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## **CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY WELCOMES FIVE PLAYERS TO 2015 COC ORCHESTRA ACADEMY**

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company Orchestra Academy** returns for a second year on **January 12, 2015**, this time welcoming five student musicians into its acclaimed COC Orchestra for an intense three-week period that offers them professional insight and experience in their pursuit of a career in an opera orchestra.

Led by **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**, the **COC Orchestra Academy** has been developed in collaboration with The Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. The five student players who join the Academy this year were selected from a pool of 14 musicians, from GGS and UofT, who auditioned for Debus and members of the COC Orchestra in November 2014: GGS double bassist **Malcolm Armstrong**, GGS cellist **Tess Crowther**, UofT violinist **Eric Fujita**, GGS violinist **Brenna Hardy-Kavanagh** and GGS violist **Laurence Schaufele**.

In joining the **COC Orchestra Academy**, these five student musicians will be mentored by players from the orchestra as well as gain valuable orchestral rehearsal and performance experience. This year's Academy participants join rehearsals for the COC's winter production of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, an opera that features some of the most powerful music ever conceived. Their Academy experience culminates in two unique performance opportunities: on **January 29**, as part of the COC's **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre**, members of the Academy perform a program of gems from the chamber music repertoire; and on **January 31**, Academy musicians perform with the COC Orchestra for opening night of *Die Walküre*.

"With the Orchestra Academy, we want to help bridge the gap between educational and professional life. It's one thing to sit in a rehearsal room alone in a conservatory or school and practice your concerti, but sitting in the orchestra pit or on a concert stage is different," says **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**. "This year, they will rehearse *Die Walküre* with us and perform on opening night. It might be a bit overwhelming at first, but this is good, and they will learn quickly. I'm incredibly thankful to our COC Orchestra members, who will work alongside these talented young players, sharing their expertise with Canada's next generation of professional orchestra musicians."

Over the three-week Academy session, the participating students 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.

The **COC Orchestra Academy** is an extra-curricular program that launched 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. The inaugural year of the program took in three students who joined rehearsals for the COC's 2014 productions of *Così fan tutte* and *A Masked Ball*. The three musicians also played with the COC Orchestra for the Ensemble Studio performance of *Così fan tutte*, a special presentation of the mainstage production that featured the singers of the company's training program for young opera professionals.

Double bassist **Malcolm Armstrong**, from Ottawa, is a first-year artist diploma student at GGS. He's been the assistant principal bass of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra and a guest soloist with the Parkdale United Church Orchestra as well as played with the world-renowned National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

Cellist **Tess Crowther**, from Edmonton, is in her fourth year of the performance diploma program at GGS. She's been principal cellist of the Edmonton Youth Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. In 2013, **Crowther** was invited to go to Bangalore, India to play with the Canada-India National Youth Orchestra.

Violinist **Eric Fujita**, from Toronto, is currently pursuing a doctor of musical arts at UofT. He was concertmaster of the University of Western Ontario and McGill Symphony orchestras, a violinist in the UWO Early Music Ensemble and concertmaster for opera productions at both institutions.

Violinist **Brenna Hardy-Kavanagh**, from Ottawa, is currently in her second year of the artist diploma program at GGS and is a member of the Royal Conservatory Orchestra, the Cadenza Chamber Duo, and the New Generation Chamber Orchestra. She's also performed with the Art of Time Ensemble, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Belle & Sebastian, and ABBAMANIA.

Violist **Laurence Schaufele**, from Bow Island, Alta., is a second-year artist diploma student at GGS. He's acted as principal violist of the Royal Conservatory Orchestra and played with many other orchestras in the Greater Toronto Area. **Schaufele** has played with the Afiara Quartet as part of the Discovery Series at Toronto's Mazzoleni Hall, and performed in BACHanlia, which kicked off Koerner Hall's 2012/2013 concert series.

On **January 29, 2015**, from **12 – 1 p.m.**, the COC's **Free Concert Series** presents "Introducing the Academy." The performance is **free** and takes place at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** (145 Queen St. W.). Admission is on a first-come, first-served basis, and concertgoers are encouraged to arrive early as late seating is not available.

Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre* is opera at its most epic and returns to the COC for seven performances at the **Four Seasons Centre**, from **January 31 – February 22, 2015**. For information on regular-priced single tickets as well as 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](http://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 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. For more information on the COC, visit its award-winning website, [coc.ca](http://coc.ca).

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