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FERRUCCIO FURLANETTO IN CANADIAN DEBUT BRINGS GREATEST LITERARY HERO TO LIFE FOR COC PREMIERE OF *DON QUICHOTTE*

Toronto – The greatest operatic bass in the world today, **Ferruccio Furlanetto**, makes his Canadian debut this spring in the **Canadian Opera Company** premiere of the operatic tale of literature’s famous dreamer, *Don Quichotte* by Jules Massenet. Known for an intensely moving portrayal of the title character, **Furlanetto** stars in this musically lush and romantic homage to Cervantes’ iconic hero, Don Quixote. *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**.

Massenet’s autumnal outpouring of poignant melodies and Spanish dance rhythms evokes a romanticized medieval Spain. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts his first *Don Quichotte*, leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through a score that represents Massenet’s tribute to the last days of noble valour as well as a farewell to the soon-to-be-lost golden age of French Romanticism.

The tale of this eccentric knight-errant and his adventures in pursuit of justice, fame and honour comes to life in an enchanting production by critically acclaimed American director **Linda Brovsky**. Characters spring out of giant leather-bound storybooks and windmills are fashioned from oversized quills in a set designed by **Donald Eastman** with costumes created by **Christina Poddubiuk** and lighting conceived by **Connie Yun**. A whimsical vision of one of the greatest literary heroes ever conceived, **Brovsky** calls this production of *Don Quichotte* from Seattle Opera “a valentine to the power of imagination – it’s our love letter to it, and the power of literature.”

The COC introduces Canadian audiences to Italian bass **Ferruccio Furlanetto**, the world’s leading Don Quichotte, with this production. One of opera’s most sought-after singers, **Furlanetto**’s vast range, thundering vocal power and renowned acting ability have been met with popular and critical acclaim over the course of a legendary 40-year career. **Furlanetto** is a regular at the world’s greatest opera houses and concert halls and makes a long-awaited Canadian debut in one of his favourite roles. “**The completeness of the role gives the interpreter a unique satisfaction,**” says Furlanetto. “**It is because [Don Quichotte] is what every man should be ideally, at least for a few moments in his life. He is a man full of humanity, love, tenderness and appreciation of life.**”

Also making her Canadian debut is powerhouse Russian mezzo-soprano **Ekaterina Gubanova** in a role debut as Dulcinée, the object of Don Quichotte’s misplaced affection. One of the finest mezzo-sopranos of her generation, **Gubanova** comes to the COC after recent star turns at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Teatro alla Scala; Berlin Staatsoper; Lyric Opera of Chicago and Metropolitan Opera. She returns to Toronto for the COC revival of Robert Lepage’s production of Bartok’s *Bluebeard’s Castle* in 2015.

Rounding out the principal cast is one of the most exciting young baritones emerging on the international operatic stage: American baritone **Quinn Kelsey** in his role debut as Sancho Panza, Don Quichotte’s loyal sidekick. He returns to the COC after delivering “a stupendous performance” (*Globe and Mail*) in the title role of the COC’s *Rigoletto* in 2011.

Making her COC debut in the pants role of Garcias, one of Dulcinée’s prospective suitors, is Greek-Canadian **Ariana Chris**. She comes to the COC having delighted audiences across Canada and internationally with “a beautifully burnished mezzo-soprano voice, a fine way with a musical phrase and a strong stage presence” (*Toronto Star*). Singing the roles of Don Quichotte’s other rivals for Dulcinée’s affections are Ensemble Studio soprano **Sasha Djhanian**, also in a pants role, as Pedro, and Ensemble Studio tenors **Owen McCausland** and **Andrew Haji** as Juan and Rodriguez, respectively. Canadian character tenor **Michel Corbeil** is Ténébrun, the bandit chief who steals the pearl necklace that Don Quichotte sets out to retrieve for Dulcinée.

In a nod to the distinctive flavour of Spain captured in the music, Spanish classical dance is incorporated into the production with choreography by acclaimed Flamenco dancer **Sara de Luis** and danced by four local dancers and veteran Mexican Flamenco star **Raúl Salcedo**. Also making featured appearances are a live horse and donkey, two essential four-legged characters who serve as the trusted companions to the opera's noble hero and his sidekick.

About Don Quichotte

Don Quichotte was first performed in Monte Carlo in 1910, just two years before Jules Massenet died at the age of 70. While Massenet was France's most celebrated opera composer during his lifetime, his operas are rarely staged today with the exception of *Manon* and *Werther*. *Don Quichotte* endures as a showcase work for opera's great basses, who possess the gravitas, charisma and vocalism to master the title role's considerable musical and dramatic demands.

The opera *Don Quichotte* is based on a play by poet Jacques Le Lorrain, *Le chevalier de la longue figure*, which in turn is an adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' canonical and influential novel *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*. Cervantes' novel has inspired numerous adaptations for film and theatre, notably the hit Broadway musical *Man of La Mancha* and the movie *Don Quixote*, starring John Lithgow.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Don Quichotte* are \$12 – \$332 (includes applicable taxes), and 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** (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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.

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.

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.

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