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CASTING UPDATE FOR OPENING NIGHT OF CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S *PETER GRIMES*

Toronto – The Canadian Opera Company regrets to announce that Canadian tenor Ben Heppner, scheduled to sing the title role in the upcoming production of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, has had to withdraw from the opening night performance on October 5 for health reasons. Mr. Heppner will return to the role for subsequent performances in the COC's production. Four-time Grammy Award-winning American tenor Anthony Dean Griffey will sing the role of Peter Grimes on October 5.

Anthony Dean Griffey is well-acquainted with the COC's *Peter Grimes*, having sung the title role when the production was presented by Houston Grand Opera and by Opera Australia in 2010. The *Houston Chronicle* described Griffey as giving "a haunting performance as the outcast hero, singing with aching beauty." This is a sentiment echoed by *Opera News*, which said "Griffey's large, lumbering physical presence commanded the stage, but it was his vocal artistry that sealed a remarkable performance. Grimes is a complex mix of cruel villain and pitiful, misunderstood misfit: the vast color palette of Griffey's voice — airy and dreamy, earthy and rough, steely and powerful — brought that complexity to vivid life, showing us Grimes by turns as gentle giant, cruel and destructive monster, and haunted and hallucinating madman."

Griffey has received critical and popular acclaim for his performances on opera, concert and recital stages around the world. He has emerged as a leading interpreter of Peter Grimes, one of the most iconic roles in 20th-century opera, with *Opera News* remarking that Griffey "could well set a new standard for this role." He makes his COC debut as Peter Grimes, a role he has performed at Glyndebourne, Santa Fe Opera, Paris Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, and elsewhere, to great praise from critics and audiences alike. His 2008 performance at the Met was deemed a "triumph" by the *New York Times*, hailing Griffey's "singing with exemplary artistry and raw emotion" in portraying the iconic and challenging role.

The COC's production of *Peter Grimes* is directed by Neil Armfield and conducted by COC Music Director Johannes Debus. *Peter Grimes* is sung in English with English SURTITLES™, and runs for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for Performing Arts on October 5, 8, 11, 17, 20, 23, 26, 2013.

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For more information or for photography requests, please contact:

Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca