

AN INTERVIEW WITH
LOVE FROM AFAR'S
KAIJA SAARIAHO

TOSCA X 2:
ADRIANNE PIECZONKA
AND JULIE MAKEROV

**OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR
AND HIS MENTOR:**
JOHANNES DEBUS AND
PAOLO CARIGNANI

ARTIST SPONSORSHIP:
**"THE MOST WONDERFUL
THING YOU CAN DO"**

**INCLUDES
A SPECIAL
2012/2013
8-PAGE SEASON
PREVIEW**

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR
ALEXANDER NEEF
HAPPY 2012!



Photo: Rider Dyce

Few opera producers find themselves at the helm of a company that can bring a dream lineup of operas to the stage without breaking the bank or compromising artistic quality. I am lucky enough to be working at the COC, a place where ambitious, creative vision and the practical conditions for realizing it, exist in near harmony. The results distinguish us as a powerhouse opera company capable of mounting truly special programming, like our 2012/2013 season.

From a rare chance to see the Canadian premiere of Peter Sellars' production of *Tristan und Isolde* to hearing one of the leading tenors of our time, Ramón Vargas, make his role debut as Manrico in *Il Trovatore*, the upcoming season shows pivotal artistic milestones that only a company like ours could achieve. And, as Canada's largest opera producer, the COC is able to showcase some of the country's most treasured artists, including Isabel Bayrakdarian, Adrienne Pieczonka, Robert Carsen and Atom Egoyan. I hope you will join us to hear their voices, experience their vision and enjoy a year of compelling operatic theatre of the highest quality.

In the more immediate future, we can look forward to a remarkable pairing of operas this winter, with the return of our 2008 production of Puccini's masterpiece *Tosca*, alongside the Canadian premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Love from Afar*. Composed a century

apart, these two works complement each other by disclosing, as only great opera can, the centrality of love and art to a meaningful human existence.

I am also pleased that the COC continues to play a major role in fostering young Canadian talent, most recently through the inaugural Ensemble Studio Competition that took place on Nov. 28 in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre. This was the first time in the history of the company that the final auditions for the Ensemble Studio were open to the public. If we are to judge by the sold-out crowd that filled the amphitheatre, there is no shortage of appetite for opera in Canada or the sheer excitement of discovering a new generation of artists. We had the pleasure of hearing 10 singers who demonstrated exceptional skill and technique and we look forward to following their career paths for many years to come.

In short, everywhere I look there are promising signs of what lies ahead in the New Year and the new season. But everything that we have been able to accomplish would not be possible without a community of patrons, donors and sponsors. And so, in order to maintain our excellence, I encourage you to join us in any way you can (as a subscriber or a committed donor, or both!) to participate in this company's very bright and very ambitious future. ■



Prelude

A gift to our friends

Editorial Board:

Robert Lamb,
Managing Director
Roberto Mauro,
Artistic Administrator
Jeremy Elbourne,
Director of Marketing
Claudine Domingue,
Director of Public Relations
Christie Darville,
Director of Development

Editors:

Suzanne Vanstone,
Senior Communications Manager, Editorial
Gianna Wichelow,
Senior Communications Manager, Creative

Editors E-mail: editor@coc.ca

Design: Endeavour

All information is correct at time of printing.

Front Cover: Rachel Harnisch as Clémence in the Vlaamse Opera production of *Love from Afar*. Photo: Annemie Augustijns, 2010

SAVE TIME, SAVE PAPER...

and save the COC mailing and printing costs! View *Prelude* online at coc.ca/Publications. Sign up at coc.ca/Prelude with your Patron Number no later than **March 16, 2012** to indicate that you no longer wish to receive a hard copy of *Prelude*. If we do not hear back from you, we will mail your regular issue of *Prelude* in early April 2012.



TOSCA X 2

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADRIANNE PIECZONKA AND JULIE MAKEROV

by Suzanne Vanstone

Mikhaïl Agafonov as Mario Cavaradossi and Eszter Sümegi as Tosca in the COC's production of *Tosca*, 2008. Photo: Michael Cooper

WE ARE FORTUNATE TO WELCOME NOT ONE, BUT TWO ACCLAIMED SOPRANOS WHO WILL SHARE THE ROLE OF TOSCA THIS WINTER. BOTH HAVE GRACED OUR STAGE IN THE PAST TO GREAT CRITICAL PRAISE. RENOWNED CANADIAN STAR ADRIANNE PIECZONKA RECENTLY PERFORMED THE TITLE ROLE IN *ARIADNE AUF NAXOS*, WHILE AMERICAN SOPRANO JULIE MAKEROV RETURNS HAVING WON A DORA AWARD FOR HER PERFORMANCE OF SENTA IN *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*. BOTH LOOK FORWARD TO PORTRAYING PUCCINI'S HEROINE FOR TORONTO AUDIENCES THIS WINTER.



ADRIANNE PIECZONKA

"Tosca is a favourite role of mine. I adore Puccini and his beautiful romantic melodies. From the first downbeat of the orchestra, the listener can feel the thrilling drama which will unfold in the following three acts.

"Floria Tosca is an opera singer, a diva and I can, of course, relate to her in this regard. She is in love with Mario and is a hopeless romantic. I, too, can relate to these aspects in my private life. But she is highly jealous and suspicious and perhaps this is where she and I differ. I am not such an impulsive hot-tempered being, but I love that she is strong enough to murder Scarpia in order to free her beloved and attempt to flee."

