

For immediate release: August 27, 2014

COC REVIVES AUDIENCE FAVOURITE, *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*, ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST-LOVED OPERAS

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company**'s beloved production of Puccini's heartbreaking masterpiece of love, longing and loss, *Madama Butterfly*, comes to the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts this October. An exquisite production by Canadian theatrical legend **Brian Macdonald**, designed by **Susan Benson** with lighting by **Michael Whitfield**, the COC's *Madama Butterfly* has become a Toronto favourite, playing to sold-out audiences at its 1990 premiere and subsequent revivals in 1994, 1998, 2003 and 2009. *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 and 31, 2014**.

Madama Butterfly is the story of Cio-Cio San, a young Japanese geisha who seeks to fulfil her dreams through marriage to an American naval officer. Her faith in their future is shattered by his empty vows, and the loss she endures makes the opera's tragic ending even more devastating.

Two great American singing actresses make their COC debuts in the feature role of Cio-Cio San: **Patricia Racette** and **Kelly Kaduce**. One of the most important and acclaimed sopranos on the international stage today, **Racette** has appeared in the world's finest opera houses and comes to Toronto in her signature role of *Madama Butterfly*. **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*). **Kaduce** is a rising star on the operatic world stage, praised for delivering a Cio-Cio San that "demolishes stereotypes. This is no conventional Butterfly-as-victim, but a woman of consequence" (*Santa Fe Reporter*).

Also appearing with the COC for the first time are two of opera's leading tenors singing the role of Cio-Cio San's beloved Pinkerton: **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.

Returning to the COC is **Elizabeth DeShong** (2011's *Cinderella*, 2009's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) as Suzuki, Cio-Cio San's devoted servant. The internationally acclaimed American mezzo-soprano most recently sang the role with San Francisco Opera and the Metropolitan Opera.

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. Rising opera singer Korean-American tenor **Julius Ahn**, in his COC debut, and distinguished Canadian tenor, and Ensemble Studio graduate, **Michael Colvin** (2014's *Falstaff*, 2013's *Salome*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*) share the role of Goro, a Japanese marriage broker.

Rounding out the cast is Ensemble Studio baritone **Clarence Frazer** as Prince Yamadori; Ensemble Studio graduate bass **Robert Gleadow** (2014's *Falstaff*, 2014's *Così fan tutte*, 2013's *La clemenza di Tito*, 2012's *Il Trovatore*) as The Bonze; Canadian baritone **Gene Wu** as Yakuside; Ensemble Studio bass-baritone **Iain MacNeil** as The Imperial Commissioner; Ensemble Studio bass-baritone **Gordon Bintner** as The Official Registrar; Canadian mezzo-soprano **Lilian Kilianski** as Cio-Cio San's mother; Canadian mezzo-soprano **Karen Olinyk** as Cio-Cio San's aunt and Canadian soprano **Alexandra Lennox-Pomeroy** as Cio-Cio San's cousin.

A rising star in the generation of young conductors, German **Patrick Lange** makes his COC debut leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through Puccini's passionate score. Containing some of opera's most memorable music, *Madama Butterfly* is considered Puccini's best work, reflects his varied influences, including American and Japanese melodies, and features an unusually large orchestra for an Italian opera.

About *Madama Butterfly*

Set in Nagasaki, the plot of *Madama Butterfly* is partly based on an actual occurrence between an American naval officer and a Japanese geisha in the 1890s and was composed by Puccini after seeing David Belasco's play *Madame Butterfly* in 1900. After a less than favourable premiere at La Scala in 1904, Puccini withdrew the score and made extensive revisions. *Madama Butterfly* is now one of the most popular and most performed operas in the world.

Director **Brian Macdonald** and designer **Susan Benson** purposefully sought a design that would enhance the story of this treasured work. The production's lean abstract set design and use of space only serve to heighten the emotions of the drama unfolding on stage. Stylistically, **Benson** has chosen to present Japan through the lens of European Romanticism, rather than in a historically realistic way. The colour palette she draws from is one symbolic of troubles to come with bright oranges giving way to stormy greys.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Madama Butterfly* range from **\$12 – \$339** (subject to availability), 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 **specialty 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

Production Sponsors: **The Asper Foundation** and **KPMG**

The COC's production of *Madama Butterfly* was originally made possible by **John A. Cook**

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.

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

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

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, W. Garfield Weston 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**.

- 30 -

For more information or to request production photographs, please contact:
Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca