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COC'S 2013/2014 SEASON FEATURES THREE COMPANY PREMIERES, THREE NEW PRODUCTIONS AND MORE OPERA STARS THAN EVER BEFORE

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** unveiled its 2013/2014 season today at a press conference at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. The company's 64th season stars the world's best singers, conductors, directors and designers in a performance year with seven operas, including three COC premieres and three new COC productions. The COC presents Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème* with a new production featuring some of Canada's brightest stars; COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** makes his Benjamin Britten debut when he conducts *Peter Grimes* with a production starring acclaimed Canadian tenor **Ben Heppner** in the iconic title role; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with a new COC production by renowned film and theatre director **Atom Egoyan** with **Debus** conducting; Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* starring great Canadian diva **Adrienne Pieczonka** in a role debut; George Frideric Handel's *Hercules* with a COC premiere and new COC production by world-renowned director **Peter Sellars** with a star-studded cast; Gaetano Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* with a COC premiere starring soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** in a role debut; and Jules Massenet's *Don Quichotte* with a COC premiere featuring **Debus** in another conducting debut and the world's pre-eminent bass **Ferruccio Furlanetto** in the title role.

The 13/14 season ranks among the most exciting yet for the COC with more Canadian and international stars on the mainstage than ever before. Making their COC debuts in the upcoming season are singers **Phillip Addis, Sir Thomas Allen, Paul Appleby, Layla Claire, Lucy Crowe, Grazia Doronzio, Joyce El-Khoury, Giuseppe Filianoti, Ferruccio Furlanetto, Ekaterina Gubanova, Teodor Ilincăi, Eric Owens** and **Roland Wood**; conductors **Carlo Rizzi** and **Corrado Rovaris**; and directors **Linda Brovsky, Sergio Morabito** and **Jossi Wieler**. Returning artists include singers **Russell Braun, Alice Coote, Richard Croft, Tracy Dahl, David Daniels, Alan Held, Ben Heppner, Quinn Kelsey, David Lomelí, Allyson McHardy, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Adrienne Pieczonka, Dimitri Pittas** and **Sondra Radvanovsky**; conductors **Harry Bicket** and **Stephen Lord**; and directors **Neil Armfield, John Caird, Atom Egoyan, Stephen Lawless** and **Peter Sellars**. 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.

"More than ever, you can see how the COC has become a destination for artists of exceptional talent and renown. The artists we invite to work with us, and the opera companies that choose to collaborate on productions with us, are among the best in the world," says **Canadian Opera Company General Director Alexander Neef**. "Looking beyond the extraordinary calibre of the artists coming to the COC next year, audiences can expect a season that invites them to engage with opera in a way that's only possible by being part of a live theatrical experience. In the end, it is the electric exchange between artists and the audience that makes the art come alive."

The COC's 13/14 season opens with one of opera's favourite and most poignant love stories, Puccini's *La Bohème*. This masterpiece of youthful flirtation, passionate love and heartbreaking tragedy was last performed by the COC in 2009 and returns in a new company production directed by Canadian-born Tony Award-winning director **John Caird** (*Don Carlos*, 2007). One of the leading conductors of his generation, Italian **Carlo Rizzi**, leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus. The sets and costumes that capture the romance of France's *Belle Époque* are created by Olivier Award-winning and Tony Award-nominated designer **David Farley**. Making their COC debuts in the role of the fragile seamstress Mimì are two recent graduates of the Metropolitan Opera's prestigious Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, already acclaimed for their renditions of this starring role: Italian soprano **Grazia Doronzio** and Canadian soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** (Oct. 9, 19, 27, 30). The role of the poet Rodolfo, Mimì's lover,

