

For immediate release: January 12, 2017

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S 2017/2018 SEASON BRINGS A PREMIERE AND HIGHLY ANTICIPATED RETURNS IN STAR-STUDED YEAR FEATURING ALL COC PRODUCTIONS

Internationally Acclaimed Canadian Soprano Jane Archibald is COC Artist-in-Residence

Toronto – The Canadian Opera Company presents a **2017/2018** season that defies conventions on what opera can be and cements the art form's enduring relevance as a reflection of timeless human relations and universal themes. Unveiled today at a public launch at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, the COC's 67th season features the company premiere of Richard Strauss' *Arabella* and welcomes the return of long absent works Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* (last presented in 1999), Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* (last presented in 1984) and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (last presented in 1980), all in new COC productions. Rounding out the season are revivals of COC productions of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Robert Lepage's landmark production of Stravinsky's *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*.

“What we have been trying to do since the opening of the opera house in 2006 is make the COC a destination for great artists. It's a proud moment to look at the 17/18 season and see the relationships that have developed to bring these artists to the COC stage,” says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. “My intention for every season we present is to share with our audiences an unrivalled operatic experience. Opera can be about so much—love, war, poverty, wealth, sadness, happiness—the big themes and questions of life, which can be explored in any number of ways. Next season brings with it meaningful examples of the limitless possibilities of how opera can be presented and the range of experiences it can offer.”

A special feature of the 17/18 season is the status of world-renowned Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald** as the COC's **Artist-in-Residence**. Over the course of the season, **Archibald** will perform one of her most acclaimed roles: **Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio***, and make two highly anticipated role debuts: **Zdenka in *Arabella*** and the **Nightingale in *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables***. In addition to her season-long residency on the COC's mainstage, **Archibald** will perform in the COC's Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre and work with the young artists of the COC Ensemble Studio and Orchestra Academy training programs in a mentorship capacity.

“It's exciting for the company and our audiences to have someone of Jane Archibald's calibre choose to spend so much of her time with us. She's an internationally in-demand artist and we've been fortunate to welcome her to the company on a number of occasions in the last few years,” says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. “This kind of commitment from Jane is a testament to the international reputation of the COC, solidifying the company and our opera house as a showcase for the world-class talent working in opera today.”

Complementing the mainstage productions is *An Evening with the Ensemble Studio*, featuring the young artists of the COC Ensemble Studio training program, as well as **Centre Stage**, the COC's annual vocal competition and premier fundraising gala.

Strauss' Arabella – COC Premiere, New COC Production

Performance Dates: October 5, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22, 28, 2017

The COC opens its 17/18 season with the lush orchestration and soaring vocal lines of Richard Strauss' *Arabella*. At the core of this lyric comedy is the relationship between two sisters of an impoverished noble family trying to find their way amidst the changing world of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Never before presented by the COC, *Arabella* has its company premiere with a glamorously opulent staging conceived by acclaimed Toronto-resident director **Tim Albery**.

This COC co-production with Minnesota Opera and Santé Fe Opera received almost unanimous reviews when it premiered in Santa Fe in 2012. The *New York Times* praised it as “**smart and tasteful**” and how Albery “**honors the work's period setting in a sensitively detailed production**” with sets and costumes by **Tobias Hoheisel** and lighting design by **David Finn**.

World-renowned Canadian **Erin Wall** brings her “**lovely, sympathetic Arabella**” (*New York Times*) and “**radiant soprano caressing Strauss' sinuous, soaring lines**” (*Dallas Morning News*) to the COC to sing the title role. Making her role debut as Zdenka, Arabella's sister who is forced to pass for a boy, is acclaimed Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald**. Mandryka, Arabella's suitor, is sung by a bass-baritone praised as “**full of light, radiance, power and immeasurable generosity**,” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine*), Poland's **Tomasz Konieczny** in his Canadian debut. Canadian tenor **David Pomeroy** is Matteo, the penniless officer who loves Arabella and is secretly loved by Zdenka.

Distinguished Canadian baritone **John Fanning** is Count Waldner, father to Arabella and Zdenka, and German mezzo-soprano **Gundula Hintz** makes her Canadian debut as their mother, Adelaide. COC Ensemble Studio graduate coloratura soprano **Claire de Sévigné** is the belle of the ball, Fiakermilli. Canadian mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham** is the Fortune Teller.

German **Patrick Lange**, the new general music director for the Wiesbaden State Theatre and one of the most exciting maestros of his generation, conducts *Arabella's* beautiful and charming score. *Arabella* is sung in German with English SURTITLES™.

Donizetti's The Elixir of Love – New COC Production

Performance Dates: October 11, 15, 17, 21, 27, 29, November 2, 4, 2017

Laughter and love stories carry over into the new COC production of Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, one of the most popular comedies of the opera world for almost 200 years. The Cinderella story is presented with a twist with a poor and uneducated young man who dreams of winning the heart of a rich, clever and beautiful woman through the aid of a magic elixir.

Donizetti's instantly appealing score is a showpiece for rising operatic talent and in this production is a showcase for the return of three recent graduates of the COC Ensemble Studio training program now making their way on the world stage: tenor **Andrew Haji**, quickly becoming a sought-after voice on the operatic and concert stages, is the love-sick Nemorino; soprano **Simone Osborne**, one of the most exciting emerging artists in the opera world, is the rich and beautiful Adina; and baritone **Gordon Bintner**, appearing in major roles this season with Oper Frankfurt, is Belcore, Nemorino's rival for Adina's affections. English baritone **Andrew Shore**, one of the most distinguished singing actors working on the lyric stage, is the roguish Doctor Dulcamara.

The Elixir of Love was last presented at the COC in 1999 and returns in a new company production, based on the 2008 co-production from San Francisco Opera, Colorado Opera and Kansas City Opera. Conceived by distinguished American director **James Robinson**, this *Elixir of Love* encapsulates the nostalgia of an idyllic summer in a small town pre-World War I, with a landscape reminiscent of the worlds of the musicals *The Music Man* and *Meet Me in Saint Louis*. Period costumes are by **Martin Pakledinaz**, charm-filled rural set design is by **Allen Moyer**, with lighting design by **Paul Palazzo**. The production's original rural U.S. setting has been given a Canadian remodelling for its COC debut with a distinct Niagara-on-the-Lake feel.

Toronto-born **Yves Abel**, a regular guest artist with the world's great opera houses and symphonies, makes a highly anticipated COC debut conducting Donizetti's bubbly elixir of *bel canto* bliss. *The Elixir of Love* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

Verdi's Rigoletto – Revival COC Production

Performance Dates: January 20, 27, February 1, 4, 6, 9, 11, 17, 21, 23, 2018

The COC takes audiences into the winter portion of the 17/18 season with an operatic tragedy of Shakespearean dimensions brought to life by some of Verdi's most passionate and heartbreaking melodies, *Rigoletto*. While the jester Rigoletto aids in his master's (the Duke of Mantua's) debauchery, it is the fool himself who pays the ultimate price with the sacrifice of his own most precious and hidden love—his daughter. Pre-eminent American maestro **Stephen Lord** conducts one of the most exciting, gritty, and popular operas in the repertoire.

Commanding English baritone **Roland Wood** brings his “**rich and authoritative sound, his jovial tone...hiding a stormier one that comes to the fore with volcanic intensity**” (*BroadwayWorld.com*) back to the COC in the title role after an acclaimed debut in 2014's *A Masked Ball*. American soprano **Anna Christy**, “**nimble of voice, body and spirit**” (*New York Times*) is his doomed daughter, Gilda. She's reunited with American tenor **Stephen Costello** who “**has the kind of voice that sets the audience—even at a dress rehearsal—atwitter**” (*Wall Street Journal*), the two performing to critical and popular acclaim as the doomed star-crossed lovers in the COC's 2013 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. **Costello** shares the role of the Duke of Mantua with the “**heroic, beautiful sound**” (*Washington Post*) of American tenor **Joshua Guerrero** (Feb. 11, 17, 23) in his Canadian debut. Georgian bass **Goderdzi Janelidze** makes his Canadian debut as the assassin Sparafucile, Canadian mezzo-soprano **Carolyn Sproule** makes her COC debut as Sparafucile's sister Maddalena, Canadian bass **Robert Pomakov** is Count Monterone and Canadian mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham** is Gilda's nurse, Giovanna.

The COC revives its co-production with English National Opera staged by **Christopher Alden**, a director committed to keeping the art form challenging and vital. Set in the 1860s, in the middle of the Victorian era, the production explores ideas of Victorian masculinity and the patriarchy of the day with a social order of men possessing enormous wealth and power, keeping women subservient and nearly powerless. **Michael Levine's** luxurious and handsomely designed set and costumes, earning bursts of applause in 2011 when the production was premiered by the COC, illustrate the wealth, privilege and sensuality of the 19th-century court. Lighting is by **Duane Schuler**. *Rigoletto* is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

Mozart's The Abduction from the Seraglio – New COC Production

Performance Dates: February 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 22, 24, 2018

Returning to the COC stage after an absence of nearly 40 years is Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in a new COC production from Lebanese-Canadian **Wajdi Mouawad**, a playwright and director whose work is increasingly internationally recognized for its moral impulse. At the time of its premiere in 2016 with the COC's co-producer, Opéra de Lyon, the *New York Times* suggested **Mouawad's** artistic vision for Mozart's problematic piece about relations between Europeans and Muslim Turks could be an example of opera becoming an agent of change.

