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FREE EVENTS IN TORONTO IN APRIL EXPLORING MÉTIS HISTORY, CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S *LOUIS RIEL*

Toronto – In conjunction with the **Canadian Opera Company's** new production of Harry Somers' *Louis Riel*, **FREE** events are taking place in Toronto throughout the month of April, allowing the general public to discover this uniquely Canadian contribution to the opera world, as well as the Métis history and cultural traditions that inspired the operatic tale of the Métis leader and Canada's westward expansion.

Métis artists appear in performance with the COC's popular **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** (145 Queen St. W.):

- On **April 13**, from **12 – 1 p.m.**, the **V'ni Dansi's Louis Riel Métis Dancers** bring the rhythms and images of the Métis spirit alive through traditional and contemporary styles of Métis dance and music. The Vancouver-based company is dedicated to sharing the dances, stories and culture of the Métis and, on April 13, performs in the Free Concert Series for the first time in celebration of the Métis people.
- On **April 20**, the **Métis Fiddler Quartet** comes to the Free Concert Series from **12 – 1 p.m.**, presenting a musical voyage that travels the trade routes of the Northwestern frontier. Born in Winnipeg, the four Delbaere-Sawchuk siblings: Alyssa, Conlin, Nicholas and Danton, of the **Métis Fiddler Quartet**, perform Métis fiddle music passed down by their elders, while drawing on their diverse backgrounds in classical music, jazz and beyond. On April 20, audience members are encouraged to clap, jig and sing along with this award-winning group and discover the history of the Métis people in Canada through fiddle tunes and songs.

Audiences of all ages can also participate in **multiple community outreach events**:

- On **April 12**, the COC hosts ***Rebel Without a Chance: Louis Riel*** at the Toronto Public Library – Don Mills location (888 Lawrence Ave. E.) as part of its Opera Talks series. In this free and interactive session, *Opera Canada* editor Wayne Gooding offers a multi-media exploration of the theme of opera and revolution by examining how the opera *Louis Riel* tells the story of this important historical figure. ***Rebel Without a Chance: Louis Riel*** takes place at **7 p.m.** No advance registration is required.
- On **April 13**, the COC's **Youth Opera Lab** series explores the traditional music of the Métis people in a workshop led by musician and educator **Conlin Delbaere-Sawchuk** of the **Métis Fiddler Quartet**. This free workshop for teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 takes place from **5 – 9:30 p.m.** at Toronto's Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (145 Queen St. W.) and includes the opportunity to observe an on-stage rehearsal of the COC's production of *Louis Riel*. Youth Opera Lab spaces are free but **advance application is required** to secure one of the 25 spots available. **Applications are available at www.coc.ca/YOL and are being accepted as of March 20, 2017.**
- On **April 21**, the free, day-long symposium ***Hearing Riel*** explores the complex biographical, historical and political terrain of Harry Somers' landmark Canadian opera. Symposium presenters include **Beverley McLachlin**, Chief Justice of Canada; **John Ralston Saul**, author of *A Fair Country*; Métis activist and lawyer **Jean Teillet**, grand-niece of Louis Riel; **Adam Gaudry**, Métis Assistant Professor, Faculty of

Native Studies, University of Alberta; and **Peter Hinton**, director of the COC's new production of *Louis Riel*. This **special, one-day-only event** is presented by the COC in partnership with the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music and the Humanities Initiative of the Munk School of Global Affairs. The symposium runs from **9 a.m. – 5 p.m.** at **Innis Town Hall** (2 Sussex Ave., St. George Campus, University of Toronto). Admission is free and **tickets can be reserved in advance as of April 4** by visiting **www.coc.ca/HearingRiel** or by calling the COC Box Office at **416-363-8231**. **There is a limit of one ticket per person.**

The 2017 production of *Louis Riel* is made possible through the financial support of individuals, corporations and charitable foundations and trusts. The COC gratefully acknowledges its underwriters: **The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Philip Deck and Kimberley Bozak, Asper Foundation, and The Max Clarkson Family Foundation in honour of Harry Somers**; with additional support from **Mark and Gail Appel, Margaret Harriett Cameron, Catherine Fauquier, Sally Holton, Michiel Horn and Cornelia Schuh, Michael and Linda Hutcheon, The Michael and Sonja Koerner Charitable Foundation, Peter Levitt and Mai Why, John D. McKellar, Trina McQueen, Roger D. Moore, Sue Mortimer, Dr. Shirley C. Neuman, Tim and Frances Price, Dr. Joseph So, Philip Somerville, Françoise Sutton, Dr. John Stanley and Dr. Helmut Reichenbächer, The Stratton Trust, and John Wright and Chung-Wai Chow**. *Louis Riel* has also been made possible by generous donors to the National Arts Centre Foundation, who believe in investing in Canadian creators, including **Kimberley Bozak and Philip Deck, Earlaine Collins and TD Bank Group**.

Louis Riel was composed by Harry Somers for Canada's centennial in 1967. *Louis Riel* is sung in English, French, Michif and Cree with English, French, Michif and Cree SURTITLES™.

The COC presents seven performances of *Louis Riel* on **April 20, 23, 26, 29, May 2, 5, 13, 2017** at Toronto's Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. The 2017 production is a co-production with the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, where *Louis Riel* will be performed in June 2017.

For more information on the COC's production of *Louis Riel* and the various events taking place in conjunction with its Toronto presentation, visit www.coc.ca.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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 coc.ca.

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