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BEST ARTISTS IN THE WORLD FEATURED IN COC'S 2014/2015 SEASON OF NEW AND CLASSIC COMPANY PRODUCTIONS

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** unveiled a season dominated by the most important, respected and talked-about artists working on the operatic world stage today at a public launch of its 2014/2015 season at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

The company's 64th season is comprised entirely of COC productions, featuring three new productions, developed in partnership with other premier opera companies, and revivals of three classic COC works that have defined the company's reputation for artistic excellence and innovation. The COC presents Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* in a new COC production, a revival of its beloved production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in a new COC creation, the revival of its acclaimed staging of Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*, Gioacchino Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* in a new COC production, and the return of the COC's iconic double-bill of Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung*.

For the 14/15 season, the COC has undertaken a restructuring of its subscription pricing. The introduction of **new value-pricing options** offers subscribers an unparalleled level of affordability, making attending the full COC season more accessible than ever before. This new special value pricing for all six operas will be available on most levels of the Four Seasons Centre including the Orchestra, Grand Ring box, and Ring 3 levels. Six-opera subscriptions for the 14/15 season are available now in these select sections for **\$169, \$399, \$499 and \$799, representing a saving of between 50% and 60% on individual ticket prices.**

"The 2014/2015 season is one that I'd describe to audiences as an unforgettable journey of musical, sensory and artistic discovery, delivered by some of the most talented emerging and established stars operating on the world stage. This season features a line-up of the finest opera companies and artists working today, and that is a testament to the international draw of this company," says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. "We have made going to the opera next season as affordable to the community as possible. The level of talent coming to our company is extraordinary and we really believe that as many people as possible should be given every opportunity we can give them to experience these artists on our stage."

Neef adds, "I'm particularly proud that the 14/15 season is comprised entirely of productions owned or co-owned by the COC. Our three new productions have been created with the world's best opera companies and the three revivals are essential pieces in the company's history. Ultimately, an all-COC season reflects the new artistic paradigm we're in, in the consistency and quality of our works."

Among the companies and festivals that the COC has partnered with for the 14/15 season to develop the newest productions to enter its repertoire are Festival d'Aix-en-Provence; Opera Australia; Bolshoi Theatre; Houston Grand Opera; Metropolitan Opera; Opéra National de Bordeaux; Netherlands Opera; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Teatro Real Madrid; and Teatro alla Scala.

The COC is bringing some of the world's best artists and most compelling storytellers to its mainstage for the 14/15 season, many of whom are considered to be among the defining singers, conductors, directors and designers of their generation. Among those making their company debuts are singers **Andrea Carè, Amanda Echalaz, Christine Goerke, Cecelia Hall, Jennifer Holloway, Kelly Kaduce, Serena Malfi, Heidi Melton, Patricia Racette, Johan Reuter, Stefano Secco and Alek Shrader**; director **Dmitri Tcherniakov**; and conductors **Michael Hofstetter** and **Patrick Lange**. The COC also welcomes the return of a number of acclaimed Canadian and international artists

including singers **Frédéric Antoun**, **Jane Archibald**, **Russell Braun**, **Dwayne Croft**, **Gregory Dahl**, **Elizabeth DeShong**, **Gerald Finley**, **Clifton Forbis**, **Ekaterina Gubanova**, **Joshua Hopkins**, **Kyle Ketelsen**, **Marie-Nicole Lemieux**, **Simone Osborne**, **John Relyea**, **Michael Schade**, **Lauren Segal** and **Krisztina Szabó**; directors **Robert Carsen**, **Atom Egoyan**, **Robert Lepage**, **Brian Macdonald**, and the production team of **Els Comediants**; conductor **Rory Macdonald**; and designers **Susan Benson**, **Michael Levine** and **Michael Whitfield**. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts three of the company's productions this season. All performances take place in the company's home, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, and feature the internationally renowned **COC Orchestra and Chorus**.