Mozart's opera of Europeans taken captive by a Muslim pasha in the Ottoman Empire and the efforts of their beloveds to rescue them is ripe with the possibility of violent confrontation, but under **Mouawad's** direction, including the reworking and modernizing of some of the original text, the introduction of his own dialogue and a prologue before the overture, the result is a presentation that avoids caricature and allows the brilliant humanity of Mozart's characters to shine in a new way. Elegant period costumes are from **Emmanuelle Thomas**, a minimalist yet sophisticated set design is by **Emmanuel Clolus** and lighting design is by **Eric Champoux**.

Canadian **Jane Archibald** performs one of her most acclaimed and favourites roles, bringing her “**commanding, compassionate soprano**” (*New York Times*) to the character of Konstanze, which she performed in this production's 2016 premiere. Making his role debut as Belmonte, Konstanze's fiancée, is a rising star in the world of

opera, Swiss tenor **Mauro Peter**. Ensemble Studio graduate soprano **Claire de Sévigné**, lauded as seeming to “**fully flourish**” (*Bachtrack*) in the role of Blonde at Opernhaus Zürich, brings her vocal flexibility and expressivity to the COC stage. Ensemble Studio graduate **Owen McCausland**’s “**ringing tenor tones**” (*Vancouver Classical Music*) sings Pedrillo, Belmonte’s servant and Blonde’s betrothed. Croatian bass **Goran Jurić** is Osmin, overseer for the Pasha. German actor **Peter Lohmeyer** returns to **Mouawad**’s production from the 2016 premiere in the spoken role of the Pasha, Bassa Selim.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, last heard at the COC in 1980. Musically, the opera is considered the first of Mozart’s great masterpieces. It’s characterised by the use of unusual instruments such as cymbals, Turkish drums, piccolo flutes and triangles and contains some of the composer’s most beautiful music. *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is sung in German with English SURTITLES™.

Stravinsky’s *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* – Revival COC Production

Performance Dates: April 13, 14, 22, May 1, 2, 10, 12, 13, 19, 2018

Hailed as a masterpiece at its sold-out 2009 world premiere in Toronto and subsequent 2011 tour to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the COC presents the revival of **Robert Lepage**’s enchanting production of Stravinsky’s *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*. A co-production between the COC, Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, Opéra de Lyon, in collaboration with Ex Machina (Québec), *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* has garnered world-wide acclaim having “**succeeded in the space of an evening in giving back to adults...a capacity for enchantment reserved for children**” (*Le Figaro*), creating a production that is “**nothing short of brilliant**” (*Opera*, UK) and “**more splendid than the Imperial Palace scene in the Met’s popular production of Puccini’s ‘Turandot,’ a Zeffirelli extravaganza**” (*New York Times*), delivering “**the most enchanting work for the musical stage to hit Toronto in years**” (*Toronto Star*).

Making her role debut as the Nightingale is Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald**. Singing the Fisherman, who discovers the Nightingale, is COC Ensemble Studio graduate tenor **Owen McCausland** in a role debut performance. The Emperor, whose life is saved by the Nightingale, is sung for the first time by American bass-baritone **Christian Van Horn**. American contralto **Meredith Arwardy**, praised as “**excellent**” (*New York Times*) and “**commanding**” (*Associated Press*) as Death in the COC’s BAM tour returns to the role for the 2018 revival.

The Nightingale and Other Short Fables is a landmark artistic experience in the opera world, featuring an unprecedented fusion of traditional and modern puppetry techniques, an innovative production design and an inversion of the operatic theatrical norm by placing the singers in an orchestra pit filled with water and the orchestra on stage. COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts a program featuring the best of Stravinsky’s music: opening with the short vocal and instrumental pieces of the jazz-tinged *Ragtime*, *Pribaoutki*, *Two Poems of Constantin Balmont*, *Berceuses du chat*, *Four Russian Peasant Songs*, and *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet*; followed by the satirical one-act opera-ballet *The Fox*; and concluding with *The Nightingale*, a Russian *conte lyrique* based on the tale by Hans Christian Andersen.

The singers perform and manipulate puppets designed by Tony® and Emmy® award-winning American puppet designer **Michael Curry**. *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*’ set is designed by Canadian **Carl Fillion**. The lighting designer for the cutting-edge production is Canadian **Étienne Boucher**. The Chinese-inspired costumes are by Canadian costume designer **Mara Gottler**. *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* is sung in Russian with English SURTITLES™.