Pieczonka first performed the role in Los Angeles in 2008 and remembers being nervous the first time she staged the murder scene with Scarpia in Act II. Acclaimed baritone Juan Pons was her Scarpia. "After we staged the scene and ran it a few times I realized I was very shaken by it. I got back to my apartment and had to have a stiff drink because the whole affair affected me deeply: the violence, Tosca's incredible strength and defiance."

In that LA production Pieczonka had the good fortune to wear the “Callas jewels”; a set of earrings, necklace and tiara made of Austrian Swarovski crystals first worn by Callas at the Met in 1956. Pieczonka says, “They were valued at around \$80,000 and an armed guard would bring the jewels to me in my dressing room each night in a special suitcase. I felt so honoured wearing the same jewellery that had graced my idol and it was a huge inspiration to me.”

What accounts for *Tosca*’s immense popularity and what is its present-day appeal? “I think Puccini is always very successful with audiences. People love his romantic writing style, his glorious melodies and his dramatic flair. *Tosca* is like a modern thriller: the story will always be current and translates well into modern day. I think Puccini is a genius on par with my other faves: Wagner, Strauss, Verdi and of course, Mozart. I love Puccini’s use of *leitmotifs* or themes for key characters. Many conductors have told me that *Tosca* is one of the hardest scores to conduct although we think of it as such an old standard somehow. The rhythms, syncopations and other complex time signature changes should never be underestimated.”

Pieczonka has performed a lot of Wagner and Strauss and perhaps audiences might assume that Puccini is less demanding. Does this role challenge her in a different way? “*Tosca* is a relatively short opera, whereas some of Wagner’s operas can be up to five hours long. But *Tosca* is not a ‘breeze’ for me at all. In Act I Tosca sings lyrically in her love duet with Mario, but in Act II she is required to sing very dramatic music and the Puccini orchestra is very thick and loud. Then in Act III she again sings lyrically and in a high tessitura in her final love duet with Mario. So, these vocal challenges are not to be taken lightly. I have to be vocally conscious not to get swept away by all the drama in Act II. It can be dangerous as the emotions run higher and higher and the scene turns violent. I need to think technically in these times to ensure I am not ‘blowing a vocal gasket,’ as it were!”

Some of Pieczonka’s favourite musical moments include the prelude and tenor aria “E lucevan le stelle” (“When the stars were shining brightly”). And she adores “Vissi d’arte” (“I lived for art”) and discovers new elements with every performance. “I love the way the entire audience (and me too!) holds its breath as Scarpia lies dead and I place the candles and crucifix by his body. The

chords Puccini composed here are just spine tingling.”

Pieczonka has worked with director Paul Curran before in *Tannhäuser* at La Scala and has seen this production of *Tosca* at the COC in 2008. She is excited to work with him again and make the production her own. “Carlo Ventre [Cavaradossi with the COC] was my Mario in San Francisco. I really enjoyed singing with him and I look forward to our performances together in Toronto. I met Mark Delavan [Scarpia with the COC] a few months ago, singing *Otello* in Berlin together. He was a lot of fun and he made me laugh all the time! I can’t wait until our big scene in Act II – but I hope he doesn’t pull any practical jokes on me!”

What does the future hold? “I can’t wait to sing Madame Lidoine at the COC in 2013! I saw *Dialogues des Carmélites* back when I was a student at UofT and it blew me away. Robert Carsen’s production will be stunning. I will sing my first Chrysothemis in an exciting new production of *Elektra* by Patrice Chéreau at the Aix en Provence festival in 2013 and that production will then go to La Scala and the Met. I am also taking on the role of Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera* and looking seriously at Aida. Who knows?”



Alan Opie as Scarpia (centre, ground) and Eszter Sümegi as Tosca in the COC’s production of *Tosca*. Photo: Michael Cooper, 2008

JULIE MAKEROV

"Tosca is one of my favourite roles. I've fallen in love with her for the same reason the audience does – you can take her at face value. She's an idealist and a woman to be respected. She is strong and bold and loving and all the things you adore about heroines. I like her gumption."

"It's always such fun to play an opera singer! What Puccini has written for her is so brilliant. He knew singers and he knew strong women – he must have, because he just gets her spot on. I'm not a wallflower myself. I'm not saying I'm pushy or would commit murder," she laughs, "but it's fun to play somebody who is so much like me. There are so many facets to Tosca... her faith is beautiful, and her devotion to the man she loves is fiercely loyal." But she is not fearless, Makerov adds. In the scene with Scarpia, she feels Tosca is scared to death, but has courage beyond her years. She reminds us that Tosca is young, yet the role is difficult and demands a singer who is at a certain technical place in their craft.

Since her first performance in 2003 with Sarasota Opera, Makerov feels she has grown more into the role and always explores the potential for further growth. "I am a different performer now. I have lived a lot of life since then and, technically speaking, I'm in a different place. I think that if we are serving the art well, we open ourselves up to various interpretations every time. This brings to light new challenges or new triumphs depending on the artistic flow of the evening."

One of her favourite moments in the opera is the duet with Scarpia in Act II. "This section is brilliantly crafted both musically and dramatically, and unfolds in a way that never fails to thrill me or the audience." What still speaks to today's audience about *Tosca*? "The story is very believable. It does not have any... well not much... suspension of disbelief. There is no need for a cover-up story, or to fill in the holes, or to create some strange back story. It makes sense to the audience."

Makerov says that with each production, each director brings a whole new "bag of tricks." She may not always agree with the concept, but she enjoys thinking outside the box. "I will try anything once. If I disagree then I will respectfully ask to find another way to go about it, but I am always up for new ideas and a new way of approaching things. I never have to 'make' Tosca new – it's new each time. I have been blessed to be a part of good productions that I am proud of and I'm very much looking forward to working with both Maestro Carignani and director Paul Curran. The production is so beautiful and I am excited about it being a little traditional."

Although she did not grow up in a classically trained musical family, Makerov's parents recognized that she had an aptitude for piano and voice, and fostered it. She first sang pop music, but at 16 she was in church and noticed a copy of "Ave Maria." She says, "I hadn't really found the type of singing that suited me, but after picking that piece up, I knew how I wanted to sing. Classical music and opera snowballed from there." Future engagements for her include singing the role of Queen of Hearts in the American premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis and making her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut next season.

Makerov enjoys returning to Toronto and to the COC, even though she has always been here in the dead of winter. "It is a little chilly," she admits. "It's a good thing the pubs are warm and the people are friendly! I love coming back to the opera house – it's just like home to me."

Makerov has a certain affinity for Puccini's music and says, as in Wagner (another favourite composer), the drama



Julie Makerov. Photo: Kristin Hoebermann

and the music are so accessible. They both lend themselves to a great journey and tell a story that is unparalleled. "I love a good *da capo* aria as much as the next person. And I love Mozart and Verdi. But Puccini makes it so easy to take the audience on a journey. And I love taking that journey with them." ■

Suzanne Vanstone is Senior Communications Manager, Editorial at the Canadian Opera Company.

This production of *Tosca* was originally made possible through a generous gift from Delia M. Moog.

Julie Makerov also takes part in our Free Concert Series on Valentine's Day at noon performing music that is close to her heart – an English program exploring love in its many guises: infatuation, obsession, passion, ecstasy, heartbreak and supreme joy.

For further insights into *Tosca* please read Suzanne Vanstone's article "*Revisiting Tosca*" in the winter house program, available online at coc.ca.

A TROUBA A COUNTESS

KAIJA SAARIAHO'S LOVE

By Suzanne Vanstone

This January, COC audiences have the rare opportunity to experience one of the 21st century's most performed operas, *Love from Afar* (*L'amour de loin*), by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. When it premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 2000, staged by legendary director Peter Sellars, it received great critical acclaim and has since garnered numerous productions worldwide. Our new co-production is staged by renowned Swiss director and choreographer Daniele Finzi Pasca, who has also directed shows for Cirque du Soleil and Québec's Cirque Éloize. His artistic vision for *Love from Afar* unites the worlds of opera and the circus.

The 12th and 21st centuries meld seductively in this haunting and vivid musical creation. Weary of his current life and anxious to explore love's frontiers, a medieval troubadour from France, Jaufré Rudel, hears of a beautiful countess, Clémence, living in Tripoli. A Pilgrim carries messages of yearning between the lovers, until the troubadour finally journeys to meet his distant desire, testing the boundaries of fantasy and reality.

Saariaho's preparation in composing this opera was a gradual one. She spent a few years searching for a story and, once found, *Love from Afar* took almost eight years to complete. She composed other music during this period, as well as writing a piece for soprano and electronic music entitled *Lohn* (1996) which was a sort of precursor to the opera. Little by little the shape of the opera grew.

Saariaho knew she had found her subject when she came upon a few lines of poetry in a book by a French poet, Jacques Roubaud. She says, "I found something akin to an official biography of Jaufré Rudel. In medieval times one constructed these biographies, more or less imaginary, after the death of a troubadour. It was only a couple of lines but I liked it because it read like a fairy tale. There was the contrast of two cultures; there was his distant love. How can you fall in love with somebody you don't know? You fall in love with the image that you create in your mind." Saariaho was also intrigued with how Jaufré travels from one culture to another, finally encountering his lover and dying in her arms, as well as how Clémence reacts to his death. "I'm interested in the human reaction. There were many elements in this story that I felt we could develop and add to musically. I wanted something quite simple so there was a lot of space for the music."

The COC presents *Love from Afar*. A scene from the Vlaamse Opera production, 2010, photo: Annemie Augustijns. Inset: Kaija Saariaho, photo: Maarit Kytöharju

DOUR, SS, A PILGRIM *FROM AFAR*

Saariaho's compositions frequently blend "traditional" orchestral music with electronic music and in *Love from Afar* this creates a lush, otherworldly quality. She says, "I spent a lot of time preparing and reading many scores. Often in contemporary opera the musical language is too uniform and it creates a kind of grey quality... which goes against the dramatic events. I felt it was very important in this music to open the boundaries of my own musical language."

"There are elements in a conversational work which I would not use in my concert music. Every personality has its own music – the music of Jaufré Rudel uses parallel fifths, and the interval of the fifth is very present... this has to do, of course, with medieval Western music. The music of Clémence is closest to my own musical language – I use a lot of parallel orchestration, octaves, etc., which reminds us a bit of Oriental music. I wanted to create the contrasts on many levels because this opera is about different feelings, different thoughts, different atmospheres."

