

For immediate release: August 23, 2017

LUSH LYRIC COMEDY, *ARABELLA*, HAS COC PREMIERE IN GLAMOROUS, OPULENT STAGING

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** opens its 2017/2018 season with the lush orchestration and soaring vocal lines of Richard Strauss’ lyrical comedy about love, money and sex, *Arabella*. Never before presented by the COC, *Arabella* has its company premiere with a glamorous opulent staging conceived by acclaimed Toronto-resident director **Tim Albery**, starring two of the finest sopranos on the world stage today: Canadians **Erin Wall** and **Jane Archibald**. *Arabella* runs for seven performances on **October 5, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22, 28, 2017** at Toronto’s Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

German **Patrick Lange**, the new general music director for the Wiesbaden State Theatre and one of the most exciting maestros of his generation, returns to the COC to conduct *Arabella*’s beautiful and charming score in a staging that shows audiences **“how seductive and insightful Strauss can be when offered a production as gracefully nuanced as this one”** (*Santa Fe Reporter*). A COC co-production with Minnesota Opera and Santa Fe Opera, this new presentation of *Arabella* was praised by *The New York Times* as **“smart and tasteful,”** singling out 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**.

At the core of Strauss’ opera is the relationship between two sisters of a financially ruined noble family who are trying to find their way amidst the changing world of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Inspired by this backdrop of age-old contrasts and a yearning for something more, **Albery** situates the action of Strauss’ opera in Vienna on the eve of the First World War. The staging suggests a time of hedonistic triviality with the looming cataclysm of the war that would destroy all the certainties of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The result is **“an extravagant, visually appealing (Gustav Klimt-style) glamour that suits the characters and their situations”** (*Opera News*).

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 **Jane Archibald**, the COC’s 2017/2017 Artist-in-Residence and an **“extraordinary coloratura soprano”** (*Globe and Mail*) who **“whether it be her projection, tone, intensity, breath or agility, as a soloist or in the many ensembles, her voice radiates and surprises at every moment”** (*ClassiqueNews.com*).

Poland’s **Tomasz Konieczny**, a bass-baritone praised as **“full of light, radiance, power and immeasurable generosity,”** (*Frankfurter Allgemeine*), makes his Canadian debut as Mandryka, *Arabella*’s suitor. American tenor **Michael Brandenburg** brings **“his natural acting and clear, attractive tenor”** (*Metro Weekly*) to his company and role debut as Matteo, the penniless officer who loves *Arabella* and is secretly loved by Zdenka.

Distinguished Canadian baritone, and COC Ensemble Studio graduate, **John Fanning** is Count Waldner, *Arabella* and Zdenka’s gambling father, and German mezzo-soprano **Gundula Hintz** makes her Canadian debut as their mother, Adelaide.

Arabella’s trio of suitors are portrayed by three rising operatic talents: American tenor **Corey Bix** makes his COC debut as Count Elemer, American baritone **Craig Irvin** sings Count Dominik and COC Ensemble Studio baritone **Bruno Roy** is Count Lamoral. 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.

Strauss' *Arabella* was first performed in 1933 at the Dresden Sächsisches Staatstheater. It is the final collaboration between the composer and his long-time librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who had previously worked together on *Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Die ägyptische Helena*. While written in the late 1920s, the libretto of *Arabella* is based on a short story written by Hofmannsthal in 1910, *Lucidor, Characters for an Unwritten Comedy*, where the focus was not on Arabella but her tomboy sister, Lucile (the quasi-trouser role of Zdenka in the opera), and published before the First World War.

Arabella is Strauss' best-loved stage work from the 1920s and '30s and contains some of the composer's most beautiful music for orchestra and soprano voice. Performed with greater frequency among European opera houses than in North America, the COC premiere of *Arabella* may also mark the opera's Canadian debut.

All performances of the COC's production of *Arabella* feature the COC Orchestra and Chorus. *Arabella* is sung in German and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Arabella* range from \$35 – \$225 and box seats, when available, are \$350. Tickets are now on sale, 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 **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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BMO Financial Group: Season Sponsor

TD Bank Group: Presenting Sponsor Opera Under 30

The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb, Marjorie and Roy Linden, 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 www.coc.ca.

- 30 -

For more information or to request photographs, please contact:

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

Kristin McKinnon, Publicist, tel: 416-306-2383, e-mail: kmckinnon@coc.ca