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ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR OPERAS COMES TO LIFE IN THE COC'S LAVISH PRODUCTION OF *TOSCA* STARRING CANADA'S ADRIANNE PIECZONKA

Toronto – One of the most popular operas of all time, Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* opens the Canadian Opera Company's 2011/2012 winter season. The COC brings back its lavish 2008 production by director **Paul Curran**, showcasing renowned Canadian soprano **Adrienne Pieczonka** in her COC role debut as the passionate and fiery heroine. Italian conductor **Paolo Carignani**, former general music director of Oper Frankfurt, makes his company debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus. *Tosca* runs for 14 performances on **Jan. 21, 25, 29, 31, Feb. 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 21, 23 and 25, 2012** at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts and is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

Tosca's fast-paced plot is full of romance and intrigue. Set in Rome in 1800, Tosca is a famed opera singer whose lover has revolutionary sympathies. In trying to protect the man she loves from a blood-thirsty chief of police, Tosca finds herself caught in a web of corruption, lust and betrayal and ultimately commits an act of murder. The title role is one of the composer's most complex and fascinating heroines, fit for great operatic actresses.

Pieczonka, most recently with the COC last spring in the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, calls Tosca her "dream role" and has drawn high praise for her portrayal since making her role debut in 2008: "She was radiant," says the *Los Angeles Times*, and "Pieczonka's Tosca is the quintessential diva, rendering her signature arias with ease and verve" describes *SF Weekly*. Sharing opera's hallmark "diva" role is American soprano **Julie Makerov**, whose vocalism and dramatic intensity as Tosca has made her "every inch the imperious diva, moving from flashing-eyed jealous lover to abused woman to penitent murder," says the *Florida Sun Sentinel*. **Makerov** returns to the COC following outstanding acclaim for lead performances in 2010's *The Flying Dutchman* and 2008's *Rusalka*.

Making their COC debuts as Tosca's lover, Mario Cavaradossi, are two tenors recognized by the world's leading opera companies for their dramatic and vocal prowess: Uruguayan **Carlo Ventre** and American **Brandon Jovanovich**. The opera's evil chief of police, Baron Scarpia, is sung by American baritone **Mark Delavan**, making his company debut in a role that he's imbued with "leering lust and the total technical control of a vocal palette that could paint as many colors as the drama demands." (*Associated Press*)

Celebrated American bass-baritone **Christian Van Horn** makes his COC debut as the escaped political prisoner Angelotti. Canadian bass-baritone **Peter Strummer** (1993's *Tosca* and *Le nozze di Figaro*) returns to the COC as the Sacristan. The role of Spoletta, Scarpia's henchman, is shared by tenors **David Cangelosi**, making his company debut, and COC favourite **John Kriter**. COC Ensemble Studio members bass-baritone **Neil Craighead** and baritone **Adrian Kramer** are Sciarrone and a Jailer, respectively.

Tosca's Empire-era costumes and stunning sets of chapels, palaces and fortresses of 19th-century Rome are brought to life in the set and costume design of **Kevin Knight**, and the atmospheric lighting design of **David Martin Jacques**.

Tosca premiered to mixed reviews in 1900, but has since become one of the most performed operas in the world. A staple of the operatic repertoire, *Tosca* is an unforgettable theatrical experience and features some of the composer's most deeply felt and dramatic melodies.

This production of *Tosca* is a COC co-production with the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Tosca* are \$12 – \$318 (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 \$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 **Jan. 7, 2012** 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 101: Tosca

The COC's popular **FREE** discussion series, **Opera 101**, heads to **Duke of Westminster** (77 Adelaide St. W.) on **Jan. 17, 2012 at 6 p.m.** with an evening devoted to **Tosca**, one of the most passionate and popular operas of all time. Featured guests are Dora Award-winning soprano **Julie Makerov** (Tosca), American baritone **Mark Delavan** (Scarpia) and director **Paul Curran**, who helms this lavish COC production. Host Brent Bambury (CBC Radio) moderates the conversation as Makerov, Delavan and Curran discuss their respective roles in staging this thrilling tale of an opera singer who is caught in a web of political intrigue, lust and betrayal. Audience members are free to ask questions of the guests throughout the event, adding to the lively nature of the conversation.

Amore with Julie Makerov

On **Feb. 14, 2012 at 12 – 1 p.m.**, soprano **Julie Makerov**, steps off the mainstage at the Four Seasons Centre, where she can be heard in the title role of the COC's production of **Tosca**, and into the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre for a special performance as part of the COC's Free Concert Series. Makerov's program, entitled **Amore**, is a musical exploration of love in its many guises: infatuation, obsession, heartbreak and ecstasy. Accompanying Makerov on the piano will be COC Ensemble Studio graduate **Anne Larlee**.

Tosca 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 downloading and streaming, all aimed at exploring an opera and its background as well as the artists appearing with the COC. Among the resources on **Tosca** accessible through COC Radio, visitors will find 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.

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