The COC's 14/15 season opens with an opera hailed as the crowning achievement of Verdi's career, *Falstaff*. This new COC co-production with Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Teatro alla Scala; Metropolitan Opera and Netherlands Opera has already delighted audiences in London, Milan and New York, described as "a wonderful show" (*Telegraph*), "enchanting" (*New York Times*) and "Verdi's masterpiece has rarely seemed so rich or life-affirming" (*Opera News*). Master director Canadian **Robert Carsen** (2013's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2011's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 2011's *Orfeo ed Euridice*) sets the action of this operatic tale based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in a lovingly-rendered 1950s England. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts his first *Falstaff*, taking the COC Orchestra and Chorus through the innate lyricism and artistry of Verdi's score that captures all the joy, wisdom and profound humanity of Shakespeare's comic invention. In the title role of Sir John Falstaff is internationally acclaimed, Grammy- and Juno Award-winning Canadian baritone **Gerald Finley**. Described as "an opera singer of distinction" by the *New York Times*, **Finley** makes his long-awaited return to the COC mainstage in a highly anticipated role debut as the lovable lecher Falstaff, who clings to his supposedly noble roots, even as he steals, cheats and deceives his way into an ill-advised scheme involving two gentlemen and their wives. Internationally acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** (2014's *Roberto Devereux*, 2012's *Il Trovatore* and *Love from Afar*) is Ford, Falstaff's nemesis. The two wives determined to teach Falstaff a lesson are played by two rising stars: South African soprano **Amanda Echalaz**, who sings Alice Ford, and Ensemble Studio graduate, South African-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Lauren Segal** (2012's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, 2011's *Iphigenia in Tauris*). Acclaimed Canadian mezzo-soprano **Marie-Nicole Lemieux** (2005's *Rodelinda* and *Tancredi*) is Mistress Quickly, reprising the role she sang to great acclaim in London and Milan. Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Simone Osborne** (2014's *A Masked Ball*, 2013's *La Bohème*, 2012's *Gianni Schicchi*, 2011's *Rigoletto* and *The Magic Flute*) is the lovesick Nannetta and Canadian tenor **Frédéric Antoun** (2013's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2011's *The Magic Flute*) sings Fenton, her amorous suitor. *Falstaff* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and was last performed by the COC in 2004. It returns to the opera company's mainstage for seven performances on **October 3, 9, 12, 14, 25, 29, November 1, 2014**.

Also in the fall is the COC's beloved production of Puccini's heartbreaking masterpiece of love, longing and loss, *Madama Butterfly*. This exquisite production by Canadian theatrical legend **Brian Macdonald**, designed by **Susan Benson** with lighting by **Michael Whitfield**, has become a Toronto favourite, playing to sold-out audiences at its 1990 premiere and subsequent revivals in 1994, 1998, 2003 and 2009. Two great American singing actresses share the feature role of Cio-Cio San: **Patricia Racette** and **Kelly Kaduce**. **Racette's** portrayal of the beloved heroine touched millions in the recent Metropolitan Opera HD broadcast and has been declared to "rightly stand among the great Butterflies of her era" (*Opera News*), while **Kaduce's** riveting portrayal "demolishes stereotypes. This is no conventional Butterfly-as-victim, but a woman of consequence" (*Santa Fe Reporter*). Singing the role of Cio-Cio San's beloved Pinkerton are **Stefano Secco**, praised for his "gorgeous, nuanced Italianate tenor singing" (*Opera News*) and **Andrea Carè**, one of the most important artists among the new generation of Italian tenors. Internationally acclaimed American mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong** (2011's *Cinderella*) is Suzuki, Cio-Cio San's devoted servant. Two of the finest baritones of their generation, American **Dwayne Croft** (1993's *The Marriage of Figaro*) and Canadian **Gregory Dahl** (2014's *A Masked Ball*, 2012's *The Tales of Hoffmann*) share the role of the American Consul, Sharpless. A rising star in the generation of young conductors, German **Patrick Lange** makes his COC debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus. *Madama Butterfly* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 12 performances on **October 10, 11, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 2014**.