is sung by two rising young tenors, Mexican **David Lomeli** (*Rigoletto*, 2011) and Romanian **Teodor Ilincăi** (Oct. 9, 19, 27, 30). Also appearing as the flirtatious singer Musetta, **El-Khoury** shares the role with COC Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Simone Osborne** (*Gianni Schicchi*, 2012; *Rigoletto*, 2011; *The Magic Flute*, 2011) (Oct. 9, 19, 27, 30). In the role of the painter Marcello, Musetta's lover, are two standout Canadian baritones: **Joshua Hopkins** (*Carmen*, 2005) and, in a company debut, **Phillip Addis** (Oct. 9, 19, 27, 30). The role of the philosopher Colline is shared by two celebrated bass-baritones: American **Christian Van Horn** (*Tosca*, 2012) and Canadian **Tom Corbeil** (*Death in Venice*, 2010) (Oct. 9, 19, 27, 30). **Addis** also takes on the role of the musician Schaunard. This production of *La Bohème* is a COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera. *La Bohème* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 12 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **October 3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29, 30, 2013**.

In the centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth, the COC presents *Peter Grimes*, his gripping opera about an alienated fisherman and the seaside village he struggles to inhabit. Acclaimed Canadian tenor **Ben Heppner** (Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde*, 2013) returns to the COC in the title role. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** makes his Britten debut when he leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus through *Peter Grimes*' evocative score, last heard at the COC in 2003. Award-winning Australian director **Neil Armfield** (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2011; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2009; *Billy Budd*, 2001) directs this co-production from Opera Australia and Houston Grand Opera. Singing the role of Grimes' unwavering advocate, Ellen Orford, is recent COC Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Ileana Montalbetti**. Captain Balstrode, one of Grimes' few friends, is sung by one of the leading singing actors today, **Alan Held** (Kurwenal *Tristan und Isolde*, 2013; *A Florentine Tragedy/Gianni Schicchi*, 2012). COC Ensemble Studio alumni, tenor **Roger Honeywell** and baritone **Peter Barrett**, portray the vengeful Bob Boles and Grimes' friend, Ned Keene, respectively. Canadian bass-baritone **Tom Corbeil** (who also appears in 2013's *La Bohème*) is the lawyer Swallow, and critically acclaimed American mezzo-soprano **Jill Grove** (*Aida*, 2010) is Auntie. *Peter Grimes* is sung in English with English SURTITLES™ and runs for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **October 5, 8, 11, 17, 20, 23, 26, 2013**.

Renowned Canadian film and stage director **Atom Egoyan** (directing *Salome*, 2013) returns to the COC with a new production of Mozart's sublime musical depiction of the frailties of the human condition, *Così fan tutte*. Egoyan's concept takes its inspiration from the opera's subtitle, *The School for Lovers*. He approaches the production as one where love is examined, dissected and manipulated, exploring the themes of love, temptation and deceit in this wry comedy about two couples gambling with one another's faith and desire. Award-winning set and costume designer **Debra Hanson** makes her opera debut with *Così fan tutte* and, with **Egoyan**, creates a production that stylistically progresses through time from the 18th-century to present day. Led by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** with the COC Orchestra and Chorus, this new production features a cast of up-and-coming opera talent in the roles of the young lovers, alongside distinguished veterans. Cast as the sisters are two Canadians: soprano **Layla Claire** in her COC debut as Fiordiligi and Ensemble Studio graduate mezzo-soprano **Wallis Giunta** (Annio in *La clemenza di Tito*, 2013) as Dorabella. Singing the roles of the sisters' two suitors are American tenor **Paul Appleby** in his COC debut as Ferrando and COC Ensemble graduate bass-baritone **Robert Gleadow** (Steersman in *Tristan und Isolde*, 2013; Publio in *La clemenza di Tito*, 2013) as Guglielmo. World-renowned Canadian soprano **Tracy Dahl** makes a highly anticipated return to the COC stage after a 19-year-long absence, in the role of the conniving Despina. **Sir Thomas Allen**, one of the finest lyric baritones on the world stage, makes his COC debut as the wily Don Alfonso. COC resident conductor **Derek Bate** leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus for one performance. *Così fan tutte* was last performed on the COC mainstage in 2006 and is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™. The production runs for 10 performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **January 18, 24, 29, February 1, 6, 7*, 9, 15, 18, 21, 2014**.

