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## **DRAMA AND DEBAUCHERY WRAPPED IN A MUSICAL MASTERPIECE WITH COC'S *RIGOLETTO***

**Toronto** – A tragedy of Shakespearean dimensions is brought to life by some of opera's most passionate and memorable music in the COC's fall production of *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi. The story of the tragic jester, Rigoletto, who vows to avenge his cruelly seduced daughter but ends up losing everything he loves, comes alive in a new production by the innovative team of COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**, American director **Christopher Alden** and award-winning Canadian designer **Michael Levine**. Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™, *Rigoletto* runs for 12 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **Sept. 29, 30 and Oct. 2, 5, 8, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 2011**.

Coming together to perform Verdi's perennial favourite are up-and-coming opera stars as well as established voices from the operatic world. Hawaiian baritone **Quinn Kelsey**'s stage presence and fluid voice has been turning heads in North America and Europe since he graduated from Chicago Lyric Opera's prestigious young artist program in 2006, and he makes his COC debut as Rigoletto. **Kelsey** shares the role with notable Verdi baritone **Lester Lynch** (2001's *Billy Budd*), whose commanding, rich and nuanced voice has made him a regular presence in the major opera houses of the U.S.

Young Russian soprano **Ekaterina Sadovnikova** makes her COC debut as Rigoletto's doomed daughter Gilda, a role she recently sang in an impressive debut at Royal Opera House Covent Garden. **Sadovnikova** shares the role of Gilda with COC Ensemble soprano **Simone Osborne**, a rising Canadian star who charmed audiences last winter with her Pamina in the COC's *The Magic Flute* and has been called "a joy to hear" by the *LA Times*. This production of *Rigoletto* marks **Osborne**'s debut in the role of Gilda.

Sharing the role of the dashing but debauched Duke of Mantua are two of the most exciting and promising young artists on the horizon today: American tenor **Dimitri Pittas**, "an appealing, rising young singer of unaffected charm" (*New York Observer*) compared in look and sound to a young Plácido Domingo; and Mexican tenor **David Lomelí**, a first-prize winner of Domingo's world opera competition Operalia who has been described as "mesmerizing" (*Wall Street Journal*) and "delightful" (*New York Times*).

Canadian bass **Phillip Ens** (2010's *Aida*) returns as the suavely sinister assassin Sparafucile. Young American mezzo-soprano **Kendall Gladen**, who is quickly earning a reputation as an important young artist and has been heard throughout the U.S., makes her company debut as Sparafucile's sister Maddalena. Canadian mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham** (2011's *Nixon in China*) is Gilda's nurse Giovanna; Canadian bass **Robert Pomakov**, who can also be heard in this fall's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, is the wronged Count Monterone who curses Rigoletto; and tenor **John Kriter**, a COC favourite, is the courtier Borsa.

Rounding out the cast are COC Ensemble Studio alumnus bass **Alain Coulombe** (2010's *Aida*) as Count Ceprano, new Ensemble soprano **Mireille Asselin** as Countess Ceprano and returning Ensemble members baritone **Adrian Kramer** as Marullo, bass-baritone **Neil Craighead** as an Usher and soprano **Jacqueline Woodley** as a Page.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts Verdi's musical masterpiece. Maestro Debus last delighted Toronto audiences when leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus in last season's *Aida* and *The Magic Flute*. He also performs as a guest conductor all over the world and returns to the opera company following an active summer schedule that included engagements at the Bayerische Staatsoper, the Staatsoper Berlin, the Spoleto Festival and Festival Opéra de Québec.

Director **Christopher Alden**, who staged the COC's highly acclaimed production of *The Flying Dutchman*, once again brings his singular vision to this production. Set in Verdi's own time (*Rigoletto* was composed in 1851), **Alden**'s staging unfolds within the rich, ribald surroundings of a 19th-century gentleman's club and brings to the fore an exploration of a patriarchal world in which powerful aristocratic men are given free rein. Joining **Alden** in bringing this creation to life is award-winning Canadian designer **Michael Levine**, whose previous COC collaborations include some of the opera company's most renowned and internationally acclaimed productions (*Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, the *Ring Cycle*). His Victorian-styled sets and costumes for *Rigoletto* promise to be as equally visually arresting. **Duane Schuler** (2003's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*) returns to design the lighting.

This *Rigoletto* is a new co-production by the COC with English National Opera, based on the 2000 Lyric Opera of Chicago production directed by **Christopher Alden** and designed by **Michael Levine**. *Rigoletto* was last performed by the COC in 2004.

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## TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Rigoletto* are **\$12 – \$318** (includes applicable taxes) and go on sale **Aug. 15, 2011**. Tickets are available online at [coc.ca](http://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 **Saturday, Sept. 10, 2011** at **10 a.m.**, online at [coc.ca](http://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.

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## 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.**

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## 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 101: *Rigoletto***

Don't miss the second instalment in the COC's 2011/2012 season of **Opera 101** on **Sept. 27, 2011** at **6 p.m.** at the **Duke of Westminster** (77 Adelaide St. W.) when the spotlight shines on ***Rigoletto***, Giuseppe Verdi's enduring masterpiece about a court jester and his tragic quest for vengeance, featuring some of opera's most passionate and memorable music. At this **FREE** event, ***Rigoletto*'s** director, **Christopher Alden**, and designer, **Michael Levine**, will join **Opera 101** host **Brent Bambury** (CBC Radio) in a lively discussion and question-and-answer period about the production. Additional guests from the ***Rigoletto*** cast are also expected to take part in the evening's activities.

### **Russian Romances with Ekaterina Sadovnikova**

On **Oct. 11, 2011**, from **12 – 1 p.m.**, Russian soprano **Ekaterina Sadovnikova** steps off the mainstage at the Four Seasons Centre, where she can be heard as Gilda in the COC's fall production of ***Rigoletto***, and into the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre for a special performance as part of the COC's Free Concert Series. **Sadovnikova's** program, entitled ***Russian Romances***, features a rich and romantic selection of arias and art songs from her native country. Accompanying **Sadovnikova** on the piano will be COC Ensemble Studio graduate **Christopher Mokrzewski**.

### **Rigoletto 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.

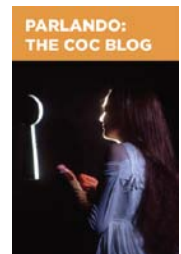
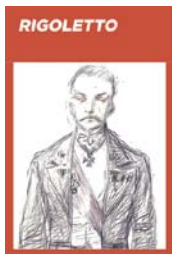
### **About the Canadian Opera Company**

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.

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### **INTERACTIVE LINKS**

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