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WORLD'S LEADING IPHIGENIA, SUSAN GRAHAM, MAKES COC DEBUT IN ROBERT CARSEN'S EMOTIONALLY GRIPPING PRODUCTION OF *IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS*

“Hi-octane” (*Opera News*)

“Susan Graham in a performance of continuous dramatic power and musical mastery” (*Chicago Sun-Times*)

“Compelling case for the opera as a visceral and emotional contemporary music drama”
(*The Sunday Times*)

Toronto – From the same creative team that brought Toronto audiences to their feet night after night this past spring with the Canadian Opera Company’s Dora Award-winning production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* comes the COC’s 2011/2012 season opening production of Christoph Willibald Gluck’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Gluck’s masterpiece has its company premiere with director **Robert Carsen** at the helm of an emotionally gripping production that features **Susan Graham**, one of the opera world’s foremost opera stars, making her eagerly anticipated COC debut in the title role. Leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus is Spanish conductor **Pablo Heras-Casado**, returning to the company after his thrilling debut in last season’s *Nixon in China*.

“This is why we go to the opera,” said the *Globe and Mail* of the COC’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* last May, and director Robert Carsen is poised to deliver again this fall with a production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* that has already played to great acclaim in Chicago, San Francisco, London and Madrid. Sung in French with English SURTITLES™, *Iphigenia in Tauris* runs for eight performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Sept. 22, 25, 28** and **Oct. 1, 4, 7, 12, 15, 2011**.

Renowned mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** is a leader in the international revival of Gluck’s operas. Her COC debut follows recent performances as Iphigenia for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Teatro Real de Madrid, for which her “molten tone and vivid acting” (*Financial Times*) as well as “nobility and vibrant vocal beauty” (*Chicago Tribune*), has been praised in performances described as “poignant and majestic” (*Opera News*) and “riveting” (*New York Times*). Also making her COC debut in the title role is rising Canadian soprano **Katherine Whyte**, “a compelling vocal and dramatic presence” (*Opera Canada*) who has made impressive debuts with English National Opera, Atlanta Opera and l’Opéra national de Bordeaux in recent years. She sings Iphigenia on Oct. 15, 2011.

Graham and Whyte are joined by a dream cast. Canadian lyric baritone **Russell Braun** is Iphigenia’s brother Orestes. In addition to being a favourite and frequent artist at the COC, **Braun** is a regular presence on the world’s finest stages, including the Metropolitan Opera, l’Opéra national de Paris, Vienna State Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, LA Opera, La Scala and the Salzburg and Glyndebourne festivals. Making his long-awaited return to the COC in the role of Orestes’ best friend, Pylades, is Met regular and COC Ensemble Studio graduate tenor **Joseph Kaiser**. Internationally acclaimed as one of the most gifted artists of his generation, Kaiser has seen success in opera, oratorio and concert throughout North America and Europe, as well as in film, having starred as Tamino in the Kenneth Branagh film adaptation of *The Magic Flute* in 2007.

Grammy Award-winning bass-baritone **Mark S. Doss** (1999's *Il Trovatore*) is Thoas, the Scythian king who orders Orestes' death, and COC Ensemble graduate mezzo-soprano **Lauren Segal** (2011's *The Magic Flute*, *Nixon in China* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*) is the goddess Diana. Rounding out the cast is a crop of Canada's rising opera stars from the COC Ensemble Studio: returning sopranos **Ambur Braid** as a Greek Woman and **Jacqueline Woodley** as the First Priestess; and new members soprano **Mireille Asselin** as the Second Priestess and bass-baritone **Philippe Sly** as a Scythian Man, in their COC debuts. COC favourite, bass **Robert Pomakov**, is the Old Servant.

Spanish conductor **Pablo Heras-Casado** returns to lead the COC Orchestra and Chorus on the heels of a Dora Mavor Moore Award nomination for "Outstanding Musical Direction" of the COC's *Nixon in China*. **Heras-Casado** has emerged in recent years as one of the brightest stars on the international conducting scene with a remarkable repertoire that spans classical to cutting-edge contemporary scores, with engagements ranging from Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and the Mostly Mozart Festival to English National Opera, Welsh National Opera and Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie to Ensemble ACJW at Carnegie Hall, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien and Collegium Novum Zürich.

