

DMITRI TCHERNIAKOV
REVEALING THE TRUTH

DON GIOVANNI
ANATOMY OF AN OPERA

CHRISTINE GOERKE
JOURNEY TO BRÜNNHILDE

JOHANNES DEBUS
IN CONVERSATION

RBC FOUNDATION
AND THE EVOLUTION
OF CORPORATE GIVING

2015 | 2016 SEASON PREVIEW



A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL DIRECTOR **ALEXANDER NEEF**

NEW YEAR, NEW SEASON, NEW ADVENTURES



In contrast to most people's natural inclination towards hibernation, winter at the COC is the season of bustling and energized activity.

We were proud to host our subscribers at another outstanding Season Launch celebration on January 14. In addition to revealing our upcoming season, we were privileged to hear our wonderful orchestra and some very special vocal talents, including many members of our Ensemble Studio. If you haven't already received a brochure, pages 18-25 highlight our amazing 2015/2016 season: the world premiere of a Canadian opera, *Pyramus and Thisbe*; one COC premiere, Rossini's *Maometto II*; two new productions, *La Traviata* and *The Marriage of Figaro*; the continuation of our *Ring Cycle* with *Siegfried*; and, the return of *Carmen*. Not only is there something for everyone on stage, there's a ticket price that's right for you, your friends, and your family. If you haven't already, take a moment to renew your subscription for another fantastic season!

As I write this, we are in the midst of final rehearsals for our two winter productions, both of which have the potential to become watershed moments for the company's artistic profile. Named *Musical America's* 2015 Vocalist of the Year, Christine Goerke makes her role debut as Brünnhilde in our *Die Walküre*. As *Musical America* says, "Christine Goerke is the Wagner-Strauss soprano we've been waiting for..." and we couldn't agree more. *Die Walküre* will be followed in subsequent seasons by *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, and Christine will be returning in the role as well. Get to know her better by reading the profile on page 14 and Coda on the back cover.

Also this winter we present the North American premiere of our new production of *Don Giovanni*, directed by one of the opera world's brightest talents, Dmitri Tcherniakov, who offers us a completely original look at the Mozart/Da Ponte classic and challenges us to experience it with fresh eyes. The talent onstage is tremendous and we are fortunate to have one of the most committed casts possible for this production, including Russell Braun who gives a mesmerizing performance, and the remarkable Jane Archibald as Donna Anna.

For those of you in the New York area at the beginning of March, please join us at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) where we've been invited to perform our 2012 production of *Semele* directed by Zhang Huan. It's a great honour to be invited back to such a prestigious arts venue, and an even greater one to present this daring piece which pushes the boundaries and demonstrates the infinite possibilities of the art form. Our last trip to BAM in 2011 (with *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*) was a massive success and this newest visit seals our reputation as a company of international stature.

I hope you stay warm and enjoy winter as much as we do at the COC. ■



Prelude

A gift to our friends

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Photo credits are on page 31.

Front cover: Russell Braun as Don Giovanni (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013).

Photo: Javier del Real

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And prices start at just \$199 for all six operas next season. That means that you can see a beautiful new production of *La Traviata*, the world premiere of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the remarkable *Siegfried*, and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in a new-to-Toronto production that was created in Salzburg, the master's home town. The excitement continues with everyone's favourite opera, *Carmen*, and *Maometto II*—a stunning rarity by Rossini. Get it all for less than \$34 per opera!

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DMITRI TCHERNIAKOV REVEALING THE TRUTH

By Gianmarco Segato

Russian director Dmitri Tcherniakov's exacting perfectionism is founded upon an intimate knowledge of the musical score and a deeply considered plan as to how each scene unfolds. He is known to map out every movement he requires of his singing actors—so scrupulous are his preparations that he likens his painstaking process to “a ritual sacrifice.”

This fastidious, uncompromising approach has placed Tcherniakov among that elite group of opera directors who are the most in-demand, the most controversial and, as a result, the most talked-about. His rise to the top began with his 2001 production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* for St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. He then gained an international reputation with *Boris Godunov* at the Berlin Staatsoper (2005), quickly followed by *Eugene Onegin* at the Bolshoi Theatre, Opéra national de Paris and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, a production that replaced the traditional, picture-postcard staging the Moscow company had used for more than 60 years. It was this *Onegin* that cinched Tcherniakov's reputation as opera's latest *enfant terrible*, garnering international media attention when the great Russian soprano Galina Vishnevskaya decided to boycott the Bolshoi after seeing it, lamenting the passing of the representational style which for decades had been that theatre's stock-in-trade.

What is it about this young Russian's concepts that provoke such extreme reactions—both positive and negative? Acting as both director and designer, Tcherniakov strips scenarios of any archaic supernatural or spiritual associations; settings are loosely modern,



Dmitri Tcherniakov

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS YOUNG RUSSIAN'S CONCEPTS THAT PROVOKE SUCH EXTREME REACTIONS—BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE?

but not tied to any specific time or place; visuals are clean-lined and contemporary; characters are sometimes brought onstage when they're traditionally supposed to be off; and, most importantly, he coaxes compelling, wholly committed performances from his casts. The results are still entirely rooted in the score and the libretto, but for some, the comforting signposts (for example, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* as comic, put-upon sidekick; the Commendatore appearing as a ghostly statue; Don Giovanni tormented by the flames of hell) might be missing.



The great Canadian baritone Russell Braun, who has already played the lead role in Tcherniakov's production of *Don Giovanni*, will reprise the role this winter at the COC.

These are replaced, thanks to Tcherniakov's "take no prisoners" approach, by performances that organically emerge from the singers' personal experiences, taking them far beyond matters of mere vocal technique. Tcherniakov says, "I try to get closer to [the singers] and to eliminate distances. I am not always able to do this because for some of them this is not at all natural. But it is important to me to encourage [them] to be daring and intrepid and even to be show-offs. I also try to rouse their curiosity and to get them interested in everything... I try to ensure that all of this remains personal, without becoming theatrical. And it is also important that they put a lot into the work." Whatever controversies Tcherniakov might stir up with some of his directorial concepts, critics are nearly unanimous in their praise of the performances he elicits from his players, often citing them as among the most committed they have ever encountered.

The intense process of self-revelation encouraged by Tcherniakov is heightened by the claustrophobic spaces he tends to favour. His *Onegin* is set entirely indoors in a reception room of the Larin's house and then in the equivalent of Prince Gremin's home in Act 3. *Wozzeck* (Bolshoi Theatre, 2011) opens with a Hitchcock-like, *Rear Window* effect as we voyeuristically observe 12 apartment windows from the outside, before our vantage point is narrowed down to just *Wozzeck* and Marie's confined space. In his 2011 *Dialogues des Carmélites* for Munich, the final scene takes place within a barricaded, hothouse-like "convent," rigged with gas canisters, while the dramatic encounter between Blanche de la Force and her brother, the Chevalier, takes on a disturbingly close physicality reinforced by their uncomfortable containment within a box-like room. A 2012 *Il Trovatore* for Brussels' Théâtre de la Monnaie compressed all of the action into a single room, thus heightening the twisted familial relationships at the heart of its Byzantine plot. Similarly in the COC's *Don Giovanni*, all of the action unfolds in the grand salon of the Commendatore's mansion. Rather than abide by the traditional, classical "unity of time" that dictates the action of *Don Giovanni* should take place over 24 hours, Tcherniakov felt it "necessary to change the spatial and temporal conditions. In the libretto, time is concentrated into a day while space is fractured into different locations to reflect different social strata. In our staging it is the time that is fractured [drop titles indicate the action is spread over several weeks] and the space that one finds concentrated."

There is an experimental, "Big Brother" or "extended family at Thanksgiving or Christmas" quality to this approach: force the "family" into unnaturally close physical proximity and see what happens. Indeed, Mozart and Da Ponte's characters have been reconfigured as an actual family. In Tcherniakov's conception, *Don Giovanni* is middle-aged when the opera begins and he holds no sentimentality about having all of his life in front of him. The aging roué now seeks to liberate the well-protected, well-appointed members of the Commendatore's family; to help them listen



Critics are nearly unanimous in their praise of the performances [Tcherniakov] elicits from his players, often citing them as among the most committed they have ever encountered. Pictured is Christine Schäfer as Donna Anna and Paul Groves as Don Ottavio.

to their interior voices and their true natures; to enable them to become more happy and generous (which, it might be added, sounds not dissimilar to the role the Russian director assumes with his casts!).