"In this opera, I'm using electronics in such a way that they are extensions of the orchestration. I have chosen certain concrete sound material which I pass through filters tuned to the same harmony that the orchestra is playing so that it really blends with the orchestration. Some of the sounds I chose for Jaufré's material are, for example, the sea-sound, the wind – natural noises – the white noise of nature. For Clémence, I had birds, a woman's voice whispering some of the texts in an Occidental language, which is the language of Jaufré."

As well as the wide over-arching journey that the characters take, Saariaho discusses their own personal journeys in the opera. "Jaufré Rudel is an artist, a creator, but also a prince. He has lived a vain, somewhat superficial life and has enjoyed a certain success but comes to a point where he needs to have something more spiritual, more profound. He hears about this countess who is so beautiful and so pure and who becomes the perfect object of his love. The question is, of course, 'What does he really know about her?' The idea of going to see Clémence seems like a good one. But during the actual journey he realizes the absurdity – he knows nothing of this lady. Afraid of what he will encounter, he falls ill and dies upon reaching her."

"Then there is Clémence, born in France and brought to Tripoli. She feels that this is not her country and although she cannot really remember her life in France, she is nostalgic for it. When she hears that there is somebody thinking of her, singing of her, it's exactly what she needs to dream about life the way she would

like it to be. She falls in love with the idea and with the music – since what does she know about this man? Nothing at all."

The final character, the Pilgrim, is like Destiny says Saariaho. Destiny who "sews these two lives together." Some directors, like Peter Sellars, were convinced that the Pilgrim falls in love with Clémence. He thought that the songs she or he sang (because we don't really know the gender of the Pilgrim) to Clémence were not Jaufré's songs, but her own. "The Pilgrim is a mysterious personality," continues Saariaho. "In the first production, it was a woman dressed in men's clothes when the character was with Jaufré, and a man dressed in women's clothes when the character was with Clémence. Because the Pilgrim is between the two, I wanted to choose a voice type in between baritone and soprano. She uses her lower register with Jaufré, and a higher one with Clémence. I liked that ambiguity. I think it could even be two different roles, or characters."

For a long time Saariaho did not know what her relationship was to these characters and was somewhat embarrassed when people asked why she chose this story of a French troubadour. "I didn't know why. It just appealed to me and was told in a way that seemed so proper to me. When I was quite advanced in composing the score, I suddenly realized that I am Jaufré, I am Clémence, and I am the Destiny who tries to bring these two lovers together. I am the woman and I am the composer, and I am trying to bring life to these two." ■

Suzanne Vanstone is Senior Communications Manager, Editorial at the Canadian Opera Company.

For further insights into *Love from Afar*, please read Suzanne Vanstone's interview with COC Music Director Johannes Debus in the winter house program, available online at coc.ca.



The COC presents *Love from Afar*. Phillip Addis (right, on swing) as Jaufré Rudel and Rachel Harnisch (below) as Clémence in the Vlaamse Opera production, 2010. Photo: Annemie Augustijns



Rachel Harnisch as Clémence in the Vlaamse Opera production of *Love from Afar*, 2010. Photo: Annemie Augustijns

TERVETULOA!

("WELCOME!" IN FINNISH)

by Nikita Gourski

This winter marks the Canadian premiere of Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's *Love from Afar*, a haunting musical creation praised by the *New York Times* as a "transfixing and utterly distinguished work." Since its world premiere at the Salzburg Festival in 2000 it has gone on to secure its place in the contemporary repertoire as one of the most successful 21st-century operas.

For the COC, it is a tremendous privilege to present the work of a living composer as highly lauded as Saariaho. Her presence in Toronto is a gratifying affirmation of our artistic vision for the company as a place that embraces the continuing relevance and vitality of opera.

Playing a significant part in making this premiere a reality are long-time COC supporters, Marjorie and Roy

Linden. The Lindens, who belong to the thriving Canadian-Finnish community in Toronto, are going above and beyond their annual support of the company by generously sponsoring Kaija Saariaho this year. A number of notable guests from the Finnish community will be present at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts premiere, including members of the Canadian Friends of Finland Foundation, an organization devoted to the promotion of friendship, understanding and co-operation between the people of Canada and Finland. We are also delighted to welcome Risto Piipponen, the Finnish ambassador to Canada, to the opening night performance of Saariaho's modern masterpiece.

The COC has always fostered connections to the larger community around us, and we are thrilled to

THE OPERA EXCHANGE

MULTIDISCIPLINARY
APPROACHES TO OPERA

Long Distance Loving: Saariaho's *Love from Afar*

International artists and experts from the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia explore the haunting musical themes of Kaija Saariaho's innovative 21st-century opera, *Love from Afar*, through dynamic lectures and audience Q&A periods. This half-day symposium also features a display of *Love from Afar* imagery and intriguing production items, courtesy of the COC music library and wig and makeup team.

Walter Hall, Faculty of Music,
University of Toronto,
80 Queen's Park Cres.

For program details and tickets
call 416-363-8231
or visit coc.ca/Explore.

COMING THIS SPRING A Wilde Time: Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy*

Sun. April 22, 2012
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Opera Exchange is presented
in partnership with:



The Opera Exchange is generously supported
by the Jackman Humanities Institute

continue participating in the fabric of our city by being a site of international artistic collaboration as well as a meeting place of diverse cultural influences. ■

Nikita Gourski is the Development Communications Assistant at the Canadian Opera Company.



