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## **COC REVEALS HUMAN PASSIONS AT PLAY IN NEW PRODUCTION OF MOZART'S WITTY FARCE, *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO***

**Toronto** – Canadian Opera Company audiences find themselves ensnared in a web of erotic passions with a new production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* this February. One of the most beautiful and convincing operas about the fluid enchantments, maze-like confusions and bouts of sheer blindness brought on by love, this new staging is directed by one of the most sought-after and critically acclaimed artists of his generation, **Claus Guth**, with equally celebrated musical leadership by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**. *The Marriage of Figaro* is on stage at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts for 11 performances, including a special presentation starring the young artists of the COC's Ensemble Studio training program, on **February 4, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22\*, 23, 25 and 27, 2016**.

This new COC production of *The Marriage of Figaro* was originally built by the Salzburg Festival as the centrepiece of its celebrations for the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. It was hailed as a "masterpiece" (*Bloomberg News*) and was the hit of the 2006 Salzburg Festival – revived repeatedly in successive seasons since. German director **Claus Guth** is renowned for his innovative productions of classic operas and for this *Figaro* he 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 at play in this opera.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** is at the musical helm of the COC's entire winter season as he conducts *The Marriage of Figaro* in addition to *Siegfried*, leading the COC Orchestra and Chorus through a score widely considered a testament to Mozart's genius. In *Figaro*, Mozart writes musical moments of unprecedented emotional impact and sensuality, delivering an opera that fuses comedy, tragedy and poetry to create one of the smartest and sharpest explorations of human relationships in all theatre. Assistant conductor **Jordan de Souza** steps into the orchestra pit for Maestro Debus on February 23 and 25.

A sparkling cast has been assembled for this magnificent, witty farce that finds Figaro and Susanna's wedding in jeopardy due to the wandering eye of their employer, the Count. The ensuing intrigue and mistaken identities lead all the characters to experience intense human passions as they're torn between morality, desire and impulse.

Austrian bass-baritone **Josef Wagner**, praised as "energetic and forceful as Figaro" (*Calgary Herald*) in his recent North American debut with Calgary Opera, makes his first COC appearance in the title role. His love, Susanna, is internationally acclaimed Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald**, praised in her most recent outing with the COC in 2015's *Don Giovanni* as "thrilling from first note to last, with a sweep and an edge that made her presence on stage aurally riveting" (*Globe and Mail*).

Renowned Canadian soprano **Erin Wall**, last heard at the COC in 2012's *Love from Afar*, is the Countess She brings her "soprano of radiance, pristine beauty and tingling top notes" (*The Guardian*) to a role that explores the full range of emotion, from sadness to humour to forgiveness. The Count is sung by internationally acclaimed Canadian baritone **Russell Braun**, returning to the COC after his intense, critically acclaimed and Dora Award-nominated portrayal of Don Giovanni last season.

American mezzo-soprano **Emily Fons**, one of opera's rising stars, makes her COC debut as the mischievous Cherubino. Acclaimed Canadian tenor **Michael Colvin**, who delighted COC audiences with his Dr. Caius in 2014's *Falstaff*, sings the role of gossiping music teacher Basilio. Canadian bass **Robert Pomakov**, last with the COC in

2013's *Peter Grimes*, returns as the vengeful Bartolo. American mezzo-soprano **Helene Schneiderman** makes her COC debut as Marcellina, Bartolo's housekeeper and partner-in-crime.

Canadian baritone **Doug MacNaughton** is Antonio, Ensemble Studio tenor **Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure** is Don Curzio and Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Sasha Djihanian** is Antonio's daughter, Barbarina. German actor **Uli Kirsch** is Cherubim, a silent character introduced by **Guth** often seen manipulating the other characters.

Set and costume design is by **Christian Schmidt**, who situates the action within the main hall of a 19th-century mansion with the characters's wardrobe reflecting a more modern era through 20th-century dresses and suits. Lighting design is by **Olaf Winter** with video design by **Andi A. Müller**. Choreography is by **Ramses Sigl**.

*The Marriage of Figaro* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™. The opera was last performed by the COC in 2007.

**\*ENSEMBLE STUDIO PERFORMANCE OF THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016**  
The young singers of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio perform Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* on **February 22, 2016**. For casting, please visit the COC website at [coc.ca](http://coc.ca). Tickets are priced at **\$25** and **\$55**.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Single tickets for *The Marriage of Figaro* range from **\$50 – \$435** and are available online at [coc.ca](http://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](http://coc.ca).

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

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**The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb, RBC Foundation 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, the Hal Jackman Foundation and other generous donors.**

### **About the Canadian Opera Company**

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the largest in North America. The COC enjoys a loyal audience support-base and one of the highest attendance and subscription rates in North America. Under its leadership team of General Director Alexander Neef and Music Director Johannes Debus, the COC is increasingly capturing the opera world's attention. The COC maintains its international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation by creating new productions within its diverse repertoire, collaborating with leading opera companies and festivals, and attracting the world's foremost Canadian and international artists. The COC performs in its own opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. Designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects, the Four Seasons Centre opened in 2006. For more information on the COC, visit its award-winning website, [coc.ca](http://coc.ca).

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