The COC's *Don Giovanni*, Russell Braun (who appeared in the Tcherniakov production at Madrid's Teatro Real in 2013), agrees that the title character embodies the "idea of free love, [that] involves all of us; the last ideal that Giovanni clings to—*viva la libertà* [long live freedom]!" For Tcherniakov, this is the essence of the *Don Juan* myth: the story of a man who challenges the social order (metamorphosed here into a family of the *haute bourgeoisie*) by giving free reign to his desire. Far from wanting to create a scandal, the Russian director's intention in challenging our expectations is only to tell the truth: "what I put on the stage—that is Mozart's opera." ■

Production supported in part by



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ANATOMY OF AN OPERA

DON GIOVANNI

by Nikita Gourski



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Opera of Operas

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Source Material

The legend of Don Juan originates in traditional Spanish folklore. The earliest recorded version appears in the play *El Burlador de Sevilla*, written by a Spanish monk, Tirso de Molina, and published in 1630. **At least three operas pre-date Mozart's treatment, testifying to the cultural fascination with the myth in 18th-century Europe.**

Mixing It Up

Collaborating with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart **mixed comedy and tragedy—including elements of horror—to produce a potent, even disturbing combination, which succeeded tremendously at its Prague premiere in 1787.** Up until that point, operas about the unscrupulous seducer were exclusively comedic.

Who is Don Giovanni?

Mozart gives him only two brief arias, both of which offer little information about the rake's inner life or psychological self. Some modern critics have speculated that Mozart and Da Ponte deliberately present the Don as a blank canvas, onto which we and the characters project our fantasies, nightmares, fears, and desires. Meanwhile 19th-century commentators like Søren Kierkegaard and E.T.A. Hoffmann became enthralled with the symbolic value of Don Giovanni, seeing in him a principle of desire or an emblem of the human soul itself, riven with the representative contradictions of the human condition. **While the opera withholds any final answers, the persistence of the question explains the variety of directorial approaches taken over the opera's performance history.**

This COC *Don Giovanni* is a collaboration with a group of prestigious peers, including Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Bolshoi Theatre, and Teatro Real Madrid.

Riveting Interpretation

Our production is staged by brilliant Russian director Dmitri Tcherniakov, **"an artist whose work is on the edge of the cutting edge"** (*Opera News*). For a full profile and analysis of Tcherniakov's work, read Gianmarco Segato's piece on the previous pages.

All in the Family

In a radical move, Tcherniakov redraws the relationships of the main characters, making them all part of a single family, which Don Giovanni—an outsider—has married into. But whether we choose to take the device literally or interpret it metaphorically, as signifying a closed system of human relations, **the results make for powerful theatre** "often more meaningfully than in a straight reading" (*Opera News*).



A Faded Don

Tcherniakov's Don Giovanni lacks any apparent sexual charisma. Instead he's a troubled, sometimes unhinged, figure. **Nonetheless, he exerts a powerful magnetism over those around him.** His haggard look is inspired in part by Marlon Brando's character in Bernardo Bertolucci's seminal film *Last Tango in Paris*.

DON GIOVANNI CAST MEMBERS RUSSELL BRAUN AND KYLE KETELSEN SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE PRODUCTION

RUSSELL BRAUN (DON GIOVANNI)

Canadian baritone Russell Braun sang Don Giovanni in Dmitri Tcherniakov's production at Teatro Real Madrid in 2013.

The most compelling moments in opera occur when you are drawn into a relationship between two people on stage. In this production, these relationships are so completely specific, and

don't go against the music or text, but rather attempt to understand it. Don Giovanni is not despised by any of the characters on stage, but what he demands of them is impossible. He is striving to find liberty—in the form of “free love”—which comes directly from the finale of Act I: “Viva la libertà!” But it's not a democratic sense of liberty—it's self-serving. The whole question that's asked at the end of any *Don Giovanni* is “Is there really such a thing as free love?”

This production is very demanding, but very rewarding as an artist. Dramatically, it's a big challenge, and the character of Don Giovanni is really revealed through the recitatives. Tcherniakov strives very hard to bring some insight into who the character is through these passages.

This production does not include graphic violence, sexuality, or drug-induced behaviour that is often in other *Don Giovanni*s. But witnessing a character exert such mind control over characters is very disturbing, and again, it comes back to the relationships on stage between every single character being so strong—these aren't archetypes that feel remote or inaccessible. These relationships give all of us something to relate to.

Russell Braun's performance is generously sponsored by Earlane Collins

Inside a Room, Worlds Collide

The action is set inside a wealthy bourgeois home. The interior gives the impression of a respectable, well-established family. But **if the Commendatore (the father), represents a particular moral code, then Don Giovanni is an eccentric force of dissent.** In negating a civilized morality of order and reason, Don Giovanni transforms each of the family members in turn and opens a field of experience that was not accessible to them before—all this can lead to moments of intoxicating madness, briefly realizing the Don's utopian vision of absolute freedom.

KYLE KETELSEN (LEPORELLO)

American bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen has appeared as Leporello in Tcherniakov's production of Don Giovanni at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Teatro Real Madrid.

Tcherniakov's production is incredibly layered and takes maximum brain power for us during the rehearsal period. His Giovanni is very much a character study—he's not the wholly malicious predator and seducer that other productions make him. When Giovanni makes Leporello switch roles with him and meet up with Elvira, Tcherniakov will tell you that that's coming from a place of sincerity—Giovanni believes that what he's doing is what's best for Leporello.

With Giovanni and Leporello, it can be tricky to work out the master-servant relationship because that doesn't really apply today. But in this production, I look up to Giovanni as someone who is part of my family (by marriage) and see something about him that, probably for the wrong reasons, I want to emulate. I'm looking for a father figure, desperately wanting to impress Giovanni. I'm always seeking his approval.

Russell is a very thoughtful artist and took every note Dmitri gave him in Madrid to heart. He has such a lovely voice and is such a sweet person but in this production he's asked to do some very ugly things that are very un-Russell-like, but that's beautiful because that's art: putting yourself in a different light and trying to fulfill the director's vision.

Mozart and Da Ponte were disrupters. They were very much for social change. I think the artists in them would appreciate the sometimes disruptive nature of what Dmitri wants on stage, how he stirs emotion and what he brings out of the piece.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The landscape of corporate citizenship in Canada is changing, with companies big and small rethinking not only the sorts of initiatives and causes they support, but also boldly investing in partnerships that redefine the traditional relationship between for-profit business and non-profit arts.

The Royal Bank of Canada is increasingly moving towards newer models of charitable giving and embracing newer forms of reciprocal, value-generating partnerships to create positive, measurable impacts in our communities.

“We’re proud of RBC’s tradition of philanthropy that dates back to the 1890s,” says Shari Austin, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship and Executive Director of the RBC Foundation. “But in recent years we’ve begun making a shift from a ‘traditional charitable model’—in which philanthropy is an adjunct of the primary business and involves mainly cash donations—to something

more holistic. Increasingly, we are building multi-dimensional partnerships with charitable partners that engage employees, clients and other stakeholders in solving some of society’s most pressing problems.”

The COC has enjoyed a strong, over two-decade long relationship with RBC and its numerous philanthropic platforms. More recently, our partnership has entered a new chapter of increased involvement through the RBC Foundation’s Emerging Artists Project. Launched in 2008, this initiative allows RBC to focus on supporting organizations that offer mentorship, training programs and exposure to audiences, designed to help artists bridge the gap between academic excellence and professional careers.

“At the end of the day,” Austin emphasizes, “our success as a global financial institution depends on the health and success of our clients and employees, and of the communities in which they live and work. Our

support of the arts has been a long-standing priority as we recognize the important role they play in building those vibrant communities and strong economies. Our relationship with the Canadian Opera Company is a wonderful example.”

Our internationally renowned Ensemble Studio fits the partnership mandate of the Emerging Artists Project perfectly, offering multi-year programs for opera professionals seeking to transition from the highest levels of academic training to the international opera industry.

Being a professional opera performer is extraordinarily demanding. Head of the Ensemble Studio Liz Upchurch has often spoken about the “Olympian training and preparation” required, while artists frequently garner comparison to high-intensity, high-performance athletes. In fact, the Ensemble Studio integrates a regimen of exercise and physical fitness into its artist training, alongside the core



The 2014/2015 Ensemble Studio members gathered in September at the start of what will be a very busy and exciting year for them. (l-r) Tenor Owen McCausland, bass-baritone Gordon Bintner, intern coach and pianist Jennifer Szeto, tenor Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure, bass-baritone Iain MacNeil, soprano Karine Boucher, tenor Andrew Haji, soprano Aviva Fortunata, baritone Clarence Frazer and mezzo-soprano Charlotte Burrage.