In returning to direct *Iphigenia in Tauris*, **Robert Carsen** brings with him other members of the *Orfeo ed Euridice* creative team: set and costume designer **Tobias Hoheisel** and co-lighting designer **Peter Van Praet**. Choreography for the 20 dancers in *Iphigenia in Tauris* is by **Philippe Giraudeau**, who makes his COC debut.

Iphigenia in Tauris was Gluck's greatest triumph, telling of how the heroine Iphigenia is rescued from imminent death only to confront the tragic twist of fate of being required to kill her long-lost brother. Composed in 1779, Gluck created a score of refined, classical beauty that lays bare the emotional intensity of this Greek tragedy. **Carsen's** directorial vision for the COC's *Iphigenia in Tauris* takes the ancient Greek myth into a timeless present, with a staging that strips away unnecessary distraction and highlights the opera's searing emotions and inherent music drama.

This production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* is a co-production of Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera and Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Iphigenia in Tauris* are **\$12 – \$318** (includes applicable taxes) and go on sale **Aug. 15, 2011**. 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 **\$22.50** to **\$107.50** (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 for a New Age

Patrons between the ages of 16 and 29 may purchase **\$22** Opera for a New Age tickets as of **Sept. 10, 2011 at 10 a.m.**, online at coc.ca or in person at the Four Seasons Centre Box Office. Opera for a New Age 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.

COC ANCILLARY EVENTS AND INFORMATION

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.

Opera Talks: *Iphigenia in Tauris*

On **Sept. 8, 2011** at **7 p.m.**, a new season of **Opera Talks** begins at Toronto's **North York Central Library** (5120 Yonge St.) by examining the COC's fall production of Christoph Willibald Gluck's lyric tragedy ***Iphigenia in Tauris***. A member of the COC's Education and Outreach team will lead the talk, mixing tantalizing tidbits of opera history with guided listening, images and production insights that showcase the visceral thrill of the multi-media genre that is opera. A Q&A session takes place at the end of the evening. **Opera Talks** is a **FREE** and interactive series of dynamic chats on the art of opera, presented by the COC and Toronto's **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**.

Opera 101: *Iphigenia in Tauris*

The COC's popular FREE series, **Opera 101**, kicks off a new year of opera chat on **Sept. 14, 2011** at **6 p.m.** at the **Duke of York** (39 Prince Arthur Ave.) with an evening devoted to Christoph Willibald Gluck's masterpiece, ***Iphigenia in Tauris***. **Opera 101** host **Brent Bambury** (CBC Radio) will moderate a lively discussion and question-and-answer period with members of the star cast of ***Iphigenia in Tauris***: mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** and baritone **Russell Braun**.

Opera Exchange Series – A Greek Family Reunion: Gluck’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*

In collaboration with the Munk School for Global Affairs and the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, the COC launches the 2011/2012 **Opera Exchange Series** with **A Greek Family Reunion: Gluck’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*** on **Oct. 1, 2011** from **9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.** at the U of T Faculty of Music’s **Edward Johnson Building** (80 Queen’s Park). Local and international academics and artists will lead explorations and analysis on the themes and music of Christoph Willibald Gluck’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Tickets are **\$23** per person and can be purchased 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. Tickets can also be purchased at the door on the morning of the event (Walter Hall, Faculty of Music). Discounts are available for UofT students and faculty.

Iphigenia in Tauris Interactive Features on coc.ca

The COC hosts a podcast series sponsored by Decca: The Opera Label. Hosted by the COC’s Gianna Wichelow and Gianmarco Segato, the podcasts explore the opera and its background, and feature interviews with singers and members of the creative team. All podcasts are available for downloading or streaming at **coc.ca**. The Canadian Opera Company’s award-winning website, **coc.ca**, contains information on all productions and programs and allows visitors to enjoy a wide variety of interactive features available for downloading and streaming.

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 62nd anniversary during the 2011/2012 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 COC, visit its award-winning website, coc.ca.

INTERACTIVE LINKS



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