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CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S 2012/2013 SEASON FEATURES STELLAR OPERATIC AND ARTISTIC LINE-UP

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** unveiled a stellar artistic line-up for its 2012/2013 season today at a press conference at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. The company's 63rd season is a celebration of opera's greatest masterpieces and features the return of works both long absent and familiar to the COC stage. The COC presents Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* in a new COC production, Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Richard Strauss's *Salome* and Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

A dazzling array of the opera world's leading artists will appear with the COC in 12/13. No less than 33 singers, conductors, directors and designers make their company debuts, including singers **Anna Christy**, **Stephen Costello**, **Melanie Diener**, **Elza van den Heever**, **Isabel Leonard**, **Brian Mulligan**, **Franz-Josef Selig** and **Erika Sunnegårdh**; conductor **Jiří Bělohlávek**; director **Peter Sellars**; and visual artists **Jean-Noël Lavesvre** and **Bill Viola**. Returning artists include singers **Isabel Bayrakdarian**, **Russell Braun**, **Judith Forst**, **Alan Held**, **Ben Heppner**, **Richard Margison**, **Adrienne Pieczonka**, **Michael Schade**, **Ramón Vargas** and **Tamara Wilson**; conductor **Stephen Lord**; directors **Christopher Alden**, **David Alden**, **Robert Carsen** and **Atom Egoyan**; and designer **Michael Levine**. All performances take place in the company's home, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, and feature the renowned COC Orchestra and Chorus.

"I'm very proud of the artists and productions the COC has secured for its 12/13 season. Exceptional artists enjoy working with exceptional companies, and the COC has become a destination for artists of a truly remarkable calibre," says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. "The 12/13 season has an ambitious and creative vision that distinguishes the Canadian Opera Company as a home for truly special programming devoted to achieving the greatest heights of artistic excellence."

The Canadian Opera Company's 12/13 season opens with the quintessential Italian opera, Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, last performed by the COC in 2005. A staple of the operatic repertoire, *Il Trovatore* has mesmerized audiences since its premiere in 1853 with its scorching tale of the vengeful gypsy Azucena, her son Manrico's romance with the noblewoman Leonora, and his rivalry with the Conte di Luna. A world-class cast helms this fiery melodrama: internationally renowned Mexican tenor **Ramón Vargas**, who appeared with the COC for the company's 60th anniversary concert, makes his mainstage and role debut as Manrico; acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** (Jaufré in the COC's 11/12 production of *Love from Afar*) makes his role debut as the Conte di Luna; South-African soprano **Elza van den Heever**, in a COC debut, appears as Leonora; and Russian mezzo-soprano **Elena Manistina** makes her COC debut as the gypsy Azucena, a role she reprises following performances with Gran Teatre del Liceu and Opéra National de Bordeaux. Rounding out the cast is Italian tenor **Riccardo Massi**, in his COC debut, who sings the role of Manrico for two performances. Ukrainian bass **Dmitry Beloselsky** appears with the COC for the first time as Ferrando. The COC's *Il Trovatore* features director **Charles Roubaud**'s acclaimed production from Opéra de Marseille and celebrated conductor **Marco Guidarini** leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Verdi's rich score, which highlights some of Romantic opera's most beautiful and recognizable music. Designer and sculptor **Jean-Noël Lavesvre** has created an atmospheric set that is at once castle and gypsy camp.

Il Trovatore is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 10 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Sept. 29, Oct. 2, 5, 10, 13, 19, 21, 25, 28, and 31, 2012.**

