of *La clemenza di Tito* are \$25 or \$55 (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., 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.

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 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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