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COC SCALES OPERATIC HEIGHTS OF HEROISM AND PASSION WITH *SIEGFRIED* DIRECTED BY FRANÇOIS GIRARD

**“This *Siegfried* was a fascinating thing to witness and gorgeous to hear”
(*Globe and Mail*)**

**“will doubtless continue to dazzle its viewers”
(*Toronto Star*)**

**“awe-inspiring sets”
(*Toronto Sun*)**

**“this *Siegfried* is psychologically rich and mysterious music theatre”
(*NOW Magazine*)**

**“*Siegfried* dazzles as soon as the curtain goes up”
(*Eye Weekly*)**

Toronto – Canadian Opera Company audiences will experience the heights of heroism and passion this winter when the third instalment of Richard Wagner’s epic *Ring Cycle*, *Siegfried*, returns to the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. *Siegfried*’s heroic journey reveals the drives and desires of gods and mortals in a story of greed, fear and self-discovery, told through a powerful and evocative score, and is brought to life in a critically acclaimed production by renowned Canadian director **François Girard** and celebrated Toronto-born designer **Michael Levine**, conducted by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**. *Siegfried* runs for seven performances on **January 23, 27, 30, February, 2, 5, 11 and 14, 2016**.

Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* is commonly described as “the Everest of opera.” The largest work in the history of Western music, the *Ring Cycle* includes four operas, *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, comprising approximately 16 hours of some of the most complex and riveting music in the operatic repertoire. *Siegfried* features some of the greatest music in the whole *Ring Cycle*, as the titular hero slays a dragon, confronts the gods, and braves a ring of fire in his journey to save the sleep-enchanted Valkyrie, Brünnhilde.

Siegfried is the ultimate story of a hero’s path to self-discovery. Drawing inspiration from *Siegfried*’s internal battles and struggle for self-understanding, **Girard** and **Levine** have conceived a work that reflects a memoryscape and a psychological fairytale. Lighting is by Dora Award-winning designer **David Finn**, and award-winning Canadian **Donna Feore** joins the creative team as the choreographer.

Johannes Debus conducts his first *Siegfried* with the COC. With this production, he leads the 106-piece COC Orchestra through an electrifying score of unparalleled musical storytelling: from *Siegfried*’s comic Forging Song in Act I to the lyrical forest murmurs in Act II to one of Wagner’s most blissful duets in Act III when Brünnhilde awakes from her sleep and declares her love for *Siegfried*.

In German tenor **Stefan Vinke** the COC has one of the finest *Siegfried*s in the world. Described as “huge of voice, unflagging of stamina, imaginative and energetic on the stage” (*Seattle Times*), **Vinke** belongs to an elite group of tenors who consistently sing the complete dramatic repertoire of Richard Wagner. Few roles in opera are more daunting than *Siegfried* with many saying it is almost impossible to sing. It demands a tenor to scale extreme vocal heights, possess unwavering stamina in a marathon opera running 240 minutes, and demonstrate a nuanced reading of one of opera’s most introspective characters. **Vinke** makes his Canadian debut in this legendary role.

Vinke is equally matched by the powerhouse American soprano **Christine Goerke**, heralded for her “gale-force power and sheen” (*Wall Street Journal*). She returns to the COC as the mighty Valkyrie Brünnhilde; her company debut in 2015’s *Die Walküre* met with unabashed critical and popular acclaim as her “gleaming tones sliced through the glittering orchestra” (*New York Times*) and showing “she possess[ed] everything a great Brünnhilde must have: dignity, stature, and a voice of molten gold” (*Toronto Star*).

Austrian **Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacke**, considered one of the most important character tenors on the operatic world stage, makes his Canadian debut as the sly Nibelung-dwarf Mime, who raised Siegfried from birth and plans to use the young hero to secure the famed ring for himself. Acclaimed British baritone **Christopher Purves** makes his COC debut as Mime’s brother Alberich, whose theft of the Rhinegold set in motion the *Ring Cycle*’s epic chain of events.

American contralto **Meredith Arwady**, who made her COC debut as Death in 2011’s *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, now brings her rich vocal intensity and captivating stage presence to the COC as the Earth Goddess, Erda. Acclaimed American bass-baritone **Alan Held**, one of the finest singer-actors on the stage today, was last heard as Balstrode in 2013’s *Peter Grimes* and returns to the COC as Wotan/The Wanderer.

Canadian bass **Phillip Ens**, most recently at the COC as Sparafucile in 2011’s *Rigoletto*, reprises the role of Fafner the dragon, the current possessor of the Rhinegold, which he sang for the company in 2005 and 2006. COC Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Jacqueline Woodley**, last heard with the company as Papagena in 2011’s Ensemble Studio performance of *The Magic Flute*, is the Forest Bird who helps Siegfried locate Fafner’s treasure and see through Mime’s deceitful ways. Actor **George Molnar** is the Bear, a silent role created by Girard.

Siegfried is sung in German with English SURTITLES™. The opera was last performed by the COC in 2006 at the opening of the Four Seasons Centre as part of the first Canadian production of Richard Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*. The COC premiered the Girard-directed *Siegfried* in 2005, having previously presented *Siegfried* in 1972.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Siegfried* range from \$60 – \$435 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

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The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb, RBC Foundation and The Slaughter 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.

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For more information, please contact:

Jennifer Pugsley, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: jenniferp@coc.ca