***ENSEMBLE STUDIO PERFORMANCE COSÌ FAN TUTTE ON FEBRUARY 7, 2014**

The young singers of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio perform Mozart's *Così fan tutte* on **February 7, 2014** 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 *Così fan tutte*'s conductor **Johannes Debus** and director **Atom Egoyan**. For casting, please visit the COC website at coc.ca. Tickets are accessibly priced at \$25 and \$55 per person.

In contrast with Mozart's tale of young, uncertain love, the COC's 13/14 winter season continues with Verdi's more mature and bittersweet story of forbidden passion, *Un ballo in maschera*. Requiring singers who can mine vast reserves of musical power and sensitivity, the COC has cast one of the world's best dramatic sopranos, Canadian **Adrienne Pieczonka** (*Tosca*, 2012; *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2011), and tenor **Dimitri Pittas** (*Rigoletto*, 2011) as the opera's two lovers embroiled in political intrigue beyond their control. **Pieczonka** and **Pittas** make their role debuts as Amelia and Riccardo. British baritone **Roland Wood** is Renato, Amelia's husband, acclaimed Canadian mezzo-soprano **Marie-Nicole Lemieux** (*Rodelinda*, *Tancredi*, 2005) is the fortune-teller Ulrica, and rising soprano star Ensemble Studio graduate **Simone Osborne** is Oscar, the page. Not unlike the opera's plot itself, political machinations have played a huge role in *Un ballo in maschera*'s history. Originally forced to change the opera's setting to Boston from Sweden to quell censors' fears of real-life assassination plots, Verdi and his opera are proof that his theme of "love in a dangerous time" is both a universal truth and historically fluid. In this same spirit, acclaimed directing duo **Jossi Wieler** and **Sergio Morabito** have revealed a layer of political and historical relevance to the plot by placing this Berlin Staatsoper production in the American South of the 1960s, with its undertones of Kennedy-era tensions, assassinations and power plays. **Stephen Lord** (conducting *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2013), one of America's most distinguished conductors of opera today, returns to lead the COC Orchestra and Chorus. *Un ballo in maschera* was last performed at the COC in 2003. Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™, *Un ballo in maschera* returns to the COC for eight performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **February 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 16, 20, 22, 2014**.

The opera company's 13/14 spring season offers a trio of COC premieres: Handel's *Hercules*, Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* and Massenet's *Don Quichotte*.

Internationally renowned director **Peter Sellars** (directing *Tristan und Isolde*, 2013) returns to the opera company with a new production of Handel's *Hercules*. **Sellars** propels the incendiary Greek myth of Hercules into the modern day, giving voice to the untold horrors of war and the unspoken complications faced by veterans returning home. With his frequent collaborators, set designer **George Tsybin**, costume designer **Dunya Ramicova** and lighting designer **James F. Ingalls**, **Sellars** has created a minimalist production that evokes ancient Greece while still locating the action clearly in the present. This co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago earned unequivocal praise when it opened in Chicago in 2011. "An opera performance this great is plenty rare. But opera capable of inspiring moral action is for the ages," said the *Los Angeles Times* while the *Chicago Sun-Times* described it as a production that "will follow you home and keep you thinking as well." The same star-studded cast from Chicago take to the COC mainstage: American bass-baritone **Eric Owens** makes his COC debut as Hercules; British mezzo-soprano **Alice Coote** (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2011) is Hercules's wife Dejanira; American countertenor **David Daniels** (*Xerxes*, 1999) returns to the COC as Hercules's trusted aide, Lichas; American tenor **Richard Croft** (*Così fan tutte*, 1991) returns as Hercules's son, Hyllus; and British soprano **Lucy Crowe** makes her COC debut as Iole, the princess whose father died at Hercules's hand. Conducting Handel's glorious music is internationally renowned Baroque specialist and COC favourite **Harry Bicket** (*Orfeo ed Euridice*, 2011; *Idomeneo*, 2009; *Rodelinda*, 2005). *Hercules* is sung in English with English SURTITLES™ and runs for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **April 5, 11, 15, 19, 24, 27, 30, 2014**.

American soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** (*Aida*, 2010), the world's leading interpreter of the great 19th-century Italian *prima donna* roles, returns to the COC to take on a new challenge with her role debut as the central character Elisabetta in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*. Making his COC and role debut as Roberto Devereux, whose life hangs in the balance for having betrayed his Queen's affections by falling in love with the wife of one her courtiers, is celebrated lyric tenor, Italian **Giuseppe Filianoti**. Also making role debuts are internationally acclaimed and COC favourite, Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** (*Il Trovatore*, 2012; *Love from Afar*, 2012; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 2011) as the Duke of Nottingham and acclaimed Ensemble Studio graduate mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy** (*Semele*, 2012; *Madama Butterfly*, 2009) as Sara, the Duchess of Nottingham. Donizetti's show stopping melodies and sumptuous period costumes bring the intrigue of the Elizabethan court to life within a Shakespearean Globe Theatre-inspired setting in this Dallas Opera production by acclaimed British director **Stephen Lawless**, who also staged the COC's hugely popular *Maria Stuarda* in 2010. Acclaimed Italian conductor **Corrado Rovaris** makes his COC debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus. *Roberto Devereux* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **April 25, 29, May 3, 10, 15, 18, 21, 2014**.

Italian **Ferruccio Furlanetto**, the world's pre-eminent bass, makes his COC debut in the title role of Massenet's intensely moving *Don Quichotte*, which closes the COC's 13/14 season. Massenet's autumnal outpouring of lush melody, based on Cervantes' iconic novel about the idealistic dreamer, Don Quixote, also stars Metropolitan Opera star, Russian mezzo-soprano **Ekaterina Gubanova**, in her COC debut as Dulcinée. American baritone **Quinn Kelsey**, acclaimed for his COC performances as Rigoletto in 2011, returns to make his role debut as Sancho Panza. American director **Linda Brovsky** makes her COC debut with this enchanting production where characters spring out of giant leather-bound storybooks and windmills are fashioned from oversized quills. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts his first *Don Quichotte* when he leads the COC Orchestra and Chorus through a score that represents Massenet's tribute to the last days of chivalry, but also his own poignant farewell to a soon-to-be-lost golden age of French Romanticism. *Don Quichotte* is sung in French with English SURTITLES™ and runs for seven performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **May 9, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22, 24, 2014**.

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 13/14 season live on coc.ca on Jan. 23, 2013, 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 13/14 season, please visit coc.ca.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The COC's new production of *La Bohème* has been generously underwritten by **Jerry and Geraldine Heffernan**

The COC's new production of *Così fan tutte* has been generously underwritten in part by **BMO Financial Group**

Un ballo in maschera Production Sponsor: **CIBC**

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The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb and The Slight Family Foundation, 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 also supported by the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, RBC Foundation and other generous donors.

TICKET INFORMATION

Now on sale, subscriptions to the seven mainstage productions for the COC's 13/14 season range from **\$184 to \$1,311**, with Grand Ring (box level) seat subscriptions available at **\$1,913**, 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. Prices include HST.

Single tickets to all of the COC's 13/14 season productions are available to the public as of August 24, 2013. Single ticket prices range from **\$45 to \$224** (\$49 to \$246 for *La Bohème*), with Grand Ring (box level) seat tickets available at **\$271 and \$332** (\$298 and \$365 for *La Bohème*). Prices include HST.

Young People

Special young people's tickets for all performances throughout the season are priced from **\$24 to \$112 (\$26 to \$123 for *La Bohème*)**, 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: **September 21, 2013; December 7, 2013; and March 22, 2014**. Program patrons may opt to pay \$35, whereby their tickets are automatically upgraded to the best available the morning of the performance they are attending. A total of 150 seats for Opera Under 30, each priced at \$22, will be available for every COC performance. Opera Under 30 is presented by TD Bank Group.

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 largest in North America. The COC enjoys a loyal audience support-base and one of the highest attendance and subscription rates in North America. 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 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 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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