

For immediate release: March 5, 2013

DONIZETTI'S *BEL CANTO* MASTERPIECE, *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*, RETURNS TO THE COC WITH AN ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION CREATED FOR AND STARRING SOPRANO ANNA CHRISTY

Toronto – Opening the Canadian Opera Company's 2012/2013 spring season is Gaetano Donizetti's *bel canto* masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, starring American soprano **Anna Christy** in a production created especially for her by director **David Alden** at English National Opera. American conductor **Stephen Lord**, named one of the "25 Most Powerful Names in U.S. Opera" by *Opera News*, leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Donizetti's cascading romantic melodies. Last presented by the COC in 2004, *Lucia di Lammermoor* returns for nine performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **April 17, 20, 26, 30, May 9, 12, 15, 18 and 24, 2013**, and is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

One of the world's most influential and prolific directors of opera, American **David Alden** has been called "a leading light ... a force in international opera today," by *The Financial Times*. He returns to the COC after more than 30 years, having directed the company's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in 1980. This production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* premiered at ENO in 2008 and was remounted in 2010. In its review of the 2010 production, *The Daily Telegraph* noted, "David Alden's production makes *Lucia di Lammermoor* seem like a novel that Emily Brontë or the young Charles Dickens should have written but didn't; it's set in some haunted, dream-like early Victorian limbo ... where walls are crumbling, fortunes have decayed, cupboards are full of dusty legal papers and suppressed desires are matched by explosive hatreds."

The Gothic world of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, conceived by **Alden** and his creative team, transports audiences to the ominous, brooding Scotland of Sir Walter Scott's popular novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, on which the opera is based. An immediate success with critics and audiences at the time of its 1835 premiere in Naples, *Lucia di Lammermoor* remains one of the most popular operas in the repertoire. Young Lucia, who is treated as little more than chattel within a brutal, power-driven society, is deceived by her brother, and forced to betray the man she loves and marry another. When confronted by her discarded lover, the expression of Lucia's broken heart, and now-fractured mind, results in one of the most famous and stunning mad scenes in all of opera. The quintessential *bel canto* opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor* is a showpiece for extraordinary singing.

Anna Christy's shattering performance in the title role was met with critical and popular acclaim when this production premiered in 2008. *The Daily Telegraph* described her Lucia as "doll-like" and "all fey intensity, unaware of her sexual allure and pitched from the start at the edge of sanity. Her dazzling sketched coloratura in the mad scene is electrifying." *The Guardian* said her Lucia "knocks sparks off Donizetti's vocal lines," a sentiment shared by *The London Times* with the comment that "she produced a mesmerising performance – and a top F that shook the West End." **Christy** has delighted audiences around the world with her extraordinary blend of sparkling voice, powerful stage presence and innate musicality. She is a frequent performer at such major opera houses as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and English National Opera, and has appeared at Opéra national de Paris, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Teatro alla Scala. **Anna Christy** makes her COC debut as Lucia,

American tenor **Stephen Costello** makes his COC debut as Lucia's lover, Edgardo. **Costello**, called "a first-class talent" by *Opera News*, has established himself as one of the current generation's most impressive artists. In recent years, this young tenor has accumulated a notable roster of debut performances at a number of the

world's most important opera houses and music festivals, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Salzburg Festival, and the Vienna State Opera.

Also making his COC debut, as Lucia's vengeful brother Enrico, is American baritone **Brian Mulligan**. Praised by *Opera News* for his "velvety, evenly and effortlessly produced baritone and nuance-rich phrasing," **Mulligan** performs regularly with the leading opera houses and orchestras of the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Washington National Opera. Abroad, he has been heard in London, Vienna, Dublin, Auckland and at the Saito Kinen Festival in Japan.

American tenor **Nathaniel Peake**, a 2010 Metropolitan Opera National Council Winner who also performs in the COC's 2013 spring production of *Salome*, makes his COC debut as Arturo, Lucia's intended groom. American **Oren Gradus**, a bass quickly gaining recognition in North America and in Europe, makes his COC debut as Raimondo, Lucia's family chaplain.

COC Ensemble Studio soprano **Sasha Djihanian**, who recently made her company mainstage debut as Annio in the Ensemble Studio performance of *La clemenza di Tito*, is Alisa, Lucia's confidante. COC Ensemble Studio baritone **Cameron McPhail** makes his COC mainstage debut as Normanno, Enrico's captain.

Conductor **Stephen Lord** last appeared with the COC leading the 1998 production of *Norma*. Currently the music director for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and recently named music director of opera studies at the New England Conservatory, **Lord** returns to conduct the COC Orchestra and Chorus.

In working with **David Alden** to bring Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* to the stage, set designer **Charles Edwards** and costume designer **Brigitte Reiffenstuel** have created a world in keeping with the Scotland of Scott's novel. **Edwards**, who makes his COC debut with this production, and **Reiffenstuel**, who designed the costumes for the COC's 2012 production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, are joined by lighting designer **Adam Silverman** and choreographer **Maxine Braham**, who both make their COC debuts.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Lucia di Lammermoor* 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 **April 6, 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 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

Production Co-Sponsors: **CIBC** and **CIBC Mellon**

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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: The Stratospheric Soprano

The Canadian Opera Company's **Opera Connect** – a new series of events connecting the public with the artists who create opera – continues its inaugural season on **April 4, 2013** at the **Waterfall Stage at First Canadian Place** (100 King St. W.) Two **FREE**, lunch-time events take place at **12:15 p.m. and 1:15 p.m.**, CBC Radio's **Brent Bambury** chats with COC artists **Teiya Kasahara** (soprano), Adam Luther (tenor), Peter Barrett (baritone) and **Christopher Mokrzewski** (piano) to explore the *bel canto* masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Bel Canto Bliss

On **May 21, 2013**, from **12 – 1 p.m.**, the COC's Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts presents coloratura soprano **Anna Christy** in concert. **Christy**, who sings the title role in the COC's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, has been called "nimble of voice, body and spirit" by the *New York Times* and presents a **FREE** noon-hour recital showcasing the *bel canto* repertoire for which she has earned great acclaim.

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.

Lucia di Lammermoor 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 *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 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:

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