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COC MUSIC DIRECTOR JOHANNES DEBUS RENEWS CONTRACT THROUGH TO 2016/2017

Toronto – Canadian Opera Company General Director Alexander Neef is pleased to announce that Music Director Johannes Debus has signed a new contract with the COC that extends his tenure as Music Director through the 2016/2017 season. Debus joined the COC at the start of the 2009/2010 season with a contract that would have him with the company through 2012/2013.

“I am extremely pleased that Johannes has agreed to an extension of his contract as Music Director. He brings such energy, talent and leadership to our company,” says COC General Director Alexander Neef. “His musicianship is faultless. There is no limit to the possibilities he can help us explore and the artistic heights we can reach within the environment that he has created with the orchestra and chorus. We are lucky to have him and even luckier that he has decided to stay on for several more years.”

“I was incredibly honoured to be offered the position of Music Director in 2009 and I’m delighted that the extension of my contract will allow me to stay on with the COC for another four seasons,” says Music Director Johannes Debus. “This is a company bursting at the seams with people committed to the operatic art form and always striving to achieve the very best that is possible to produce.”

“The COC Orchestra is for me a unique ensemble. They are very generous artists of exceptional skill who allow conductors to be better than we might think we are. These extraordinary players combine incredible musicianship with an enormous willingness to express and explore the music beyond what we all know and are accustomed to. For them, as it is for me, it is about serving the art of the music,” says Debus. On the subject of the COC Chorus, he adds, “From the first moment that I was introduced to the COC Chorus in the fall of 2008 when I conducted *War and Peace*, I was very impressed. This group of singers is filled with amazing voices and great musicianship and artistry. They bring an incredible enthusiasm and commitment to their craft.”

As Music Director, Debus is the leader of the COC Orchestra, responsible for conducting several operas per season, as well as overseeing the orchestra; including participating in auditions and filling open orchestra positions. Debus also works closely with the COC Chorus and the Ensemble Studio, and, as an integral member of the artistic administrative team, he shares responsibility for repertoire and casting decisions.

Last season, Debus took on the role of curating a mini-festival of four concerts featuring members of the COC Orchestra, in various combinations, offered as part of the COC’s Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Last season’s mini-festival proved very popular. The COC Orchestra returns for a second season to the Free Concerts Series, and gives their first of five concerts on October 25, 2012.

Debus made his debut with the COC in the fall of 2008 conducting the company’s critically-acclaimed production of *War and Peace*, and began his appointment as the COC’s Music Director in the 2009/2010 season. Since then, he has conducted the COC’s Diamond Anniversary Celebration in 2009 and the

company's productions of *The Flying Dutchman*, *Aida*, *The Magic Flute*, *Rigoletto*, *Love from Afar* and *The Tales of Hoffmann*, as well as *The Nightingale at Other Short Fables* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Born in 1974 in Speyer, Germany, Debus has established a reputation for himself in many of the great opera houses and festivals of Europe. As the former resident conductor for the Frankfurt Opera, where he also worked as pianist, coach and assistant conductor for over 10 years, Debus gained an impressive conducting repertoire ranging from Mozart to Berg, and Rossini to Strauss, as well as many 20th- and 21st- century works. In August 2012 he made his Cleveland Orchestra debut with *A Night at the Opera* at the Blossom Festival. Debus made his Tanglewood Festival debut in 2010 conducting *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and subsequently appeared at Symphony Hall, again with the BSO. He recently conducted *Elektra* and *The Rake's Progress* at Staatsoper unter den Linden in Berlin. Debus has also appeared at the Spoleto Festival, Bayerische Staatsoper, Festival d'opéra de Québec and the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera.

Johannes Debus's new contract extends his tenure with the Canadian Opera Company through to the end of June 30, 2017. The COC's 2012/2013 season marks Debus's fourth as Music 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 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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