The fall season continues with Johann Strauss II's popular operetta, *Die Fledermaus*. In this hilarious comedy, with its screwball plot of elaborate revenge, disguises, mistaken identity and spouses pushing the boundaries of each other's fidelity, Strauss outdid his own reputation as the "waltz king" of Vienna by composing some of opera's most gorgeous dance music. Absent from the COC stage for more than 20 years, *Die Fledermaus* returns in a new production by director **Christopher Alden** (2011's *Rigoletto* and 2010's *The Flying Dutchman*). Set in early-20th century Vienna, Alden's staging will conjure up a glamorous world bubbling with extravagance and sophisticated wit, while gently mocking the duplicity of people and the larger social hypocrisies they inhabit. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus through a score that has come to embody high-spirited celebration since the opera's premiere in 1873. *Die Fledermaus* features a cast of largely Canadian voices, led by internationally renowned Canadian tenor **Michael Schade**. Last with the COC in 2011's *The Magic Flute*, Schade returns to make his role debut as Gabriel von Eisenstein, an affluent gentleman who delays serving a short prison sentence by way of a quick frolic at an extravagant party. American soprano **Tamara Wilson** (2010's *Idomeneo*) returns to delight audiences as Rosalinde, Eisenstein's wife, whose disguised appearance at the same party has mischievous consequences for her husband. Mezzo-soprano **Laura Tucker** (2004's *Die Walküre*) returns to the COC as Prince Orlofsky, the host of the elaborate costume party. Current and former COC Ensemble Studio artists make up several of the operetta's comedic characters: Ensemble sopranos **Ambur Braid** and **Mireille Asselin** share the role of Eisenstein's maid, Adele; Ensemble graduate baritone **Peter Barrett** (2011's *Ariadne auf Naxos*) is Dr. Falke; Ensemble tenor **Christopher Enns** is Alfred, who mistakenly goes to jail in place of Eisenstein; and Ensemble graduate baritone **James Westman** (2009's *Madama Butterfly*) is Frank, the prison's governor. American tenor **David Cangelosi** (Spoletta in the COC's 11/12 production of *Tosca*) is Dr. Blind. *Die Fledermaus* is sung in German with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 11 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Oct. 4, 9, 12, 14, 17, 20, 24, 27, 30, Nov. 1 and 3, 2012.**

The COC opens its winter season with one of music history's most influential works, Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. This production by legendary director **Peter Sellars** stars celebrated Canadian tenor **Ben Heppner** in his signature role, one that critics have hailed as a "translucent and exalted performance." Making his company debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus is one of the most sought after and respected conductors in the world today, Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra **Jiří Bělohlávek**. This is the first time that Sellars' awe-inspiring production of *Tristan und Isolde* will be seen in Canada, with the COC recreating the Opéra national de Paris production that premiered in 2005. Sellars' staging for *Tristan und Isolde* comes to life with video imagery by internationally renowned video artist **Bill Viola**, who, says Sellars, "has come up with an image of the scale and scope, grandeur and immensity, and genuine transcendence that Wagner was imagining." Singing opposite Heppner is a German soprano known for her mastery of the Mozart, Strauss and Wagner repertoire, **Melanie Diener**, in her COC debut as Isolde. German bass **Franz-Josef Selig** makes his COC debut as King Marke of Cornwall, the man betrayed by Tristan and Isolde's love affair. The role of Isolde's maid, Brangäne, is sung by Greek-American mezzo-soprano **Daveda Karanas**, and American bass-baritone **Alan Held** (Simone and Gianni Schicchi in the COC's upcoming double bill of *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi*) is Tristan's servant, Kurwenal. American bass-baritone **Ryan McKinney** is the courtier Melot, and Ensemble Studio graduates bass **Robert Gleadow** and tenor **Adam Luther** return as the Steersman and the Sailor/Shepherd, respectively. German tenor **Burkhard Fritz** and American soprano **Margaret Jane Wray** will sing the roles of Tristan and Isolde for two performances. Last seen at the COC in 1987, *Tristan und Isolde* returns for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Jan. 29, Feb. 2, 8, 14, 17, 20 and 23, 2013**, and is sung in German with English SURTITLES™.

The winter 2013 season continues with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's final opera, *La clemenza di Tito*. Containing some of opera's most sublime music, *La clemenza di Tito* was written to celebrate the coronation of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia in 1791. In its telling of the attempted assassination of the

Emperor Tito and his forgiveness of those who betrayed him, the opera was meant to reflect in the titular emperor's mercy, a quality that the populace might have hoped for in their new king. **Michael Schade** returns to the COC for the second time in the 12/13 season to perform Tito, a role which has won him acclaim from Salzburg to Washington where his singing was praised for its "unflagging intensity and musical intelligence" (*Washington Post*). Making her COC debut as Sesto, Tito's friend, is Met regular and one of the finest mezzo-sopranos on the operatic stage today, American **Isabel Leonard**. Ensemble Studio soprano **Mireille Asselin** performs the role of Servilia, Sesto's sister, and cast as the vengeful Vitellia is rising opera star American soprano **Keri Alkema** (appearing with the COC in this spring's *The Tales of Hoffmann*). The COC also welcomes back Ensemble Studio alumni mezzo-soprano **Wallis Giunta** as Annio and bass **Robert Gleadow** as Publio. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** once more leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus and he's joined by director **Christopher Alden**, with a production described by the *Chicago Tribune* at its 2009 premiere by Chicago Opera Theater as "an evening of modern music theatre you mustn't miss." *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 **Feb. 3, 6*, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 19 and 22, 2013**.

