

For immediate release: September 15, 2016

## **CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY PARTNERS WITH AGAINST THE GRAIN THEATRE IN PILOT RESIDENCY PROGRAM**

**Toronto** – The Canadian Opera Company expands its training program for young opera professionals this fall with the introduction of a residency program for emerging opera companies. As a pilot project, the COC will act as an incubator for the indie opera collective Against the Grain Theatre (AtG) during a two-year residency at the COC’s administrative offices at 227 Front St. E. in Toronto.

The COC’s pilot company-in-residence program is designed to support an individual opera company during the critical transition from its initial formation to growing into a more established organization with a viable infrastructure. The residency program is specifically aimed at opera companies that have been in existence for five years or less and offers, in addition to dedicated administrative space and resources, mentorship involving different departments and opportunities for job shadowing, as well as invitations to observe and/or participate in company meetings and events.

“This residency program is a formalization of a long-time mentorship that has existed between the COC and Against the Grain Theatre. Partnering with AtG during the program’s pilot stage gives the COC an opportunity to lend support to an emerging company while also receiving valuable feedback on how this kind of residency works and if it’s a viable structure we can build upon,” says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. “It’s an exciting time for opera right now with so many independent opera companies establishing themselves within the arts community. Our hope with this residency program is to put a system in place that helps nurture those companies as they grow and seek to establish a sustainable future.”

“Building a company is tough in any industry, but especially in opera,” says **AtG General Manager Joanna Barrotta**. “The COC’s leadership in mentoring young companies like ours gives us a stable platform to continue our growth, and allows us to make a meaningful contribution to the opera ecosystem.”

AtG’s residency at the COC begins with the 2016/2017 season and runs through the 2017/2018 season to August 15, 2018. The COC’s company-in-residence initiative joins the Ensemble Studio, Canada’s premier training program for young opera professionals established in 1980, and the Orchestra Academy, an extra-curricular program founded in 2014 to offer student musicians professional insight and experience in their pursuit of a career in an opera orchestra.

### **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).

### **About Against the Grain Theatre**

In December of 2010, Toronto's opera scene received a jolt of energy with the formation of Against the Grain Theatre (AtG). With a goal to reinvigorate the operatic art form by presenting an eclectic array of musical works in unconventional spaces and innovative ways, AtG staged its first performance to a sold-out audience of 50 people, and with that the company was off and running. Since that first season, AtG has packed every single one of its productions with standing room-only crowds, winning a consistent level of critical and public acclaim. The arts community has embraced the AtG, as has a much wider, more diverse audience of people who may have never considered attending an opera. Founded by an adventurous collective of friends and artists, the company's mission is to preserve the company's unique ability to be serious in intent and execution, yet fun and irreverent in spirit.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

**Jennifer Pugsley, Canadian Opera Company**, Media Relations Manager, tel: 416-306-2303, e-mail: [jenniferp@coc.ca](mailto:jenniferp@coc.ca)

**Caitlin Coull, Against the Grain Theatre**, Communications Director; e-mail: [cait@againstthegraintheatre.com](mailto:cait@againstthegraintheatre.com)