Mozart's darkly witty masterpiece about the master of seduction, *Don Giovanni*, is brought to blistering life in a new game-changing COC co-production by Moscow-born director **Dmitri Tcherniakov** with internationally acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** (2014's *Falstaff* and *Roberto Devereux*, 2012's *Il Trovatore* and *Love from Afar*) in the title role. Named Best Director at London's inaugural International Opera Awards in 2013, **Tcherniakov** makes his

COC debut with one of his deeply considered, unconventional and piercingly honest productions that the *Financial Times* hailed as “a thrillingly accomplished *Don Giovanni* that caught us off guard.” In bringing the operatic tale of literature’s most famous womanizer, Don Juan, to life, **Tcherniakov** plumbs the psychological possibilities of this work. The characters have become part of one extended family, who are, in one way or another, brought into the thrall of the mesmerizing title character. As Don Giovanni, **Braun** reunites with Tcherniakov and reprises the role he sang for Teatro Real Madrid in 2013. He leads a dream cast that includes renowned Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald** (2012’s *Semele*, 2011’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*) as Donna Anna, one of Don Giovanni’s conquests; and one of the leading Mozart tenors on the stage today, Canadian **Michael Schade** (2013’s *La clemenza di Tito*, 2012’s *Die Fledermaus*, 2011’s *The Magic Flute*), as Don Ottavio, Donna Anna’s fiancé. Lauded American mezzo-soprano **Jennifer Holloway** is Donna Elvira, Don Giovanni’s wife. Renowned American bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** (2011’s *Cinderella*) reprises the role of Leporello, Don Giovanni’s relative, following performances of this production with Teatro Real Madrid and Festival d’Aix-en-Provence. Leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus for the first time is accomplished and highly lauded German conductor **Michael Hofstetter**. *Don Giovanni* was last presented by the COC in 2008 and returns in a new COC co-production with Teatro Real Madrid, Festival d’Aix-en-Provence and Bolshoi Theatre. *Don Giovanni* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™ and runs for 10 performances on **January 24, 27, 30, February 1, 3, 6, 12, 14, 18, 21, 2015**.

Wagner’s *Die Walküre* returns to the COC mainstage for the 14/15 season with the company’s critically acclaimed production by renowned Canadian director **Atom Egoyan** (2014’s *Così fan tutte*, 2013’s *Salome*). First presented by the COC in 2004 and then in 2006 as part of the COC’s full *Ring Cycle*, which inaugurated the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, this critically acclaimed production has been described as “powerful and moving” (*Globe and Mail*) and “as thoughtful and poetic as it is gripping” (*National Post*). Canadian **Michael Levine** (2013’s *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2011’s *Rigoletto*) designed the “striking to behold” (*Opera*) sets and costumes. A star-studded cast is featured in this masterwork about a passionate, forbidden love ignited in a war of gods and mortals, and a warrior goddess who risks everything to preserve the future. One of the most exciting dramatic sopranos in the world, Grammy Award-winning American **Christine Goerke**, makes her first appearance with the COC in a role debut performance as the mighty Valkyrie Brünnhilde. She’s joined by American **Clifton Forbis** as the half-mortal Siegmund, who reprises the role he sang to rave reviews at the COC in 2004 and 2006. Highly sought-after Danish baritone **Johan Reuter** makes his COC debut as Wotan, king of the gods. American soprano **Heidi Melton**, hailed as “the Wagnerian voice we have been waiting for since Flagstad and Nilsson” (*La Presse*), makes her COC debut as Sieglinde, Siegmund’s lover and his unknown twin sister. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts his first *Die Walküre*, leading the COC Orchestra through a score that features some of the most powerful music ever conceived. *Die Walküre* is sung in German with English SURTITLES™ and runs for seven performances on **January 31, February 4, 7, 10, 13, 19, 22, 2015**.

Toronto audiences will discover love has a sense of humour with the COC’s new production of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* from the Spanish theatre troupe **Els Comediants**. The group came to international prominence in 1992 with the spectacular fire ceremony they designed for the closing of the Barcelona Olympics, and they wowed Toronto when they brought their unbounded vitality to the recent COC presentation of *Cinderella*. In *The Barber of Seville*, the Spaniards take on Rossini’s greatest comedy about a barber who helps a nobleman win the woman of his dreams. Their cubist-inspired set plays with scale and proportion, while bursts of day-glo colour and innovative lighting conjure a fantasy world hovering between fairytale and vaudeville. The wily barber Figaro is sung by Canadian **Joshua Hopkins** (2013’s *La Bohème*), “an outstanding young baritone with a virile, vigorous yet velvety sound and an immediately evident dramatic authority” (*Globe and Mail*). Count Almaviva, the young suitor that Figaro assists, is American **Alek Shrader**, noted as “possibly one of the most exciting young tenors on the planet” (*Seen and Heard International*). The role of the young and charming heroine Rosina is shared by two exciting mezzo-sopranos poised on the threshold of international careers, Italian **Serena Malfi** and American **Cecelia Hall**. Leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Rossini’s veritable hit parade of a score, filled with showstoppers and sparkling tunes, is Scottish-born **Rory Macdonald** (2010’s *Carmen*), one of Britain’s most talented, dynamic young conductors. *The Barber of Seville* was last presented by the COC in 2008 and returns in this COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera, Opéra National de Bordeaux and Opera Australia. Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™, *The Barber of Seville* runs for 13 performances on **April 17, 19, 21, 26, 29, May 2, 7, 9, 13, 15*, 19, 21, 22, 2015**.