RBC FOUNDATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF CORPORATE GIVING

elements of vocal technique, language and diction training, acting and body movement classes, as well as hundreds of hours of rehearsal and performance.

“Increasingly, we are building multi-dimensional partnerships with charitable partners that engage employees, clients and other stakeholders in solving some of society’s most pressing problems.”

Shari Austin, RBC

Meanwhile, social media and communication technologies enable RBC to share the extraordinary accomplishments of Ensemble Studio

artists. For example, RBC recently rolled out a new digital hub for the Emerging Artist Project, where they profile supported artists and share their stories, including the 10 current Ensemble members. Together with the COC, RBC also tracks Ensemble Studio alumni, many of whom are enjoying international careers in the world’s most prestigious opera cities, extending the impact of the partnership both at home and abroad.

The ability to promote the Ensemble Studio all season long and encourage RBC employees to attend their recitals, concerts, and special events is more than a perk. It can be an enduring way to enhance the corporation’s sense of purpose while contributing to the larger goal of long-term profitability.

“Engaging our employees and clients by inviting them to attend performances has really added value to the relationship,” Austin says.

And it is a relationship that continues to evolve and to offer new, mutually beneficial opportunities. As the public profile of the Ensemble Studio continues to grow—through the *Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition Gala*, a flagship fundraising event for the COC—the level of involvement at RBC has kept pace.

“We were thrilled to be a supporter again in 2014,” Austin says. “Great things are happening at the COC and it’s an amazing opportunity for two world-class organizations to bring their communities together and generate positive impact.” ■

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IN CONVERSATION: JOHANNES DEBUS

By Claire Morley

Conductor Johannes Debus first stood on the COC podium in 2008 when he conducted *War and Peace*. Now in his sixth season as Music Director, he reflects on some of the COC Orchestra's triumphs, tests, and what lies ahead.

It's been six years since you were appointed. How are things now compared to then?

I feel like I'm more part of the COC family now. When I started, I had to learn how this company functions and to understand what my role is or could be within it. It was a bit of a learning curve—my job is not just about standing in the pit and trying to bring the score to life. It's more than that. I don't ever do things that would benefit myself—it should be the common goal of the company.

Can you talk about one of these goals?

I believe the level of singing has risen since Alexander and I first started. The orchestra members are inspired by that level of performance on stage and they are keen to interact with those artists and to deliver the best possible, to really be part of the drama. That's really important to me. In this day and age things are sometimes terrifyingly fast and often superficial—as musicians we must make time to understand more than what just lies on the surface. It's not about just delivering a culinary experience—we have to discover what might be behind the notes, what story we can tell and get the audience on board as an active part of this discovery. This kind of exploration might involve taking some risks and stepping outside of our collective safe zone, but that's what you have to do!

How do you help the orchestra members explore?

They are all masters of their instruments, but I try to encourage them to always be particularly thoughtful about their quality of tone. Before I lift my arm, I have to imagine the precise sound I want to get, and what I want to express. They have to think that way too, even if it means taking risks. I've told them it's more of a mistake to stay in a neutral zone than to offer something and risking that the conductor may say "Hmmm, okay, but I'd prefer to have it done this way." That requires a certain amount of courage, but we have to get there, because we can become greater musicians and experience something more glorious and beautiful than if we play it safe. As [conductor] Nikolaus Harnoncourt put it, "Beauty happens on the edge of the abyss." Sometimes we have to stand on the verge of this abyss and risk falling down. The good thing is, if we fall down, we do not die. We try it again, and don't give up.

How do the players respond to that approach?

This collaborative attitude is really in the DNA of the COC Orchestra—I encountered that the very first time I came here for *War and Peace*. Our musicians are keen on making music together and to share their musical experiences with the singers on stage as well as with our audiences in the hall. I try to encourage them to always be expressive and meaningful, and not just play the right notes at the right time. All of us share the idea that, at the end of the day, it's about this art form and the glory of it—and how we can find this glory collectively.

How else do you keep the orchestra inspired and energized?

Bringing new, young members in to play is important, because they can bring a fresh new energy. An orchestra is like an organism that sometimes needs to rejuvenate. You need both the experience of the older members and new talent.

Speaking of new talent, you created the Orchestra Academy program last year, and this season you're once again bringing in some young musicians to play alongside members of the orchestra. What do you think that experience will be like for them?

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. 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 remember when I was 16 or 17, I wanted to know what made the *Ring* so special. I got a piano-vocal score of *Walküre* from the library and just sat down at the piano and went through the whole thing. I was mesmerized—I didn't feel tired. I am sure at the end of opening night, they'll say "Can we play the whole thing again, right now?" Playing Wagner is so much fun—it can be addictive, almost! I'm so pleased that five string players will be joining this year's Orchestra Academy, rehearsing and performing with some of this country's best classical musicians. I'm incredibly thankful to our five COC Orchestra members, who will work alongside these talented young players, sharing their expertise with Canada's next generation of professional orchestra musicians. ■

SEMELE GOES TO BAM!



For the second time in only four years, the COC presents a signature production at one of the most prestigious art venues in the world, the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)! The COC will perform Handel's *Semele* March 4-10 as part of BAM's 2015 spring season. A tantalizing mix of East and West, Baroque opera and 21st-century performance art, ancient myth and real-life tragedy, *Semele* was the sensation of the COC's 2011/2012 season.

“ It's truly an honour to have been invited to bring *Semele* to BAM. This venue's international reputation and reach is an exceptional way for us to show new audiences what a great company we are. In 2011, we were thrilled to be the toast of New York City with *The Nightingale* and *Other Short Fables*, and we look forward to a similar reaction this year with this fantastic *Semele*. ”

**COC General Director
Alexander Neef**

“ Both the adventurous staging and the consistently brilliant singing make Handel's *Semele* by far the best opera production I've seen from the COC. ”

barczablog, 2012

“ I'm extremely pleased to be debuting this role with the COC at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which is known for its dedication to cutting-edge art. ”

**Baritone Kyle Ketelsen
(Cadmus/Somnus)**

“ I am so delighted to be able to inhabit *Semele*'s world once again! Performing this role with the COC has been an absolute highlight of my career and it feels like such a wonderful fit for me. The costumes are beautiful, the set is evocative and the production is thought-provoking. I'm very excited to share it with New York audiences! ”

**Soprano Jane Archibald
(Semele)**

In March 2015, the COC's groundbreaking production of Handel's *Semele* will travel to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The COC thanks the following donors for their support of this milestone for the Company.

Philip Deck and Kimberley Bozak
David and Kristin Ferguson

Jerry and Geraldine Heffernan
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Kristine Vikmanis and
Denton Creighton
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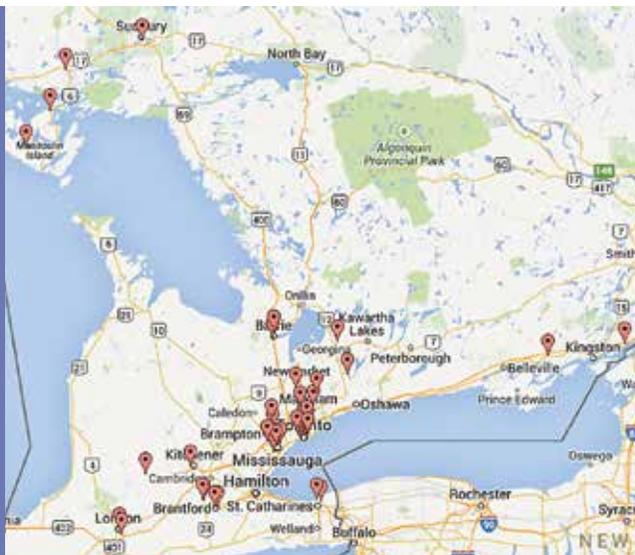
TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

The Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour hits the road!

This November, our Ensemble Studio went back to school—the school tour, that is! The Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour featured two productions, *The Bremen Town Musicians* and *The Scorpions' Sting: An Egyptian Myth*. Each is a children's opera written by Canadian composer Dean Burry and performed in English. This year, we performed 55 shows at 50 schools across Ontario and one performance in partnership with the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, which helped introduce over 16,500 children in Kindergarten to Grade 8 to the wonder of opera! Along the way, the cast shared their journey through Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. We've picked some of the best ones to share with you here—check out this great glimpse into their tour!

