

For immediate release: December 15, 2014

COC PRESENTS “THE GREATEST OPERA EVER WRITTEN” IN GAME-CHANGING PRODUCTION OF MOZART’S *DON GIOVANNI*

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company**’s 2014/2015 winter season opens with a game-changing new production of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. Internationally acclaimed Russian director **Dmitri Tcherniakov** defies convention with this dark and witty masterpiece inspired by literature’s most famous womanizer, Don Juan. His vision is brought to blistering life by a dream cast led by renowned Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** and German maestro **Michael Hofstetter** conducting Mozart’s glorious score of irresistible melodies. Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™, *Don Giovanni* runs for 10 performances on **January 24, 27, 30, February 1, 3, 6, 12, 14, 18, 21, 2015** at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

Named Best Director at London’s inaugural International Opera Awards in 2013, **Dmitri Tcherniakov** makes his COC debut with a deeply considered, unconventional and piercingly honest production that the *Financial Times* hailed as “a thrillingly accomplished *Don Giovanni* that caught us off guard.” Described as “an artist whose work is on the edge of the cutting edge” (*Opera News*), **Tcherniakov** plumbs the psychological depths of this work about a driven and aggressive seducer, Don Giovanni, who goes too far and kills the father of one of his victims, while those whom he has hurt seek vengeance.

Deemed “the greatest opera ever written” by George Bernard Shaw, part of *Don Giovanni*’s enduring appeal in the years since its 1787 premiere is the scope for endless interpretation on the drives and meanings behind the story of Don Juan and Mozart’s opera. Originally, *Don Giovanni* takes place over a day or two and in several different locations. In this production, the tale unfolds over several weeks with the action confined to one room within a wildly luxurious home. **Tcherniakov**’s vision also reimagines the characters as one extended family who are, in one way or another, brought into the thrall of the mesmerizing title character. The result is a more tightly woven web where the characters’ relationships are intensified by their familial and physical closeness.

Renowned for his luminous voice “capable of the most powerful explosions as well as the gentlest covered notes” (*Toronto Star*), Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** rightfully claims his place on the concert, opera and recital stages of the world. As Don Giovanni, **Braun** reunites with **Tcherniakov** to reprise the role he sang for Teatro Real Madrid in 2013, and once again take on one of opera’s most intense and dramatically challenging characters. A regular at the COC in recent seasons (2014’s *Falstaff* and *Roberto Devereux*, 2012’s *Il Trovatore* and *Love from Afar*), **Braun**, as the mythical seducer, is the beloved baritone as COC audiences have never seen him before.

Internationally acclaimed Canadian **Jane Archibald** makes a role debut as Donna Anna, one of Don Giovanni’s conquests. The superstar coloratura soprano last appeared with the COC to popular and critical acclaim in 2012’s *Semele* and 2011’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*, delighting Toronto audiences with an “unbelievable mastery of singing, controlled with apparent ease... [and] technical ease combined with a remarkable dramatic presence” (*Le Figaro*, FR), that has won her admiration the world over.

Canadian **Michael Schade**, one of the leading Mozart tenors on the stage today, is Don Ottavio, Donna Anna’s fiancé. Last with the COC in 2013’s *La clemenza di Tito*, 2012’s *Die Fledermaus* and 2011’s *The Magic Flute*, **Schade** returns in a role that has won him international acclaim since delivering his first Ottavio in 1996 at the Vienna State Opera.

Lauded for her “nuanced dramatic impulses” (*Opera News*) and a “voice that is liquid, lambent, and lit from within” (*Classical Review*), American mezzo-soprano **Jennifer Holloway** makes her Canadian and role debut as Donna Elvira, Don Giovanni’s wife. American **Kyle Ketelsen** is Leporello, Don Giovanni’s relative. Last seen at the COC in 2011’s *Cinderella*, “the appealing and hardy-voiced bass-baritone” (*New York Times*) reprises the role following performances of this production with Teatro Real Madrid and Festival d’Aix-en-Provence.

Singing some of *Don Giovanni*'s most well-known and treasured music is young Canadian lyric soprano, and COC Ensemble Studio graduate, **Sasha Djihanian** as the flirtatious Zerlina, Donna Anna's daughter. Rising American baritone **Zachary Nelson** is Masetto, Zerlina's fiancé. Il Commendatore, Donna Anna's murdered father, is sung by one of the most sought-after basses on the international stage, Italian **Andrea Silvestrelli**.

Leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus for the first time is highly lauded Munich-born conductor **Michael Hofstetter**. A multiple nominee for "Conductor of the Year" by *Opernwelt* magazine, **Hofstetter** has been met with acclaim conducting with the premier orchestras of opera houses and festivals around the world, repeatedly praised for his style and musical insight.

Don Giovanni was last presented by the COC in 2008 and returns in a new COC co-production with Teatro Real Madrid, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Bolshoi Theatre. Sets are by **Dmitri Tcherniakov** with costume design shared between **Tcherniakov** and **Elena Zaytseva**. The lighting design is by **Gleb Filshinsky**, recreated in Toronto by **Ayvar Salikhov**.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Don Giovanni* range from **\$49 – \$424** 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

The COC's new production of *Don Giovanni* is supported by the **Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund**.

BMO Financial Group: Title Sponsor of Pre-Performance Opera Chats and Student Dress Rehearsals

Sun Life Financial: Presenting Sponsor of SURTITLES™

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

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. 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