YOUTH OPERA LAB

FREE!
AGES
16 to 21

FREE dinner; FREE workshop with an opera professional; FREE exclusive glimpse of the first rehearsal of cast, crew and orchestra; and two FREE tickets to attend the BMO Financial Group Student Dress Rehearsal a week later.

There's just one catch: space is limited! APPLY ONLINE.

TOSCA
SOLD OUT!
Jan. 11, 2012
Workshop: 5:30 to 9 p.m.
Jan. 18, 2012
Dress Rehearsal: 7:30 p.m.

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN
March 31, 2012
Workshop: 5:30 to 9 p.m.
April 7, 2012
Dress Rehearsal: 7:30 p.m.

SEMELE
April 28, 2012
Workshop: 5:30 to 9 p.m.
May 7, 2012
Dress Rehearsal: 7:30 p.m.

Production Sponsor



coc.ca/Explore

Alan Opie and Eszter Sümegi in the COC's production of Tosca, 2008. Photo: Gary Beechey

BMO Financial Group Pre-Performance Opera Chats and BMO Financial Group Student Dress Rehearsals

BMO Financial Group



CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY
KIDS

2011-2012 SEASON

March Break Opera Camp



SING, DANCE, CREATE visual art and **PLAY** with professional COC artists. Inspired by themes and music of popular operas, participants indulge their creativity during exploratory sessions in **MUSIC, ACTING** or **DESIGN**.
No music or acting experience required.

AGES 5 to 6 March 14, 2012	AGES 7 to 9 March 15, 2012	AGES 9 to 12 March 16, 2012
DURATION 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	COST Full Day \$35 Half Day \$25 (March 14 only)	

coc.ca/Explore
416-363-8231

Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre
227 Front St. E., Toronto

OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR AND HIS MENTOR

JOHANNES DEBUS AND PAOLO CARIGNANI

by Suzanne Vanstone

We have the honour of welcoming acclaimed conductor Paolo Carignani to the COC pit this winter to conduct *Tosca*. Carignani was music director of Frankfurt Opera from 1999 to 2008, currently lives in Zurich and enjoys an active international career conducting at major houses throughout the world.

Our own Music Director, Johannes Debus, conducts the Canadian premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Love from Afar* during the same run. Of course having two different conductors share our pit is nothing new. But this time both men have an intriguing connection. Carignani was Debus's mentor in Frankfurt.

Debus says, "I met Paolo for the very first time when he was introduced at a press conference as the new music director at Oper Frankfurt. It was obvious from this first encounter what a very special person he was – he had such vivid eyes and a vibrant energy. I was a rehearsal pianist at the time and I had the chance to work

with him on *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. He had such intensity – 'il diavolo addosso' which means the 'the devil on your back.' Verdi often said that about singers he admired. In a way Paolo was hot, burning, and of course the result was such vibrancy in the air when he conducted. When he entered the pit, when he entered a room, you felt his presence, even if you couldn't see him."

After *Cav/Pag*, Carignani made Debus his assistant. As well as conducting some piano rehearsals, Debus would conduct specific passages during orchestra staging rehearsals so that Carignani could listen and observe from outside the pit. Debus continues, "He gave me a lot of opportunity. And he gave me the chance to develop as an operatic conductor with repertoire that you don't normally get to perform in Germany."

Often Debus would take over a performance without a rehearsal with the orchestra. "Can you imagine?

Falstaff without rehearsal with the orchestra!! That's quite something – there were probably some rough moments," he laughs. "But I did it and that's what you have to do to gain experience. Paolo was always supportive and for that I am very, very grateful."

Carignani talks about meeting Debus. "When I started in Frankfurt, Johannes was a répétiteur but there is definitely an art to playing the piano at rehearsals. There are wonderful pianists who can play every note in the score but that is not useful for a conductor's rehearsal. A conductor needs the répétiteur to play with an orchestral sound, not a piano sound. He or she has to be able to follow the conductor, assist the singers, understand which notes are necessary and be extremely flexible. Johannes was one of the best I have met in my life.

"He told me that he wanted to become a conductor and one day, when I was too busy to take the



COC Music Director Johannes Debus conducts the COC Orchestra at the Diamond Anniversary Concert, 2009. Photo: Michael Cooper

beginning of a rehearsal, I asked him to conduct. I saw that he had great talent and after that he did a series of performances starting with *Falstaff*.” Carignani and Debus agree – *Falstaff* is one of the most difficult Verdi operas to conduct, especially without a rehearsal. “You need to be really strong, very clear and you need a lot of things to come together. He did a wonderful performance and it was clear to me that he was not just a répétiteur. He developed more and more every year, proceeded to show what a wonderful conductor he was, and now he is musical director of your company and that is fantastic!”

Just as a variety of repertoire is crucial for orchestral musicians to develop, so is a variety of conductors. Debus says, “It’s very important that there are different influences, different perspectives – no one person can give an orchestra everything. It’s important that guest conductors come and share the work we do. Our orchestra is enormously versatile and enormously flexible, so if the connection with the guest conductor works, if they trust that person, they will play the way the conductor indicates.”