GLENCORE

To learn more about these professional productions for children, visit [Parlando at coc.ca/Parlando](http://Parlando.coc.ca) for a behind-the-scenes video by *The Bremen Town Musicians'* Music Director Jenna Douglas and a photo collection of a typical touring day by *The Scorpions' Sting* Stage Manager Mike Lewandowski.



armacpherson, baritonekeith
 lewandowskim Day 1 of the @canadianopera #ScorpionsCOC Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour. 1. Happy group. 2. Chilly Morning warm ups 3. Our music director Jennifer Szeto working hard during the show 4. Busy organized chaos



SAVE THE DATE: *The Bremen Town Musicians* returns in November 2015! Inquire about booking a show for your school today. Call Vanessa Smith, School Programs Manager at 416-306-2392 or send her an e-mail at education@coc.ca.

INTRODUCING OUR BRAND AMBASSADORS:



The Life Trustees Council is a new recognition society and outreach committee comprising philanthropic and artistic leaders whose efforts have been integral to the company's evolution and transformative history of accomplishment. Members are appointed by the COC, and our inaugural roster is made up of amazing individuals who have played critical roles in delivering the company to its current moment of success.



Please join us in congratulating the inaugural members announced at the COC's Annual General meeting on October 27, 2014: David Ferguson (Chair), Earlaine Collins, Jerry and Geraldine Heffernan, Hon. Henry N. R. Jackman, Ben Heppner, and Adrienne Pieczonka.

Beginning with six members in the 2014/2015 season, the Life Trustees Council will expand annually by three to four members, eventually reaching its maximum size of 25. As lifetime ambassadors charged with the company's future, Life Trustees will continue to be the transformative individuals they already are in this new role, promoting the company's mandate and programs, areas of excellence, and community connections.



Far left: COC Life Trustees David Ferguson, Adrienne Pieczonka, Earlaine Collins and Ben Heppner

Left: COC Life Trustees Geraldine and Jerry Heffernan

Above: COC Chief Advancement Officer Christie Darville with COC Life Trustee Hal Jackman

A BIG Opera Shop Thank You!

The COC wishes to thank the hundreds of volunteers and our thousands of loyal patrons who made the Opera Shop such a huge success. Your dedication, curiosity, interest, support, and love were an inspiration and the reason for its many accomplishments and enduring popularity.

Although the Opera Shop's run is over, the company is transforming the space over the next few months into a distinctively new environment, so bear with us as we work to enhance your Canadian Opera Company experience!





CHRISTINE GOERKE:

JOURNEY TO BRÜNNHILDE

By Gianna Wichelow

Christine Goerke is a rarity. Her voice, as *The Wall Street Journal* described it, is “a big, blazing soprano that not only has the gale-force power and sheen to slice through Strauss’s huge orchestra, but also seamless legato and an entire paintbox of colors.” When you have this remarkable sound created by a compelling actress, it’s no wonder the eyes of the opera world will be focused on Toronto this winter, when Goerke makes a much-anticipated role debut as Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre*.

Excitement grew even further when, late in 2014, *Musical America* named her Vocalist of the Year for 2015, declaring that “Christine Goerke is the Wagner-Strauss soprano we have been waiting for, a multi-hued miracle of gale-force power, and pinpoint control, effortlessly riding over the most clamoring orchestras.”

But how did this one-time school band director hopeful get to the position as the go-to dramatic soprano of today? Growing up on Long Island, Christine’s family was Italian on her mother’s side and German/Irish/Scottish on her father’s. “I’m anal **and** have a bad temper—it’s fantastic! There’s Sicilian in there too so watch out!” Her family wasn’t particularly musical but, “In fourth grade, I came running home from school and said ‘Dad, I wanna play the flute!’ And he said ‘Choose the clarinet—I like Artie Shaw!’ I said... ‘Okay!’ So that pretty much sealed my fate. But I loved it and I really threw myself into it and in a way it kind of saved me. I lost my mom when I was 12, and I tell this to people because I’m a big proponent for fighting for music education in schools: if I hadn’t had music and the arts to throw myself into I’m not exactly sure what would have happened to me. It really saved my life. I also started to teach myself the flute. And then I learned how to play the saxophone and by the time I was done I was playing the most unsexy of woodwind instruments, the bari-sax and the bass clarinet. They did not get me a lot of dates! But I loved them.”

She also recognized what a huge impact her high school band teacher was having on his students. “There were five

of us out of 300 that would go on to actually be musicians or teachers but everyone wanted to be part of what he was doing. And it just showed me that it’s so much bigger than actually being a musician, and I thought everyone thinks he’s cool, everyone thinks he’s fun, everyone’s learning. I want to do that. And we’re still in contact. He was really an inspiration to me.”

Entering the State University of New York at Fredonia, Christine’s clarinet playing was trumped by her sight-singing exam. Ultimately transferring to the State University of Stony Brook on Long Island, Christine completed her degree studying voice. The family had struggled financially after her mother passed away, which left her with a determination to not go into debt. “Some semesters I couldn’t afford to go to school and I refused to take out loans. It took me eight years to complete my degree, but it worked out for the best because it gave me more time to let this voice develop. I finally began to do auditions and got into a couple of summer programs. One of them was at Glimmerglass and (then executive director) Paul Kellogg called the people at the Met and said, ‘you need to hear this girl’ and that was that!”

Christine then spent three years in the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. “It was completely invaluable. And I was very, very lucky. There are so many singers who are so talented but it really takes being in the right place at the right time and singing for the right person and doing your best that day. But when you get into a situation like that where there is not just information-sharing but there’s nurturing... that’s gigantic and especially for big voices. We need time to cook! And if we get out there too soon and we’re doing the wrong things, we’re done.”

Winning the Richard Tucker prize in 2001, Christine’s career was on an ascent, with the young lyric coloratura soprano flourishing in Mozart and Handel roles. But suddenly in 2003, in her very early 30s, something went awry.

“Nothing that I was doing vocally was working. Everything that I knew was not functioning right. It was like the instrument suddenly wasn’t mine. I knew I had to try something else because even if I had to walk away from this career, I was so proud of it. But I didn’t want to be in a place where I was embarrassed.”

It was soprano/teacher Diana Soviero who finally helped Christine figure out what was going on. “I tried to sing for her and she looked at me and said, ‘Honey, I have no idea why you have come off your support to the extent that you have, but that has to stop right now.’ I said, ‘OK, you have three months before I have a new production of *Don Giovanni* at the Met. If we can’t fix this, I’m cancelling it and I’m going to quit.’ She goes, ‘Oh good, no pressure. Come back tomorrow.’ Basically I’d stopped supporting low and little by little I’d got higher and higher because my voice had gotten bigger and I’d been trying to keep it in this small place. It makes a lot of sense here [indicating her head], it just didn’t work here [indicating her throat]. So the second I got the support back down again, everything changed.”

Since her early 20s Christine had heard the words “dramatic soprano” being thrown around regarding her future. She knew that at some point her voice would probably grow, but she and her teachers predicted this shift would take place sometime in her late 30s or early 40s. What they hadn’t counted on was that shift happening so fast and so soon.

Three months later she did do *Don Giovanni* at the Met. “*The Times* said I finally had the success that I was due. However I came right off stage and I looked right at Diana and I said, ‘This is my last Mozart isn’t it?’ and she said, ‘Yesssss.’ I went and spoke to Lenore Rosenberg at the Met about it, and she has been—since I was a young artist there—she’s been the person I can sit down and say something and she never lies. So if you’re not ready for the truth, don’t ask her! She agreed. I wasn’t going to be cast in any more Mozart at the Met. She said, ‘You’re the loudest thing up there.’ And I said ‘I was on the stage with René Pape!’ ‘Okay, you were slightly the second-loudest thing up there!’ I had no idea and that’s the funny thing. People laugh at me constantly because I’m always saying, ‘Can you hear me? Do I need to be louder?’ I just don’t hear it the way you do. I just hear a lot of buzz in my head.”

Strauss and Wagner are now at the heart of what Goerke is singing, and those roles include Elektra, which she has sung at Madrid, Chicago, London (Royal Opera House and BBC Proms) and Detroit; Ortrud (*Lohengrin*) and now Brünnhilde, which she has sung in concert in New Zealand. Her COC Brünnhilde this winter represents her first staged appearance in the role and will be followed by *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* over the next two seasons, and the same roles in Houston, Chicago, and the Met, when it remounts its *Ring Cycle* in 2018/2019. In the *New York Times* article that announced the Met’s *Ring*, Met General Manager Peter Gelb described Goerke as the go-to dramatic soprano of our

times. It was hearing her sing the Dyer’s Wife in Strauss’s *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in late 2013 that cemented the deal. *The New Yorker* described it as “a career-transforming performance... displaying the kind of vocal stamina that Wagner-Strauss fanciers have been awaiting since Birgit Nilsson delivered her last ‘hojotoho!’”

Goerke and her voice have made the seismic shift into her new repertoire. And things are still developing. Last summer in Glimmerglass she was preparing to give a recital. For an encore it was suggested she sing something from her young artist days at the Festival when she sang Fiordiligi. “I said I do NOT have a ‘Come scoglio’ in me anymore—there’s no way. And they said, ‘Do you want to try it?’ There was no one there so I tried it. It not only came out—it was whistle clear! So I still have it! I think maybe it’s time to look at some things with some coloratura while I still have a D flat. I started looking at Lady Macbeth. And that coloratura works!”

As her Twitter handle @HeldenMommy implies, Goerke is also a busy wife and mother of two young girls. Last summer in Glimmerglass, she had an opportunity to spend more precious time with her growing family. “When we were young we went out and played all day and at dinner time someone screamed for us. The world has changed. But this summer my girls were able to just say ‘I’m going outside’ and I said, ‘OK’ and they did. But it was six months ‘til I was home again. I told my manager, ‘I don’t care if someone catches on fire, I’m not leaving the house!’ She *did* leave home this past December to come to Toronto to start rehearsals for *Die Walküre*. We’re really glad she did! ■

Christine Goerke’s performance is generously sponsored by Jack Whiteside

Die Walküre originally made possible by Kolter Communities

Below: Elektra is a signature role for Goerke who, when she sang it in Chicago in 2012, “was rewarded in her solo call by a rapturous standing ovation that emerged viscerally from the house as an organic reaction to her tour-de-force performance.” *Opera News*



WORKING HARD



PLAYING HARD



1. Development staff members Alexandra Folkes, Bree Callahan, Laura Aylan-Parker and Paige Phillips welcomed COC patrons with a smile at the 14/15 season opening party last fall. Photo: Dave Cox. **2.** VIP dinner guests were treated to a sparkling and sumptuous dinner setting on stage in R. Fraser Elliott Hall at the 2014 *Centre Stage* Ensemble Studio Competition Gala in November. Photo: Jenna Wakani. **3.** The cast and creative team of *Falstaff* celebrate after the triumphant opening night performance. Photo: Dave Cox. **4.** COC Board Member Colleen Sexsmith and Ensemble Studio pianist Jennifer Szeto at the Ensemble Studio Reception in September. Photo: Karen Reeves. **5.** (l-r) Tenor Stefano Secco and his fiancée Sarah, mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton (Patricia Racette's wife), and soprano Patricia Racette with a fluffy friend celebrate *Madama Butterfly* backstage along with COC Golden Circle members. Photo: Joey Lopez. **6.** (l-r) Emma Noakes, Laura Jean Elligsen and Shannon Churm pose with a mysterious and charming man at the COC's holiday party. Photo: COC. **7.** COC Chorus members strike a pose backstage before a performance of *Falstaff*. **8-9.** Partygoers at *Operation 11: Light up the Night* rocked the night away in October with musical guest Yelle and members of the COC Ensemble Studio. Photo: Ryan Emberley. **10.** *Centre Stage* Ensemble Studio Competition Gala prizewinners (l-r) tenor Aaron Sheppard, baritone Dimitri Katotakis and tenor Charles Sy share a laugh with host Ben Heppner. Photo: Jeff Higgins. **11.** It was all-smiles for mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili and director Joel Ivany when they filmed their interview for next season's *Carmen*. Photo: Jeff Higgins. **12.** COC Music Director Johannes Debus looking particularly dapper during a video session for the 2015/2016 season! Photo: Jeff Higgins



2015-2016 SEASON PREVIEW

JOIN US

If you attended our launch event at the Four Seasons Centre, then you're already excited about our 2015/2016 season, full of favourites, new productions, and a Canadian world premiere!

Our new *La Traviata*, heartbreakingly beautiful, opens in October, followed by the **world premiere of *Pyramus and Thisbe*** by Canadian composer Barbara Monk Feldman. Winter brings *Siegfried* and a new production of Mozart's sparkling comedy, *The Marriage of Figaro*. Perhaps the world's most popular opera, *Carmen*, is paired with a gripping historical tale in the spring—Rossini's *opera seria Maometto II* which has never before been performed in Canada.

Internationally renowned singers, directors, and conductors unite to create magic that is breathtaking, spectacular, and inspiring. Only at the COC.

LA TRAVIATA

Giuseppe Verdi

OCTOBER 8, 13, 16, 17, 21, 24, 29, 30, NOVEMBER 1, 4, 6, 2015



When everything is for sale, what would you give for love? In 1853, censors balked at the contemporary edge of Verdi's latest project: an opera about a high-society courtesan in which the "fallen woman," rather than being melodramatically pigeonholed or vilified, is actually held up as a sympathetic, profoundly human character. Indeed, in Verdi's glorious masterpiece, Violetta emerges as one of the most compelling, glamorous heroines in all opera; what's incriminated is rather the hypocrisy of a middle-class morality that destroys her one shot at true happiness.

The source material was a recently premiered play, itself based on a recently published best-seller—both inspired by the tragic fate of a real-life Parisian courtesan named Marie Duplessis.

"A subject of the times," Verdi would write proudly to a friend.

But not everyone was thrilled about the composer drawing from such recent, fact-based goings-on. Censors demanded that Verdi buffer *La Traviata's* immediacy by setting it about 150 years earlier than intended. He put up a fight but eventually capitulated, knowing that the opera would not be staged otherwise. Yet he also recognized that *Traviata* was

unique among his works for being musically and thematically indigenous to mid-century Paris, a drama whose action arises from the social constraints imposed on the heroine in that time and place.

In our new production, renowned New York theatre director Arin Arbus follows this insight to stage the action squarely in the time period of the opera's provenance, an 1850s demimonde of parties and all-night balls, featuring sumptuous sets and exquisite costumes. The role of Violetta demands vocal pyrotechnics and the dramatic conviction to carry the character through a remarkable emotional arc, and we have wonderful exponents of the part in Ekaterina Siurina and Joyce El-Khoury, two of the most exciting young sopranos on the opera scene.

With some of Verdi's most popular and beautiful music, a new *La Traviata* promises to be a blockbuster COC event.

GENEROUSLY UNDERWRITTEN IN PART BY

DAVID ROFFEY AND KAREN WALSH

BMO  Financial Group

PYRAMUS AND THISBE

WITH *IL COMBATTIMENTO DI TANCREDI E CLORINDA* AND *LAMENTO D'ARIANNA*

Barbara Monk Feldman / Claudio Monteverdi

OCTOBER 20, 23, 25, 28, NOVEMBER 5, 7 (2 performances), 2015



**NEW COC
PRODUCTION**

**CANADIAN
WORLD
PREMIERE**

Bold new Canadian meets early Baroque classic. Opera's earliest beginnings collide with a bold, new Canadian world premiere in this intriguing and innovative program. Claudio Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* (1608) and *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624) were composed for celebrations in early Baroque Venice, just as the operatic genre itself was bursting to life. As with most early opera, their subjects are drawn from mythology and history—here, the tales of Ariadne abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos; and, of Tancredi and Clorinda whose tragic fates are determined on the battlefields of the Crusades.

Canadian composer Barbara Monk Feldman's *Pyramus and Thisbe* (2010) is also based on a classical myth—the same saga of ill-fated love famously adapted by Shakespeare for *Romeo and Juliet*. Inspired by the ever-changing light and colour of her native Gaspé Peninsula, Monk Feldman's transparent score charts the emotional

landscape between its two main characters, examining the way tragedy becomes sublimated into everyday life and ultimately, the cathartic power of letting love go.

Following a virtuosic turn in 2012's *Love from Afar* and her highly anticipated performance in the forthcoming *Erwartung*, Canadian mezzo-soprano and COC Ensemble alumna Krisztina Szabó continues her traversal of contemporary opera's most compelling heroines as Monk Feldman's *Thisbe* and then reaches back four centuries to play Monteverdi's *Arianna* and *Clorinda*. Canadian baritone Phillip Addis (Marcello/Schaunard in 2013's *La Bohème*) returns as *Pyramus* while former Ensemble tenor Owen McCausland is *Testo*, the narrator of our tale of the Crusades. This compelling team of singer-actors is united under the ever-probing eye of director Christopher Alden (*Die Fledermaus*, 2012; *Rigoletto*, 2011). COC Music Director Johannes Debus leads the COC Orchestra.

SIEGFRIED

Richard Wagner

JANUARY 23, 27, 30, FEBRUARY 2, 5, 11, 14, 2016



The Ring returns. Richard Wagner revolutionized the art form of opera with his seamless unification of text and music, creating what many consider to be some of the most profound and powerful drama ever created. His *Ring Cycle* was his crowning achievement, and in *Siegfried*, the third instalment, Wagner immerses us into a psychologically penetrating world of greed, fear and self-discovery.

The formidable German tenor Stefan Vinke is the hero Siegfried, described as “huge of voice, unflagging of stamina, imaginative and energetic on the stage” (*Seattle Times*) and powerhouse American soprano Christine Goerke

brings her “multi-hued miracle of gale-force power and pinpoint control” (*Musical America*) in a return to the COC as the mighty Valkyrie Brünnhilde after her company debut in *Die Walküre*. Johannes Debus leads the COC Orchestra through Wagner’s score that is both electrifying and deeply intimate.

Innovative French-Canadian director François Girard and Toronto-born designer Michael Levine return with their evocative production that mirrors the emotional landscape found in Wagner’s complex and stirring score.

PRODUCTION ORIGINALLY MADE POSSIBLE BY KOLTER COMMUNITIES

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

FEBRUARY 4, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22* 23, 25, 27, 2016



Love conquers all. Especially reason.

No opera is more convincing—or as consistently beautiful—in portraying the fluid enchantments, maze-like confusions, and bouts of sheer blindness brought on by love.

On the eve of their wedding, Figaro and Susanna’s romance is shaken when their employer, the Count, takes an extramarital interest in Susanna. This sets in motion a day of schemes and counter schemes, sexual intrigues and mistaken identities, embroiling the entire household in a web of erotic passions.

A sparkling cast of Mozartian singers takes us into this magnificent, seriously witty farce, set to some of the

most sublimely beautiful music ever written, from the Countess’s ravishing arias to virtuosic ensembles such as the Act II finale in which seven musically independent parts are woven into one miraculous whole.

This new-to-Toronto production has prestigious origins, having been originally built by the Salzburg Festival as the centrepiece for their celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s birth. Hailed as a “masterpiece” (*Bloomberg News*), this staging by Claus Guth draws visual and thematic inspiration from the films of Ingmar Bergman and the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg, while fusing stylized gesture and choreography with Mozart’s score to deliver a “shattering, unforgettable” (*The Guardian*) account of the elemental forces of human nature.

Production Sponsor



*Ensemble Studio Performance—see page 25.

NEWCOC
PRODUCTION

CARMEN

Georges Bizet

APRIL 12, 17, 20, 23, 28, 30, MAY 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 2016



Live free or die. Everybody's favourite freedom-loving temptress returns next spring to the stage of the Four Seasons Centre in a story that could be ripped from the headlines of today: Carmen enters into a tragic love affair with a young soldier whose jealousy is at odds with her unrelenting desire for freedom. The COC's production is set in a Latin America of the 1940s, but beneath the colourful, sunbaked setting is a very real story of human relationships.

Bringing a fresh look to this universally popular opera is director Joel Ivany of Toronto's exciting rogue opera company *Against the Grain Theatre*. Conductor Paolo Carignani (COC's *Tosca*) returns to lead an exciting young cast, including two stunning mezzo-sopranos who are making a specialty of the lead role: Anita Rachvelishvili (COC's *Carmen* and *Don Quichotte*), who has sung Carmen with "smoldering, earthy sexuality" (*New York Times*) at the Met, La Scala and Berlin; and Clémentine Margaine, whose "passion and menace" (*Opera News*) has made her Carmen such a hit in Rome and Berlin.

Production Sponsor



COC
PRODUCTION

MAOMETTO II

Gioachino Rossini

APRIL 29, MAY 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 14, 2016



Love and war collide in Rossini's epic drama. In his grand *bel canto* drama *Maometto II*, Rossini unleashes his full arsenal of vocal pyrotechnics on the historical tale of the great Turkish Sultan, Maometto, and his quest to conquer the Holy Roman Empire. One of Rossini's early, "serious operas," *Maometto II* disappeared in its original 1820 Naples form until its triumphant return at Santa Fe Opera in 2012. There, it was lauded as a "thrilling [piece of] experiential theater" (*Opera News*) in the same David Alden production that will appear on our Toronto stage next spring.

Alden, along with set and costume designer Jon Morrell, have brought the opera's action forward from its historical 15th-century origins to the time of its creation in 1820. Strikingly-coloured, Napoleonic era, First Empire gowns glow jewel-like against a neoclassical marble colonnade.

Surprising *coups de théâtres* are peppered throughout, including the sudden emergence of a statue of three galloping horses on which Maometto makes a dramatic exit.

Mastering Rossini's fearsome vocal demands will be superstar Italian bass-baritone Luca Pisaroni making his COC debut as "a chilling and complex Maometto. His dashing stage presence and virile voice exude menacing authority" (*New York Times*). COC favourite Elizabeth DeShong—no stranger to the Rossini roulades that she so expertly tossed off as our 2011 *Cenerentola*—returns as Calbo, one of *bel canto's* great, heroic pants roles. The young, rich-toned American soprano Leah Crocetto debuts as Maometto's forbidden love, Anna. Conductor Harry Bicket (*Hercules*, 2014) makes a welcome return to the podium.

NEWCOC
PRODUCTION

WHO IS CANADA'S NEXT TOP VOICE?

**CENTRE
STAGE**



Join us for this electrifying showcase featuring singers under consideration for the Ensemble Studio, the country's premier training program for young opera professionals. Canada's best singers compete for thousands of dollars in prizes. Featuring the illustrious COC Orchestra, conducted by COC Music Director Johannes Debus.

ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION GALA

NOVEMBER 3, 2015

Competition and reception: \$100

Gala: \$1,500

(includes post-competition dinner on the stage)

Order tickets today with your subscription!

visit COCCentreStage.ca



SPECIAL ENSEMBLE STUDIO PERFORMANCE

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Monday, February 22, 2016

ALL TICKETS \$25 AND \$55

Experience the extraordinary talent of Canada's future opera stars as they take to the mainstage for their own performance of the COC's new production of Mozart's timeless masterpiece. Don't miss this perfect opportunity to introduce a friend to opera, and at these prices you can bring a whole group! Conducted by Johannes Debus with the COC Orchestra and Chorus.

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GET BOTH Ensemble Studio events and SAVE!

Pay \$140 for both, with premium seating for *The Marriage of Figaro*. Order your tickets today with your subscription!

AROUND THE WORLD...

...THE COC CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE WHY IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING, DYNAMIC, AND INFLUENTIAL OPERA COMPANIES TODAY.

SPECTACULAR

**SANTA FE
MINNEAPOLIS**

Arabella

R. Strauss

COC co-production with Santa Fe Opera
and Minnesota Opera



BREATHTAKING



**AIX-EN-PROVENCE
AMSTERDAM | CHICAGO**

Ariodante

Handel

COC co-production with Festival
d'Aix-en-Provence, Dutch National Opera,
and Lyric Opera of Chicago

INSPIRING



**SAN FRANCISCO
BARCELONA | CHICAGO**

Norma

Bellini

COC co-production with
San Francisco Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu,
Lyric Opera of Chicago



LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOYS

2014 CENTRE STAGE ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION GALA

BY JENNIFER PUGSLEY

Cheers and thunderous applause greeted each of the seven finalists at this year's Ensemble Studio Competition as they stepped onto the stage of the Four Seasons Centre this past November, but ultimately three of the young opera stars shone just a bit brighter than the rest. In what was an exhilarating vocal showcase, featuring the singers selected from the company's nationwide auditions for the COC Ensemble Studio, tenor Aaron Sheppard received third prize (\$1,500), baritone Dimitri Katotakis won second prize (\$3,000), and tenor Charles Sy took home first prize (\$5,000) and the Audience Choice Award (\$1,500).

Now in its fourth year, the Ensemble Studio Competition is the feature event of the COC's annual fundraising gala, *Centre Stage*, an evening dedicated to the discovery and celebration of the next generation of opera stars. And on November 25, 2014, more than 900 patrons filled the orchestra level and Grand Ring of R. Fraser Elliott Hall to hear the operatic hopefuls that the COC had brought together.

COC Music Director Johannes Debus leading the COC Orchestra started the night off on a festive note with the delightful overture from Nicolai's

At the end of an exciting evening, COC Music Director Johannes Debus (second from left) and COC General Director Alexander Neef (second from right) joined the winners backstage. They are, left to right, tenor Aaron Sheppard (Third prize), baritone Dimitri Katotakis (Second Prize) and tenor Charles Sy (First Place and Audience Choice)

Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor, before turning the evening over to renowned Canadian tenor Ben Heppner. With his trademark warmth and wit, Heppner was a masterful host and, given his alumnus affiliation with the Ensemble Studio, his mere presence was an effective reminder of the footsteps in which these singers aspire to follow.