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

The exciting young singers of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio perform Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* on **Feb. 6, 2013** at 7:30 p.m. on the mainstage. This special performance stars the Ensemble members with the full COC Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of *La clemenza di Tito*'s conductor **Johannes Debus** and director **Christopher Alden**. For casting, please visit the COC website at coc.ca. Tickets are accessibly priced at \$22 and \$55 per person.

Opening the COC's spring season is Gaetano Donizetti's *bel canto* masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, starring American soprano **Anna Christy** in a production created for her by director **David Alden** for English National Opera. Christy's shattering performance in the title role was met with critical and popular acclaim when the production premiered at ENO in 2008. Alden's production transports audiences into the darkly brooding world of Sir Walter Scott's Gothic novel in which Lucia is treated as little more than chattel within a brutal, power-driven society. "[Christy's] doll-like Lucia is 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" said *The Daily Telegraph*. American tenor **Stephen Costello** and American baritone **Brian Mulligan** make their COC debuts as Lucia's lover, Edgardo, and Lucia's vengeful brother, Enrico, respectively. American tenor **Nathaniel Peake**, a 2010 Metropolitan Opera National Council Winner, is Arturo, and American bass **Oren Gradus** sings Raimondo. **Stephen Lord**, named one of the "25 Most Powerful Names in U.S. Opera" by *Opera News*, leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus conducting Donizetti's cascading romantic melodies. *Lucia di Lammermoor* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs 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**.

The spring season continues with the return of celebrated Canadian director **Atom Egoyan** with his searing, critically acclaimed COC production of Richard Strauss's *Salome*. Adapted from Oscar Wilde's play, the opera recounts the biblical story of Salome, who – to the horror of her stepfather Herod – demands the head of John the Baptist in return for performing the Dance of the Seven Veils. At the opera's 1905 premiere, the audience and critics were shocked by its subject matter and erotic themes; *Salome*'s world of voyeurism and sexual abuse still elicits an equally visceral response today. In past presentations of this production, in 1996 and 2002, the COC's *Salome* was described as a "brilliant modern day interpretation" that is "lusty," "provocative," "marvellously wicked and wickedly marvellous," and "relevant to a 21st-century audience." In Swedish-American soprano **Erika Sunnegårdh**, the COC has a Salome who can meet the vocal and physical demands of one of opera's most challenging roles. Rounding out the impressive cast is a line-up of familiar and new opera stars: Canadian **Richard Margison**, making his role debut as Herod; German baritone **Martin**

Gantner, in his COC debut, and American bass-baritone **Alan Held**, share the role of Jochanaan (John the Baptist); and Swiss mezzo-soprano **Julia Juon** is Salome's mother, Herodias, in a COC debut performance. American tenor **Nathaniel Peake** sings Narraboth, the captain of the guard, and Israeli mezzo-soprano **Maya Lahyani** comes to the COC for the first time as the Page. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts Strauss's ecstatic and intoxicating music. Sung in German with English SURTITLES™, *Salome* runs for eight performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **April 21, 27, May 1, 4, 7, 10, 16 and 22, 2013**.

Bringing the COC's 12/13 season to a close is Francis Poulenc's operatic masterpiece, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, in a production by **Robert Carsen**. The acclaimed Canadian director returns to the COC for a third consecutive season (2010/2011's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, 2011/2012's *Iphigenia in Tauris*) to direct a cast of 150 performers in a production described by *Variety* as "subtle, yet gut-wrenching." COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** makes his fourth conducting appearance of the 12/13 season leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through what is considered to be Poulenc's most haunting score and a work that contains one of opera's most devastating and unforgettable final scenes. Set design is by acclaimed Canadian designer **Michael Levine**. *Dialogues des Carmélites'* beautiful music sets the tone for the story of an order of Carmelite nuns caught up in the terror of the French Revolution. Leading the primarily Canadian cast are internationally renowned stars: soprano **Isabel Bayrakdarian** (2011's *Orfeo ed Euridice*) as the young aristocrat Blanche trying to escape the turmoil of the Revolution; mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst** (2002's *The Queen of Spades*) as Madame de Croissy, the prioress of the convent; and soprano **Adrienne Pieczonka** (starring in the COC's 11/12 production of *Tosca*), in her role debut, as Madame Lidoine, the new prioress. They are joined by soprano **Hélène Guilmette**, making her COC debut as Soeur Constance; Moldavian powerhouse **Irina Mishura** (2009's *Rusalka*, 2005's *Il Trovatore*) as Mère Marie, tenor **Frédéric Antoun** (2011's *The Magic Flute*) as Chevalier de la Force and **Jean-François Lapointe** as Marquis de la Force. Carsen brings his signature high-impact approach to this production, which has been seen at some of the world's great opera houses, including La Scala, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam. Last performed by the opera company in 1997, *Dialogues des Carmélites* runs for eight performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **May 8, 11, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23 and 25, 2013**, and is sung in French with English SURTITLES™.