Keeping an orchestra, chorus and soloists together on stage and in the pit seems like an incredibly daunting task. Debus says, “More and more I try to think differently. It’s not so much about keeping people together. It’s more important to have a strong idea about the music. If you can transmit the energy of the music it will, somehow, all come together. As conductors get older and have gained a lot of experience, you notice their gestures become smaller and smaller. If your thoughts are clear, then your feelings miraculously get transmitted to those 70 or 80 musicians. It’s an amazing thing.”

Carignani, who for many years had his own orchestra in Frankfurt, looks forward to working with new musicians. “To play in the pit with good musicians, who have a different culture and different points of view, can be exciting. I enjoy

meeting people and helping them. A conductor can always learn new things – I am always pleased to have a dialogue with the musicians.”

Carignani speaks of two mentors that he had early in *his* career. The first was composer Gian Carlo Menotti who invited him to the Spoleto Festival in Italy several times. “The first opportunity to conduct is so important and he gave me that.” Alexander Pereira, intendant of Zurich Opera, afforded him the stepping stone to an international career. “I was conducting at a small

festival in Italy and he attended a performance while he was on holidays there. He invited me for several productions in Zurich. After that came Vienna, Munich, Tokyo, Frankfurt, everything. It is important that someone nurtures people with talent and tries to help and encourage them.”

Debus and Carignani are eagerly looking forward to working with each other again, as well as sharing their passion for opera with our musicians and our audiences. ■



Paolo Carignani

BETWEEN THE HEAD AND THE HEART

CARIGNANI CONDUCTS *TOSCA*

For Paolo Carignani, conducting *Tosca* for the first time in 1994 with Teatro dell’Opera di Roma was full of emotion. It premiered at that very theatre (formerly the Teatro Costanzi) on Jan. 14, 1900 and Rome is the setting for the opera. He says, “To conduct this opera where it was first performed was absolutely wonderful for me. The orchestra of Rome can play *Tosca* by heart – there is such a tradition, and they still have the original score and original musical parts so it was a fantastic feeling.” The most recent time Carignani conducted *Tosca* was for a Decca DVD in Zurich in 2009 with Jonas

Kaufmann, Emily Magee and Thomas Hampson. It was Kaufmann’s role debut as Cavaradossi and so was particularly exciting for Carignani.

Carignani says, “In *Tosca* you can discover everything in detail because Puccini wrote so cleverly to show, in the orchestra, all the emotions on the stage. Puccini’s music is human... I see many people who are very cold, very dry but when they hear Puccini, they cry! It touches you. Even though you can be very controlled and have some distance with your emotions, Puccini closes that distance from your head to your heart. He awakens a part of

us that sometimes we don't know we have."

But Carignani hastens to add that as a conductor one has to be cautious not to fall into that emotional pit. "You have to be very careful when you are conducting this piece, because the sensations are overwhelming and it can become a little bit kitsch." A recent experience conducting *Lulu* in Germany served as a reminder to Carignani. "Pieces by Berg or certain works by Strauss, are a little more analytical, so when you come back to Puccini you see the score in another way and strike a balance." Before becoming a conductor, Carignani was an organist, played piano and studied composition. "I studied composition because I wanted to better understand other composers. When you study and analyze a score, it helps to create your own interpretation."

Of course we will have audience members who are seeing *Tosca* for the first time and some for the 21st time. What does it offer to that spectrum of patrons? "There are some movies in the history of cinema that are remade with new actors, and so it's never the same. That also applies with opera – it is always new. And *Tosca* is not just a love story – it's really a thriller. There is blood, betrayal, murder, suicide. For those attending for the first time you don't know what is happening until the last scene. We suppose that *Tosca*

is safe with Cavaradossi but we don't know for sure. There is a tension from the beginning until the end." One of Carignani's favourite passages is the night scene with Cavaradossi just before the famous aria "E lucevan le stelle." He says, "You hear the bells of Rome – and it is so atmospheric. It is one of the most beautiful moments in the opera."

Tosca is one of those operas that seem to be shrouded in rather unusual occurrences during its performances over the years. Has Carignani been privy to any of these? "Nothing unusual while I was conducting," he says. "But in 1995 I was in the audience on opening night for a *Tosca* production at the open-air festival in Macerata, Italy. And at the end of the opera when the soldiers shoot Cavaradossi, he was really shot! Apparently a blank might have been too tightly packed in the rifle and Fabio Armiliato was shot in the foot. The performance was stopped and he was taken to hospital. Armiliato returned to the production a few performances later, but fell while waiting offstage and broke his other leg in two places. He reportedly said on his second trip to the hospital, "Could it be that I am destined never to leave this theatre on my own two feet?" All in the name of art!

When asked about his favourite composers Carignani says, "Whatever

score I am conducting at the time becomes my favourite, and I think 'There is nothing more beautiful than *this* score.' But my favourite composer has nothing to do with opera. For me, Johann Sebastian Bach is the best composer. Bach has exactly the right combination of feeling, of architecture, of philosophy. Everything is perfect. If you want a sign that God exists, listen to the music of Bach. Only God could create that music."

Is there an opera that you have not conducted yet that you would like to conduct? "When I was music director in Frankfurt I had the opportunity to do everything I wanted – *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Tannhäuser*, *Der fliegende Holländer*. I would love to conduct *Meistersinger* again – I think it is the most beautiful piece I have ever conducted. But there are two pieces I have not done – *Wozzeck* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. I would love to conduct them." He smiles, "But even if I don't, I will survive!" ■

Suzanne Vanstone is Senior Communications Manager, Editorial at the Canadian Opera Company.

This production of *Tosca* was originally made possible through a generous gift from Delia M. Moog.

For further insights into *Tosca*, please read Suzanne Vanstone's article "Revisiting *Tosca*" in the winter house program, available online at coc.ca.



Alan Opie (centre) as Scarpia in the COC's production of *Tosca*, 2008. Photo: Gary Beechey

THE OPERA SHOP

LOOKING FOR MODERN ROMANCE OR HOT-BLOODED MELODRAMA?
YOU'LL FIND IT ALL AT THE OPERA SHOP... PLUS JEWELLERY TO MATCH!



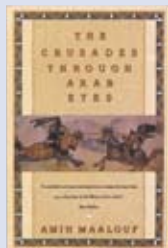
JEWELLERY TRUNK SHOW

Saturday Jan. 21, 2012, before, during and after the performance.

A special opportunity to meet Ayana Fishman whose Two A jewellery line seamlessly combines organic eco-materials with industrial metals to create a striking and fresh spin on Bohemian-Chic.

The Opera Shop, located on the main floor of the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room, offers a fine selection of opera recordings on CD and DVD, opera-related books, giftware and COC souvenirs. One-of-a-kind jewellery includes magnificent *Tosca*-inspired pieces by Nancy Ciccone.

THIS WINTER, ALEXANDER NEEF RECOMMENDS...



The Crusades Through Arab Eyes

Amin Maalouf, Schocken Books, \$23.25 including tax.

In *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, Amin Maalouf (the librettist for *Love from Afar*) delves into the historical underpinnings which lie behind Kaija Saariaho's opera. He rescues from obscurity key contemporary Arab accounts of the Crusades, challenges Western perceptions of these events and offers insights into historical forces which still shape Arab and Islamic consciousness today.

Available at the Opera Shop.

THIS WINTER WE ALSO RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING RECORDINGS FROM UNIVERSAL CLASSICS:



Tosca

Membran. Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro alla Scala di Milano, Victor de Sabata, conductor. Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, Tito Gobbi.

\$27 including tax.

What more can be said about one of the most universally-praised opera recordings of all time? We have Callas at the peak of her powers virtually defining this role for all future Toscas; her favoured tenor collaborator, di Stefano in sweetest voice and Gobbi, the greatest singing actor of his time as a chilling Scarpia. At budget price, this is a cornerstone for any operatic CD collection!



L'amour de loin

Deutsche Grammophon. Finnish National Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor. Dawn Upshaw, Gerald Finley, Monica Groop. \$25.75 including tax.

Salzburg saw the premiere of Kaija Saariaho's astoundingly beautiful *L'amour de loin* in 2000. The same production was recorded four years later in Helsinki for this DVD. It features stunning performances by Dawn Upshaw, Gerald Finley and Monica Groop; superb conducting by Esa-Pekka Salonen and a production of simple, ecstatic beauty by Peter Sellars.

SHOP FOR MUCH MORE AT THE OPERA SHOP OR ONLINE AT COC.CA!

The Opera Shop is a project of the Canadian Opera Company, in partnership with L'Atelier Grigorian and Decca - The Opera Label. All proceeds support the Canadian Opera Company.



GRIGORIAN

DECCA

ARTIST SPONSORSHIP: “THE MOST WONDERFUL THING YOU CAN DO”

by Nikita Gourski

When Earlane Collins takes her seat at the opening night performance of *Love from Afar* this February, it won't be as an ordinary audience member. In the collective hush of a full theatre before the overture starts, her anticipation will be of a far different sort than most of the patrons assembled in the Four Seasons Centre.

That's because for the past 17 years Earlane has played her own integral role in the company as the artist sponsor of Russell Braun, a principal cast member in *Love from Afar* and one of the most in-demand baritones working in opera today. Over the span of almost two decades, Earlane has been there, practically front and centre, to witness Russell coming into his own

as an artist. It's no surprise that the experience provides a unique, personal connection to his performances. “I get stage fright for him,” she jokes. “I take over his nervousness.”

“THIS IS AN INCREDIBLE PERSONAL OPPORTUNITY. YOU GET BACK TENFOLD WHAT YOU GIVE.”

Earlane began her sponsorship of Russell in 1995, some years before the rest of the world got to know the beauty and power of his voice. “His voice,” she says, “which was darn good to begin with, has grown into this glorious sound... now he's at the top.” Paris, New York, Vienna and Milan are just a few of his regular destinations these days, but back then he was getting his professional start with the Canadian Opera Company right here in Toronto.

Earlane agreed to sponsor Russell because she recognized the need to support and develop young Canadian talent in order to ensure the vitality of the art form in Canada. “I didn't even know I'd meet the singer,” she recalls. “I thought it would be a one-time thing for this particular person in this particular opera.”

Of course they did meet and the two became “almost instant friends,” with Earlane following Russell's career ever since. Whenever he sings in New York, she is sure to take him out to dinner... even though it's often past midnight by the time the throngs of people, who have come to see him, have left. Years ago, Earlane's late husband, Gerard, established homes for the mentally challenged. When Russell learned about the endeavour he and his wife Carolyn Maule, a pianist, offered to give a fundraising concert which drew over 1,000 people. The relationship between Earlane and Russell encapsulates all the things that artist sponsorship has the potential to be: a transformative, long-term friendship of mutual generosity, care and respect.