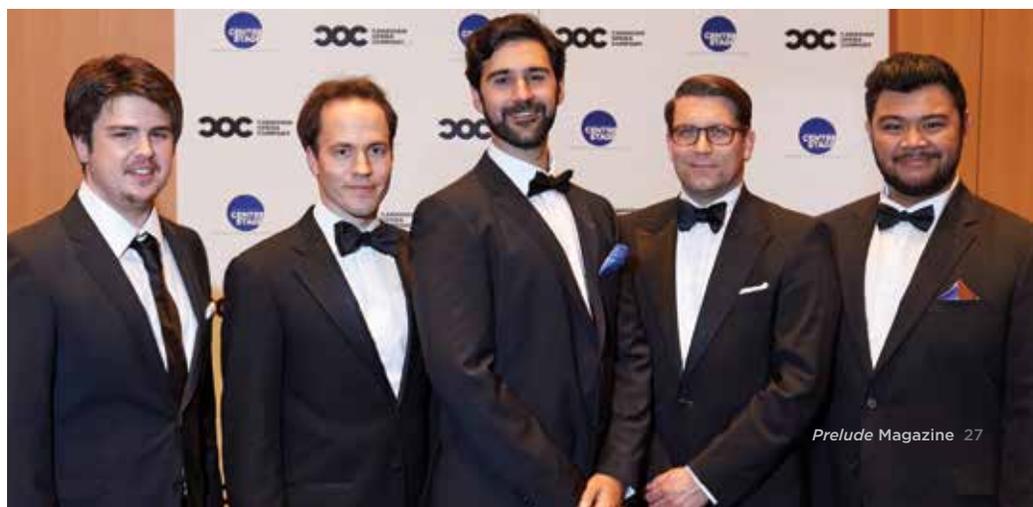
Further adding to the excitement of the evening was the surprise performance by one of Canada's reigning opera stars, soprano Adrienne Pieczonka. As the judges deliberated the winners of the competition, Debus led the COC Orchestra as Pieczonka sang "Ebben... Ne andrò lontana" from Catalani's *La Wally*, "Pace, pace" from Verdi's *La forza del destino*, and "Zueignung" by Richard Strauss. Heppner's expertly timed quip, "Now that's how it's done," was almost drowned out by the roars of appreciation in response to her performance.

"We heard from seven fantastic singers at *Centre Stage* this year, some of whom will go on to have

careers like those of Ben Heppner and Adrienne Pieczonka, whose names are associated with the world's foremost opera houses, festivals and performance halls," says COC General Director Alexander Neef. "Canada's emerging opera singers deserve to be heard and celebrated, and it's an honour to be able to showcase the promise that these talented young artists represent."

And celebrated they were! Following the competition, the finalists and winners joined in the black-tie dinner festivities held on stage in R. Fraser Elliott Hall.

In addition to competing for cash prizes, the Ensemble Studio Competition finalists were also hoping to secure highly coveted positions in the 2015/2016 COC Ensemble Studio, a decision based largely on a final round of auditions held privately from the annual showcase. Toronto audiences can look forward to seeing much more of Charles Sy and Aaron Sheppard with the opera company in the near future. Both have been invited to join the COC's ranks next fall! ■





OPERA TALKS

LOCATION: North York Central Library, Auditorium, 5120 Yonge St.
ADMISSION: FREE but advance registration is recommended:
416-395-5639

A FREE and interactive series presented by the COC in partnership with *Opera Canada* magazine and Toronto's North York Central Library. This season, the staging of opera takes the focus in our series: "First Nights, Faux Traditions and Fresh Starts—An introduction to director's theatre in opera through three dysfunctional families." *Opera Canada* editor Wayne Gooding uses audio and visual elements to illuminate the way production styles have changed from the works' premieres up to the present day.

Tuesday, January 27, 2015, 7 p.m.
"Die Walküre: A revolutionary approach to family ties that get too close"

Tuesday, April 14, 2015, 7 p.m.
"The Barber of Seville: Making merry with the generation gap"

Wayne Gooding examines the different ways Wagner's matchless epic and Rossini's riotous romp have been translated to the stage throughout their performance history. Special attention will be given to the Atom Egoyan and Els Comediants productions for the COC.



YOUTH OPERA LABS

Explore, experiment, and expand your horizons: this spring brings you two all-new Youth Opera Labs!

COST: FREE | **AGES:** 16 - 24 | **LOCATION:** FOUR SEASONS CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, 145 QUEEN ST. W.

REGISTRATION: coc.ca/YOL

VOCAL HEALTH & DICTION LAB *The Barber of Seville*

Flit like Figaro! Brush up on your "Bravo, bravissimo!" in an Italian diction workshop, and learn from our ear, nose and throat doctor about how to keep your vocal cords happy and healthy. See a working rehearsal of the COC's production of *The Barber of Seville*, followed by the dress rehearsal the following week.

THE LAB: Saturday, April 11, 2015 | 12 to 4:30 p.m.

THE DRESS REHEARSAL: Wednesday, April 15, 2015 | 7:30 p.m.



MEDIA EFFECTS & STAGE DESIGN LAB *Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung*

Participate in an interactive stage design workshop, and learn about the role of technology in stage design with Media Effects Designer Laurie-Shawn Borzovoy. See a working rehearsal of the COC's production of *Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung* followed by the dress rehearsal the following week.

THE LAB: Tuesday, April 28, 2015 | 5 to 9:30 p.m.

THE DRESS REHEARSAL: Monday, May 4, 2015 | 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM SUPPORTER
J. P. Bickell Foundation





CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY
**FINE WINE
AUCTION**
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2015

NEW VENUE:
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On Thursday, April 16, 2015, the Canadian Opera Company hosts its 16th Annual Fine Wine Auction at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Hundreds of wine aficionados and Toronto business and arts leaders will gather for an event you won't want to miss.

This is an opportunity to purchase exquisite international fine wines from private collections, with all proceeds supporting the COC Ensemble Studio, the country's top apprenticeship program for young opera professionals. You'll also enjoy

sampling fine wines, an amazing array of hors d'oeuvres, and have the chance to explore a diverse line-up of packages in our popular silent auction.

Stephen Ranger, one of Toronto's most entertaining auctioneers, leads the charge with an impressive array of wines for purchase in the live auction.

A pre-auction cocktail hour begins at 6 p.m. and the live auction starts at 7 p.m.

Visit coc.ca/Support

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COC RADIO BECOMES **LOOK & LISTEN** 

Our exclusive video and audio hub has a new name—Look and Listen! All of the exclusive behind-the-scenes videos, podcasts and other audio/visual resources you've come to love will now be available at coc.ca/LookAndListen instead of coc.ca/COCRadio. Be sure to update any bookmarks or favourites in your browser, and continue to immerse yourself in fascinating videos and resources about your favourite COC productions!

Look for the new icon and name on coc.ca on January 14!



WINTER/SPRING 2015

JANUARY 2015		
Tue	6	12 p.m. Newton Moraes Dance Theatre*
Wed	7	5:30 p.m. Amy McConnell & William Sperandei Quartet*
Thu	8	12 p.m. Ritmo Flamenco Dance and Music Ensemble*
Tue	13	12 p.m. Victor Fournelle-Blain, violin; Philip Chiu, piano*
Wed	14	6:30 p.m. 2015/2016 Season Launch
Thu	15	12 p.m. McGill Honours Jazz Combo; Rémi Bolduc, director/saxophone*
Sat	17	1 p.m. The Opera Exchange: Directors Take the Stage: Debating <i>Regieoper</i> , UofT, Walter Hall
Tue	20	12 p.m. Humber College's Indo-Jazz Collective Justin Gray, Leader*
Thu	22	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Sat	24	4:30 p.m. Don Giovanni Opening Performance
Tue	27	12 p.m. Canadian Art Song Project*
Tue	27	7 p.m. Opera Talks: <i>Die Walküre</i> North York Central Library
Tue	27	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Thu	29	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Orchestra Academy*
Fri	30	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Sat	31	7 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i> Opening Performance

