

For immediate release: December 13, 2012

COC PRESENTS MOZART'S FINAL OPERA *LA CLEMENZA DI TITO* IN A PRODUCTION OF "MODERN MUSIC THEATRE YOU MUSTN'T MISS"

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** presents a production described as “modern music theatre you mustn’t miss” (*Chicago Tribune*) this winter season when it performs Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s last opera, *La clemenza di Tito*, directed by **Christopher Alden**. Conducting some of opera’s most sublime music is the dynamic young maestro **Daniel Cohen** in his company debut, leading an acclaimed ensemble cast that features internationally renowned Canadian tenor **Michael Schade** and Metropolitan Opera regular American mezzo-soprano **Isabel Leonard**. *La clemenza di Tito* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and was last performed by the COC in 1991. It runs for nine performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **February 3, 6*, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 19 and 22, 2013**.

American director **Christopher Alden** returns to the COC on the heels of the successful premiere of his production of *Die Fledermaus* for the opera company this past fall. His production of *La clemenza di Tito* premiered in 2009 at Chicago Opera Theater, where it was received as “an excellent introduction for the operatic novice and a gorgeously executed classic for the connoisseur” (*SteadStyleChicago.com*), “smart, good-looking, and in Alden’s staging, often humorous” (*Chicago Reader*) and “boldly liberated from the stilted conventions of *opera seria*” (*Chicago Tribune*).

Written in 1791 to celebrate the coronation of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia, *La clemenza di Tito*’s story of the attempted assassination of the Emperor Tito and his forgiveness of those who betrayed him was meant to reflect a quality that the populace might have hoped for in their new king. Mozart spent his entire life pleasing and placating the kings, emperors, and archbishops who commissioned his operas, constantly striving to impress them. In bringing *La clemenza di Tito* to the stage, **Alden** approaches the work as the composer’s personal statement on his own dealings with powerful men. **Alden**’s staging explores the real human emotions at the opera’s core and focuses on the relationship between the characters, especially how others relate to Tito, offering a psychologically penetrating depiction of people negotiating the dangerous corridors of power.

La clemenza di Tito is considered one of the composer’s late masterpieces, and an undeniable example of Mozart’s musical genius. The delicate, sublime beauty of the orchestral writing delivers the kind of emotional immediacy that only great art possesses, and the complex characters are depicted with both realism and powerful drama.

In the role of Tito is **Michael Schade**, returning to the COC, following an acclaimed role debut performance as Eisenstein in last fall’s *Die Fledermaus*. One of the leading Mozart tenors on the stage today, **Schade**’s portrayal of Tito has won him acclaim from Salzburg to Washington, praised for his “apparently effortless command of Mozartian style” (*The Telegraph*), and “mesmerizing the audience” (*Opera Britannia*) with an “unflagging intensity and musical intelligence” (*Washington Post*). Making her COC debut as Sesto, Tito’s closest friend, is highly acclaimed American mezzo-soprano **Isabel Leonard**. A regular at the Metropolitan Opera and described as “fresh, effervescent, and lovely” (*New York Times*) and “a stage animal with charisma written all over her” (*Financial Times*), Leonard’s performance with the COC marks her role debut as Sesto. American soprano **Keri Alkema**, last with the COC in 2012’s *The Tales of Hoffmann*, returns to treat audiences to her “appealing brew of dark and creamy colors” (*New York Times*) in a role debut as the vengeful Vitellia, the instigator of the attempted assassination of Tito.

Ensemble Studio soprano **Mireille Asselin**, who dazzled audiences as the maid Adele in the COC's *Die Fledermaus* and has been praised for her "soft-grain soprano and lovely stage presence" (*Opera*), returns to the mainstage as Servilia, Sesto's sister. Ensemble Studio alumna **Wallis Giunta**, "a gifted mezzo-soprano" (*New York Times*) returns to the COC from the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann young artist development program to sing Annio, Servilia's love interest. Ensemble Studio graduate bass **Robert Gleadow** sings the role of the guard Publio, in addition to his appearance in the COC's *Tristan und Isolde* this winter.

Israeli conductor **Daniel Cohen** makes his COC debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus in this production. At the age of 28, **Cohen** is one of today's most talented young conductors and a rising star in both the concert and operatic arenas. A protégé of Daniel Barenboim, he recently assisted the renowned conductor at the 2012 West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in the preparation of a Beethoven symphonies cycle as well as major works by Schoenberg and Boulez.

Since his debut at the age of 19, **Cohen** has conducted the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester and Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as the Kammerphilharmonie Graz, the European Union Chamber Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. At Israeli Opera, he has conducted Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and Verdi's *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto*. He recently conducted at the Festival della Valle d'Itria and opened the operatic season of the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari with a new production of Massenet's *Don Quichotte*. He is currently chief conductor of the Jersey Chamber Orchestra, music director of the Eden Sinfonia in London, and artistic director of the Gropius Ensemble. He is also the permanent guest conductor of the Israel Chamber Orchestra, a position he has held since 2010.

In bringing Mozart's masterpiece to the stage, director **Christopher Alden** visually conceives a work that blends Roman classicism with a modernist edge. The costumes designed by **Terese Wadden**, who worked with the COC in 2012's double-bill of *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi*, are Roman garb but imagined as if the style had evolved through different fashion eras. The set, designed by **Andrew Cavanaugh Holland**, also grows out of the Roman sensibility and evokes a civic space made to impress, as well as to perform a public function. Inspiration was found in the architecture of the Lincoln and Kennedy centres, and the design incorporates cool, marble-like walls on which Tito's subjects write their dissent. The lighting is designed by **Gary Marder**.

The COC's *La clemenza di Tito* is a production from Chicago Opera Theater.

***ENSEMBLE STUDIO PERFORMANCE OF LA CLEMENZA DI TITO ON FEBRUARY 6, 2013**

Experience the exciting young singers of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio performing the lead roles in their own performance of *La clemenza di Tito* on **February 6, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.** Under the direction of the same creative team as the mainstage cast, the Ensemble Studio members appear with the full COC Orchestra and Chorus. More details will be available in a separate press release.

Tickets for the February 6 performance are accessibly priced at **\$25** or **\$55**. See ticket purchasing details below.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *La clemenza di Tito* are **\$12 – \$325** (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.

Young People

Special young people's tickets are priced from **\$23** to **\$110** (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 **January 19, 2013** 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 tickets are automatically upgraded to the best available 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 **\$22** 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

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

Official Media Sponsors: **CTV and The Globe and Mail**

Digital Marketing Sponsor: **Delvinia**

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 Talks – La clemenza di Tito

On **January 15, 2013** at **7 p.m.**, the 2012/2013 season of **Opera Talks** continues at Toronto's **North York Central Library** (5120 Yonge St.) with an engaging chat on the Canadian Opera Company's production of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*. Toronto lawyer and classical musical enthusiast **Ian Kyer** will lead the talk, focusing on the relationship between Mozart and his contemporary, Antonio Salieri. Kyer parses the facts and fictions of the musical rivalry – including the long-held suspicion that an envious Salieri poisoned the Salzburg musical genius – and delivers guided listening, images and insider information about this production. Opera Talks, a **FREE** and interactive series of dynamic chats on the art of opera, is presented by the COC and North York Central Library. For more information and to register, please call the Languages, Literature and Fine Arts department at North York Central Library at **416-395-5639**.

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 clemenza di Tito 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 clemenza di Tito*, visitors will find a podcast series sponsored by Decca: The Opera Label. Hosted by the COC's Gianmarco Segato, the podcasts explore the opera and its background, featuring 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.

- 30 -

For more information or to request production photographs, please contact:
Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca