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SONDRA RADVANOVSKY IN ROLE DEBUT AS ELIZABETH I FOR COC PREMIERE OF DONIZETTI'S TUDOR DRAMA, *ROBERTO DEVEREUX*

Toronto – World renowned American soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** returns to the **Canadian Opera Company** this spring in the ultimate diva role, Queen Elizabeth I, for the COC premiere of Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*. The tumultuous final days of the reign of the Virgin Queen are depicted in this powerful drama of show-stopping vocal fireworks, directed by **Stephen Lawless** and conducted by **Corrado Rovaris**. *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**.

Stephen Lawless (*Maria Stuarda*, 2010; *Il Trovatore*, 2005) returns to the COC with a riveting interpretation of *Roberto Devereux*. Created by **Lawless** for Dallas Opera as part of its presentation of the Donizetti Tudor trilogy (*Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Roberto Devereux*), the intrigue of the Elizabethan court comes to life with this production's Shakespearean-inspired Globe Theatre set design by **Benoît Dugardyn** (first seen by COC audiences in 2010's *Maria Stuarda*) and sumptuous period costumes by **Ingeborg Bernerth**, with lighting design by **Marc McCullough**.

Roberto Devereux is a showcase for brilliant singing, demanding a cast capable of scaling the heights of vocal athleticism. Leading the voices at the heart of this production is superstar soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** (*Aida*, 2010) making her role debut as Elisabetta (Queen Elizabeth I). With this role, **Radvanovsky** realizes a rare and significant career achievement for a soprano by having sung all three of the Donizetti "Tudor queens."

Today's leading interpreter of the great 19th-century Italian prima donna roles, **Radvanovsky** has won accolades from critics and audiences alike for the sincerity and intensity of her performances in every major opera house in the world. The *Washington Post* has described her singing as "**outright gorgeous, poignant and silvery,**" with the *New York Times* recently lavishing praise on **Radvanovsky's "expressive shadings and heartfelt delivery"** with her "**top notes ringing and powerful, her middle range velvety, her coloratura nimble and phrasing elegant.**"

Celebrated Italian tenor **Giuseppe Filianoti** makes 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. One of the preeminent lyric tenors of his generation, **Filianoti** has won widespread critical and popular praise for the beauty of his voice, the passionate lyricism of his artistry, and the dramatic fervor of his approach to the stage. A regular at Europe's leading opera houses, Filianoti's starring with increasing frequency at the Metropolitan Opera where he has "**soared to virile, commanding form**" (*New York Post*) and earned praise from the *Associated Press* for his "**rich-toned and fluent**" singing and from the *New York Times* for the "**melting sound**" of his voice.

Also making role debuts are two internationally acclaimed Canadian stars: baritone **Russell Braun** and COC Ensemble Studio graduate mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy**. **Braun** has been celebrated for his "**vocal warmth, nuanced phrasing**" (*New York Times*) and called "**a model of style and grace**" (*Opera Now*) and "**one of this nation's operatic treasures**" (*Toronto Star*). He returns to the COC after a critically acclaimed and Dora Mavor Moore Award-winning performance in 2012's *Il Trovatore* to sing the Duke of Nottingham, Roberto Devereux's friend. **McHardy** has been called "**a revelation**" (*Financial Times*), singled out for her "**velvety and radiant mezzo**" (*Chicago Sun-Times*) and, in her most recent outing with the COC in 2012's *Semele*, was described as "**all creamy, dark magic**" (*Globe and Mail*) and praised for her "**believable emotion and theatrical detail**" (*NOW Magazine*). She returns to sing Sara, the Duchess of Nottingham, a woman torn between loyalty to her queen and an ill-fated love for Roberto Devereux.

Rounding out the cast is Ensemble Studio tenor **Owen McCausland** as Lord Cecil, American bass **Matt Boehler** as Sir Gualtiero Raleigh (Sir Walter Raleigh), Ensemble Studio bass-baritone **Gordon Bintner** as a Page and Ensemble Studio graduate bass-baritone **Neil Craighead** as a Servant of Nottingham.

Donizetti's dazzling and breathtaking melodies are directed by acclaimed Italian conductor **Corrado Rovaris**. The music director of the Opera Company of Philadelphia, the principal conductor of the Italian chamber orchestra I Virtuosi Italiani, and music director of the Artosphere Festival, **Rovaris** is also a regular guest artist in Italy's historic opera houses. He makes his COC debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Donizetti's emotional score.

About Roberto Devereux

Roberto Devereux is the last of three *bel canto* operas Donizetti wrote illustrating the Tudor court, the first two being *Anna Bolena*, and *Maria Stuarda*. The opera was performed repeatedly in the years immediately following its premiere in 1837. **Roberto Devereux** features some of Donizetti's best vocal writing. The opera is considered a dramatic and musical showcase for those cast in its roles, especially the soprano.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Roberto Devereux** 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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