FEBRUARY 2015		
Sun	1	2 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Tue	3	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Tue	3	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Wed	4	7 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i>
Thu	5	12 p.m. Emanuel Ax, host; Pavel Kolesnikov, piano; Orion Weiss, piano*
Fri	6	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Sat	7	4:30 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i>
Mon	9	5:30 p.m. The Christina and Louis Quilico Awards; Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Tue	10	12 p.m. Jane Archibald, soprano; Liz Upchurch, piano*
Tue	10	7 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i>
Wed	11	5:30 p.m. Minor Empire*
Thu	12	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Fri	13	7 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i>
Sat	14	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Tue	17	12 p.m. Janina Baechle, mezzo-soprano; Rachel Andrist, piano*
Wed	18	7:30 p.m. <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Thu	19	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio and Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal*
Thu	19	7 p.m. <i>Die Walküre</i>
Sat	21	7:30 p.m. Don Giovanni Closing Performance
Sun	22	2 p.m. Die Walküre Closing Performance
Tue	24	5:30 p.m. Barbara Hannigan, soprano; Liz Upchurch, piano; Artists of the TSO*

MARCH 2015		
Tue	3	12 p.m. Fandango Guitar Quartet*
Wed	4	12 p.m. Marie France Forcier and Tracey Norman, choreographers*
Tue	10	12 p.m. Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan; Blair Mackay, artistic director*
Wed	11	5:30 p.m. Alex Samaras Quintet*
Thu	12	12 p.m. Yao Guang Zhai, clarinet; Jeanie Chung, piano*
Tue	17	12 p.m. Humber Latin Jazz Ensemble; Hilario Durán, director*
Thu	19	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Tue	24	12 p.m. The Western Collective*
Thu	26	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Tue	31	12 p.m. Jaffa Road*

APRIL 2015		
Wed	1	5:30 p.m. Canadian Children's Opera Company; Ann Cooper Gay, conductor*
Thu	2	12 p.m. Artists of the Glenn Gould School*
Tue	7	12 p.m. Alice Gi-Young Hwang, piano*
Thu	9	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Tue	14	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Orchestra*
Tue	14	7 p.m. Opera Talks: <i>The Barber of Seville</i> North York Central Library
Wed	15	12 p.m. Peggy Baker Dance Projects*
Thu	16	6 p.m. Fine Wine Auction
Fri	17	7:30 p.m. The Barber of Seville Opening Performance
Sun	19	2 p.m. <i>The Barber of Seville</i>
Tue	21	7:30 p.m. <i>The Barber of Seville</i>
Tue	21	12 p.m. Raagini Dance; Bageshree Vaze, artistic director*
Thu	23	12 p.m. Erik Lawrence, piano*
Tue	28	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Wed	29	7:30 p.m. <i>The Barber of Seville</i>
Thu	30	12 p.m. Stephen Hargreaves, harpsichord*

*These performances are part of the Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, supported by the Free Concert Series Endowment Fund, established in honour of Richard Bradshaw by an anonymous donor.

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The Canadian Opera Company gratefully acknowledges the generous support through operating grants from these government agencies and departments:



PHOTO CREDITS **Page 2:** COC General Director Alexander Neef. Photo: bohuang.ca; **Page 3:** clockwise from top left: Marina Rebeka as Violetta in *La Traviata* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, 2013). Photo: Todd Rosenberg; Christian Franz as Siegfried in *Siegfried* (COC, 2005). Photo: Michael Cooper; (l-r) Uli Kirsch as Cherubim, Franz-Josef Selig as Bartolo and Malin Christensson as Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Salzburg Festival, 2011). Photo: Monika Rittershaus; Luca Pisaroni as Maometto II in *Maometto II* (Santa Fe Opera, 2012). Photo: Ken Howard; (centre photo) Rinat Shaham as Carmen and Alain Coulombe as Zuniga in *Carmen* (COC, 2010). Photo: Michael Cooper; **Pages 4-5:** Russell Braun as Don Giovanni; Christine Schäfer as Donna Anna and Paul Groves as Don Ottavio (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013). Photos: Javier del Real; **Page 6:** (top) Kerstin Avemo as Zerlina and Bo Skovhus as Don Giovanni; (bottom left) Bo Skovhus as Don Giovanni and Kyle Ketelsen as Leporello; (bottom right) A scene from *Don Giovanni*. Photos from Festival d'Aix-en-Provence production of *Don Giovanni*, 2010. Photos: Pascal Victor/ArtComArt; **Page 7:** (top) Russell Braun as Don Giovanni; (bottom) Kyle Ketelsen as Leporello. Photos from Teatro Real Madrid production of *Don Giovanni*, 2013. Photos: Javier del Real. **Pages 8-9:** 2014/2015 COC Ensemble Studio members. Photo: Chris Hutcheson; **Page 10:** Johannes Debus. Photo: bohuang.ca; **Page 11:** (foreground) Jane Archibald as Semele and (background) William Burden as Jupiter in *Semele* (COC, 2012). Photo: Michael Cooper; **Page 13:** (l-r) David Ferguson, Adrienne Pieczonka, Earlaine Collins and Ben Heppner. Photo: Jenna Wakani; Geraldine and Jerry Heffernan. Photo: COC; Christie Darville and Hal Jackman. Photo: Ellie Smart Photography; Opera Shop photos: COC; **Page 15:** Christine Goerke in *Elektra* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, 2012). Photo: Dan Rest; **Page 18-19:** Scenes from *La Traviata* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, 2013). Photos: Todd Rosenberg; **Page 20:** Detail from Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape during a Thunderstorm with Pyramus and Thisbe*, 1651. Photo: U. Edelmann-Städel Museum-ARTOTHEK; **Page 21:** Christian Franz as Siegfried (COC, 2006). Photo: Michael Cooper; **Page 22:** Uli Kirsch as Cherubim in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Salzburg Festival, 2011). Photo: Monika Rittershaus; **Page 23:** Rinat Shaham as Carmen (COC, 2010). Photo: Michael Cooper; **Page 24:** Luca Pisaroni as Maometto II (Santa Fe Opera, 2012). Photo: Ken Howard; **Page 25:** (top) Finalists from the *Centre Stage*: Ensemble Studio Competition Gala, 2014 with COC Music Director Johannes Debus. Photo: Michael Cooper; (bottom) Simon Keenlyside as Count Almaviva and Marlis Petersen as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Salzburg Festival, 2011). Photo: Monika Rittershaus; **Page 26:** (top) A scene from *Arabella* (Santa Fe Opera, 2012). Photo: Ken Howard; (bottom left) A scene from *Ariodante* (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, 2014). Photo: Pascal Victor/ArtComArt; (bottom right) Sonda Radvanovsky as Norma (San Francisco Opera, 2014). Photo: Cory Weaver. **Page 27:** (top) Finalists from the *Centre Stage*: Ensemble Studio Competition Gala, 2014, with host Ben Heppner; (bottom) *Centre Stage* prizewinners with Johannes Debus and Alexander Neef. Photos: Michael Cooper; **Page 28:** (top right) Patrick Carfizzi and Nathan Gunn in *The Barber of Seville* (Houston Grand Opera, 2011). Photo: Felix Sanchez; Youth Opera Lab photos: COC; **Page 29:** (top) 2014 Fine Wine Auction. Photo: Joey Lopez; (bottom) Photo: COC. **Back cover:** Photo: Allison Wamser

Coda ^{with} Christine Goerke

The last piece of music I heard on my iPod was *Queen - Fat Bottomed Girls*

If I'd never become a singer, I would have been *A high school Band teacher.*

If I were a tenor, I'd love singing the role of *Siegfried, hands down.*

The opera character I most resemble is *Ellen Orford. I want to fix anyone & everything.*

When I have an afternoon off, *I'm a Mom... what's an afternoon off?!!*

My carry-on essentials are *Water, hand & face lotion, iPad, Pashmina*

On my piano you'll find *Strauss, Wagner, the music for "let it go", and selections from Harry Potter.*

The quality I most admire in a friend is *It's a toss up between loyalty & honesty.*

Walking Dead or Mad Men? *Neither. I don't really watch much TV.*

Pinot grigio or scotch? *Scotch. Is that even a question?!*

Callas or Tebaldi? *Varnay. (I'm a rebel)*

George Clooney or Benedict Cumberbatch? *Oh - Clooney!*

Favourite movie: *The Princess Bride.*

Favourite chocolate: *Kit Kat. (I'm so low brow...)*

Favourite lipstick shade: *Red*

Favourite cold remedy: *Sleep!*

Favourite handbag: *I adore Louis Vuitton, but have two college educations to pay for!*

Favourite literary hero/heroine: *Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice*

Favourite workout: *Chasing my girls around.*

Favourite concert gown: *Something bright & corseted!*



Prelude
A gift to our friends

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