Donizetti’s *Anna Bolena* – New COC Production

Performance Dates: April 28, May 3, 5, 8, 11, 16, 20, 24, 26, 2018

The COC closes its 17/18 season by concluding the Tudor Trilogy by Donizetti it began in 2010. Following the previously presented productions of *Maria Stuarda* (2010) and *Roberto Devereux* (2014), the COC brings to its stage a new company production of *Anna Bolena* starring the queen of *bel canto*, Canadian **Sondra Radvanovsky**.

A showpiece for an extraordinary soprano, the character of Anna Bolena is a punishing role capturing the tumultuous final days of Henry VIII's second wife, who must fight for her honour and her life. **Radvanovsky** brings her portrayal of the doomed queen to Toronto on the heels of her heralded Metropolitan Opera performance where she was praised by *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini for how she “**sings with wondrous command of subtle shadings and vibrato. Making every word matter, she infuses each phrase with urgency and emotion. In bursts of defiance, she can unleash her voice with thrilling power, slicing through the orchestra and chorus with silvery top notes. I was especially moved, though, by the beauty of Ms. Radvanovsky's subdued, pianissimo singing....**”

American bass-baritone **Eric Owens**, who “**speaks to you even in his silences...and shakes you when he sings,**” (*Chicago Sun-Times*), is Enrico VIII, King of England. American soprano **Keri Alkema** brings her voice with its “**appealing brew of dark and creamy colors**” (*New York Times*) to the role of Giovanna Seymour. American **Bruce Sledge**, one of the world's most in-demand *bel canto* tenors and last with the COC in 2016's *Maometto II*, is Lord Riccardo Percy. Canadian mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy**, described on the world stage as everything from radiant and sumptuous in tone to noble and spellbinding in her presence, sings the role of Smeton, the musician secretly in love with the queen. Conducting **Anna Bolena's** score of exquisite melodies, rich in emotion, is Italian maestro **Corrado Rovaris**.

The COC's new production of **Anna Bolena** was originally created by director **Stephen Lawless** for Dallas Opera as part of its presentation of the Donizetti Tudor Trilogy. Working from the common thread of the powerful presence of Queen Elizabeth I, **Lawless** and his team set the three Donizetti operas in a theatrical style that was popular during her reign, producing a Shakespearean-inspired Globe Theatre set design by **Benoît Dugardyn** and sumptuous period costumes by **Ingeborg Bernerth**. **Anna Bolena** was last performed by the COC in 1984. **Anna Bolena** is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.

Centre Stage, Ensemble Studio Competition Gala + An Evening with the Ensemble Studio

The young voices emerging on Canada's operatic stage are also thrust into the spotlight in the 17/18 season. On **November 1, 2017**, the COC celebrates the future of opera in Canada with its premier fundraising event, **Centre Stage**. The annual vocal competition and gala is a celebratory showcase of the young opera artists vying for a spot in the COC's Ensemble Studio training program.

On **May 25, 2018**, the COC hosts **An Evening with the Ensemble Studio**, an evening of operatic scenes performed by the current members of the Ensemble Studio and Canada's future opera stars.

Both evenings of music take place at the Four Seasons Centre with COC Music Director Johannes Debus leading the celebrated COC Orchestra.

All repertoire, dates, pricing, productions and casting are subject to change without notice. For more complete casting and creative team information, please see the production pages at **coc.ca**.

TICKET INFORMATION

Subscriptions to the six mainstage productions for the COC's 17/18 season range from **\$199 to \$1,081**, with box seat subscriptions available for **\$2,086**. Subscriptions may be purchased online at **coc.ca**, by calling **416-363-8231**, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office**, 145 Queen St. W., Toronto. **Special value pricing is available on most levels of the Four Seasons Centre**. Prices include HST. Special pricing is also available for seniors and children in all subscription series.

Single tickets to all of the COC's 17/18 season productions are available to the public as of August 28, 2017. Single tickets prices range from **\$35 to \$225**, and box seats, when available, are **\$350**. Tickets will be available online at **coc.ca**, by calling **416-363-8231**, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office**, located at 145 Queen St. W.

Tickets to the **Centre Stage** competition and the **Evening with the Ensemble Studio** may be purchased as part of a COC subscription package for the 17/18 season. Single tickets to the **Centre Stage** competition tickets are **\$100**, and are available as of **January 12, 2017**. All tickets to the **Evening with the Ensemble Studio** are **\$35** with single tickets on sale as of **August 28, 2017**.

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, student groups** and **rush seating**, visit coc.ca.

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 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 www.coc.ca.

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