All repertoire, dates, pricing, productions, and casting are subject to change without notice. For more complete casting and creative team information, please see the production pages at coc.ca.

The Canadian Opera Company webcast the announcement of its 12/13 season live on coc.ca on Jan. 18, 2012, at 10 a.m. from the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. The webcast is available for streaming.

For more information on the Canadian Opera Company's 12/13 season, please visit coc.ca.

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Tristan und Isolde Production Sponsor: **BMO Financial Group**

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The COC Ensemble Studio 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 supported by the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, RBC Foundation and other generous donors.

TICKET INFORMATION

Subscriptions to the seven mainstage productions for the COC's 12/13 season range from **\$175 to \$1,281**, with Grand Ring (box level) seat subscriptions available at **\$1,869 and \$2,289**, and may be purchased online at **coc.ca**, by calling **416-363-8231**, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office**, 145 Queen St. W., Toronto. Subscriptions are now on sale. Prices include HST.

Single tickets to all of the COC's 12/13 season productions are available to the public as of Aug. 27, 2012. Single ticket prices range from **\$45 to \$219** (\$45 to \$263 for *Tristan und Isolde*), with Grand Ring (box level) seat tickets available at **\$265 and \$325** (\$265 and \$390 for *Tristan und Isolde*). Prices include HST.

Young People

Special young people's tickets for all performances throughout the season are priced from **\$23 to \$110**, including HST. 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

Young adults between the ages of 16 and 29 may purchase specially priced **\$22** tickets through the COC's Opera Under 30 program approximately two weeks prior to each of the fall, winter and spring seasons: **Sept. 15, 2012; Jan. 19, 2013; and April 6, 2013**. Opera Under 30 is presented by TD Bank Group. A total of 150 seats, each priced at \$22, will be reserved for every COC performance and will be available for purchase through Opera Under 30 to student groups and subject to availability on the day of a performance.

Standing Room

Standing Room tickets, priced at **\$12**, go on sale at 11 a.m. the day of a performance.

Rush Seats

Rush seats, starting at **\$25**, go on sale at 11 a.m. on the morning of each performance at the Four Seasons Centre Box Office, subject to availability.

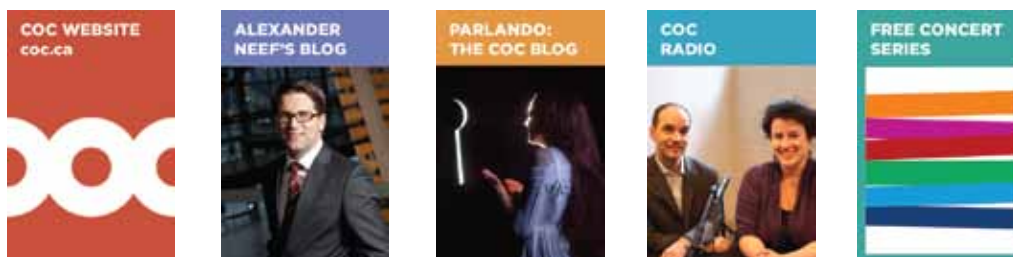
About the Canadian Opera Company

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the five largest in North America. The COC enjoys a loyal audience support-base and one of the highest attendance and subscription rates in North America. The COC celebrates its 63rd anniversary during the 12/13 season. 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 and 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 Canadian Opera Company, please visit its award-winning website, coc.ca.

Canadian Opera Company Website

The Canadian Opera Company's award-winning website, coc.ca, contains information on all productions and programs and includes video interviews with members of the creative team, as well as many other fun, informative and interactive features. Visitors to coc.ca can access COC Radio, which features a variety of audio and digital features available for downloading and streaming, all aimed at exploring an opera and its background as well as the artists appearing with the COC.

INTERACTIVE LINKS



- 30 -

For more information, or to request production photographs, please contact:
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