***ENSEMBLE STUDIO PERFORMANCE OF *THE BARBER OF SEVILLE* ON MAY 15, 2015**

The young singers of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio perform Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* on **May 15, 2015** at 7:30 p.m. on the mainstage. This special performance stars Ensemble Studio members with the full COC Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of *Barber of Seville* conductor **Rory Macdonald** and artistic production team **Els Comediants**. For casting, please visit the COC website at canadianopera.ca. Tickets are accessibly priced at \$25 and \$55 per person.

The COC's iconic double-bill of Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* returns to the company's mainstage to close the 14/15 season. The 1993 premiere of *Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung* by director **Robert Lepage** (2009's *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*) was a watershed moment for the COC, establishing it as one of the world's most visionary and compelling opera companies. **Lepage's** spectacular and surprising integration of movement, light and theatrical sleight-of-hand, features set and costume design by Canadian **Michael Levine** (2015's *Die Walküre*, 2013's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2011's *Rigoletto*) and lighting design by American **David Finn** (2006's *Ring Cycle*, 2005's *Macbeth*). The COC subsequently garnered world-wide acclaim in presenting this production on the company's inaugural visits to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Edinburgh International Festival, Melbourne International Festival and Hong Kong Arts Festival. *Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung* is now presented for the first time at the Four Seasons Centre. Bartók's only opera features superstar Canadian bass-baritone **John Relyea** (2012's *The Tales of Hoffmann*) as the inscrutable Duke Bluebeard whose castle holds untold secrets. Russian **Ekaterina Gubanova** (2014's *Don Quichotte*) one of the finest mezzo-sopranos in the world, is Judith, the bride who unlocks the rooms of her mysterious husband's castle. Schoenberg's monodrama about a woman who descends into madness stars virtuosic Canadian mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó** (2012's *Love from Afar*, 2010's *Idomeneo*, 2006's *Ring Cycle*) in a role debut performance as the Woman. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts both operas for the first time when he takes to the podium to lead the COC Orchestra through these visceral and haunting scores. *Bluebeard's Castle* is sung in Hungarian and *Erwartung* is sung in German, both with English SURTITLES™. The double-bill was last presented by the COC in 2001 and returns for seven performances on **May 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 23, 2015**.

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.

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The COC's production of *Die Walküre* was originally made possible by **Kolter Communities**

The Barber of Seville Production Sponsor: **CIBC**

Presenting Sponsor of SURTITLES™: **Sun Life Financial**

Official Automotive Sponsor of the COC at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts: **Mercedes-Benz Canada**

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, Hal Jackman Foundation, and other generous donors.

TICKET INFORMATION

Now on sale, subscriptions to the six mainstage productions for the COC's 14/15 season range from **\$148 to \$2,050**, 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. **Special value pricing is available on most levels of the Four Seasons Centre, including the Orchestra, Grand Ring box, and Ring 3 levels.** Prices include HST. Special pricing is also available for seniors and children in all subscription series.

Single tickets to all of the COC's 14/15 season productions are available to the public as of August 25, 2014. Single tickets prices range from **\$12 to \$339** (includes applicable taxes). Tickets are available online at coc.ca, by calling **416-363-8231**, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office**, located at 145 Queen St. W.

For more information on specially priced tickets available to **young people under the age of 15, standing room, Opera Under 30** presented by **TD Bank Group, student groups** and **rush seating**, visit coc.ca.

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, canadianopera.ca.

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