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## **CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY LAUNCHES ORCHESTRA ACADEMY**

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company** expands its training program for young opera professionals this January with the launch of the **Canadian Opera Company Orchestra Academy**. Developed in collaboration with the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music, the **COC Orchestra Academy** is a mentorship program led by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** offering student musicians professional insight and experience in their pursuit of a career in an opera orchestra.

The **COC Orchestra Academy** begins on January 7, 2014, with three student musicians being mentored by members of the COC Orchestra as they attend orchestral rehearsals of the opera company’s winter productions of *Così fan tutte* and *A Masked Ball*. From the Glenn Gould School, cellist **Ashton Lim** will be mentored by COC assistant principal cellist **Paul Widner**. Also from GGS is Rebanks Family Fellow oboist **Alessandro Rauli**, who will be mentored by COC principal oboist **Mark Rogers** and COC oboist **Lesley Young**. From UofT’s Faculty of Music, violinist **Rebecca MacLeod** will be mentored by COC violinist **Dominique Laplante**.

“What we’re creating with the COC Orchestra Academy is an opportunity to pass on the wealth of experience that the members of the COC Orchestra possess to the next generation of musicians coming up through the ranks,” says COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**. “The students selected for the launch of the program represent some promising talent and I’m very interested to see how they will blend in with our players and the perspective they’ll gain on the world of the orchestra pit.”

“This exciting new program is an inspiring example of everything we are striving for in music education and performance training,” says **James Anagnoson**, Dean of the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music. “There is no substitute for one-on-one mentorship with leading artists, and the COC Orchestra Academy experience will provide this in the most professional of settings. It is a pleasure for GGS to collaborate with the COC and the University of Toronto in providing such a special opportunity for our students.”

“The chance to take part in rehearsals, observing performances both from the pit and from the audience perspective, and the chance to talk to professional players and watch them in action adds up to a very full and rich experience for our students,” says **Jeff Reynolds**, Performance Division Coordinator and Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. “We value it as excellent outreach, offering a real-life experience impossible to duplicate any other way.”

The **COC Orchestra Academy** runs for the duration of orchestra rehearsals for the COC’s 2014 winter season. Over the next four weeks, the participating students will experience how an operatic performance comes together, how to prepare their part of a score, and the expectations from a first rehearsal through to the development and improvement of an orchestra over the course of rehearsals and performances.

Through observation as well as working with their assigned mentors, **COC Orchestra Academy** students will be exposed to all aspects of playing as part of an opera orchestra. Opportunities include:

- studying rehearsal and performance etiquette, as well as developing the awareness, coordination, reaction, flexibility and listening skills required to play in an opera orchestra;
- learning endurance techniques and how to focus for long periods of time;
- gaining an understanding of sound production, articulation and blending as well as tuning within the orchestra, the section and with the singers, and the subtleties of balancing sound intensity; and
- studying different styles and levels of expressiveness in musicianship.

**Ashton Lim, Rebecca MacLeod** and **Alessandro Rauli** are the inaugural students of the **COC Orchestra Academy**, selected by the COC's **Debus, Widner** and resident conductor **Derek Bate**, GGS's Associate Dean and Director of Chamber Music **Barry Shiffman** and UofT's **Reynolds**. **Lim, MacLeod** and **Rauli** were chosen from a select pool of 10 students from GGS and UofT's Faculty of Music who auditioned for the extra-curricular program in December 2013.

The **COC Orchestra Academy** launches in January 2014 as a pilot program with the intention of growing the initiative to include more students and members of the COC Orchestra. There is no official credit attached to the students' participation. Members of the COC Orchestra participate in the **COC Orchestra Academy** voluntarily.

Cellist **Ashton Lim** is currently pursuing an artist diploma at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music. He has performed throughout North America and Asia, enjoying an exciting and varied career as a soloist, chamber musician, orchestral player and teacher.

Violinist **Rebecca MacLeod** is currently pursuing a master of music at the University of Toronto. She is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and the Glenn Gould School, and enjoys a diverse career as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral performer.

Oboist **Alessandro Rauli** is currently studying at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music taking part in the Rebanks Family Fellowship and International Performance Residency Program. Rauli has performed with the Veneto Philharmonic Orchestra and the Mantova Friends of Music Orchestra, as well as playing first oboe and solo for *Oboe Concerto in D-minor* by Alessandro Marcello with the Benacus Orchestra.

#### **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 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 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](http://coc.ca).

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