Take it from someone who has been doing this for many years: “I think anybody who gets the opportunity to sponsor a young singer should go for it. It's the most wonderful thing you can do.” ■

To learn more about becoming an artist sponsor, please contact Dawn Marie Schlegel at 416-306-2351 or dawnmaries@coc.ca.



Russell Braun and Earlane Collins at the COC's Diamond Anniversary Concert, 2009. Photo: COC

We highlight three other members of the COC community who, through artist sponsorships, have made an individual commitment to exceptional opera artists and the outstanding work they create.

Kris Vikmanis

“Spending time with an artist, learning about their journey – on both professional and personal fronts – is fascinating in its own right, and we have all become friends,” Kris says of her past experience as an artist sponsor. This season, she is sponsoring Canadian **John Relyea**, a bass-baritone whose first appearance at the Met was hailed by the *New York Times* as the kind of debut “young singers dream about.” Kris is overjoyed to be Relyea’s sponsor as he makes his COC debut in Offenbach’s *The Tales of Hoffmann* this spring. Having seen Relyea at the Met, Ms Vikmanis has a pretty good idea of what’s in store: “I suspect I will be enchanted.”



John Relyea

Jack Whiteside

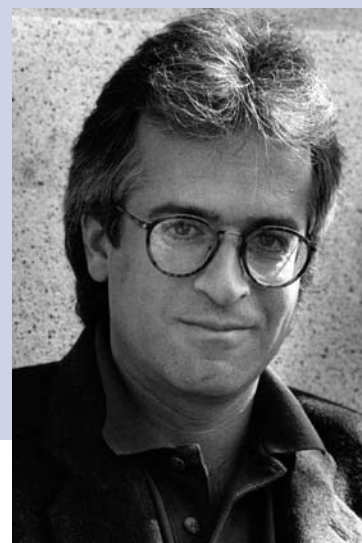
“I’m very excited to be supporting a Canadian artist of such high calibre,” Jack says of Canadian soprano **Adrianne Pieczonka**, a singer who has achieved great things at home and abroad. Her iridescent, dramatic vocals have won her critical acclaim – and plenty of standing ovations – throughout Europe, North America and Asia. “It’s a great thrill that she’s here: one of Canada’s top opera singers, performing one of opera’s quintessential roles as Tosca with one of the best opera companies. And she’ll be back to sing with the COC in the near future. How great is that?” The convergence of high artistic standards and vocal talent that Mr. Whiteside attributes to the company is, of course, made possible in large part by supporters like him. “I’m very proud of the success of this company and its new home,” he says, “so if I can do my own little bit to help out, I’m delighted to do so.”



Adrianne Pieczonka

Paul Bernards

For Paul Bernards, being the artist sponsor of director **Christopher Alden** has proven to be “incredibly rewarding... I can’t say enough good things about this kind of opportunity.” Christopher Alden’s distinguished career of engaging with the operatic repertoire in innovative ways has yielded stimulating results for the COC, with *The Flying Dutchman*, last presented in 2010, and most recently, this fall’s *Rigoletto*. For both of those operas, Paul received an intimate perspective on how the production was conceived and executed. “You get involved with the life of the production, you go to closed rehearsals. You see how art takes shape as a living and breathing thing. For anyone who is interested in opera, it’s an enlightening, and surprisingly fun, experience.”



Christopher Alden

RECENTLY AT THE COC

WORKING HARD

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER *OPERANATION 8: A MUSE BALL*

On Oct. 21, 2011 the COC's annual fundraiser generated \$100,000 in support of the Ensemble Studio. Partygoers enjoyed a mesmerizing performance from the world's hottest singer-songwriter, Rufus Wainwright, as well as a pop-opera mash-up featuring breakthrough Canadian band Austra and our very own Ensemble Studio members, Ambur Braid and Adrian Kramer.



Top: Rufus Wainwright, Alexander Neef, and Jorn Weisbrodt at the COC's 8th Annual Operation "A Muse Ball," 2011, photo: Mark Ridout. Below: (l-r) Phil Deck, Tim Price, Charles Petersen, Colleen Sexsmith, Frances Price, Kim Bozak, Rob Lamb, Don O'Born, Riki Turofsky, Judy Matthews, Wilmot Matthews, Anne Arrell, Alexander Neef, George Tsy-pin, photo: COC © 2011

THE COC TAKES NEW YORK

This fall, a group of the COC's most generous supporters joined Alexander Neef for the inaugural General Director's Tour. The exclusive visit to New York offered an intimate exploration of operatic art with three

new productions at the Met, post-performance discussions over dinner and drinks with leading artists, as well as a tour of renowned set designer George Tsy-pin's studio in Queens.



& PLAYING HARD

A RIGOLETTO TO CALL OUR OWN

Guests celebrate at the opening night party of the COC's new production of *Rigoletto*, which has been generously underwritten, in part, by Tim & Frances Price, Judy & Wilmot Matthews, and Gail & Bob Farquharson. New productions like this ensure the COC's artistic and financial vitality.

Top: Opening night of *Rigoletto* at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 2011, photo: COC. Below: Owen McCausland, Claire de Sévigné, Alexander Neef, Lindsay Barrett, Sasha Djihanian, photo: Chris Hutcheson, 2011

NEW ENSEMBLE STUDIO VOCAL COMPETITION

For the first time in the history of the COC, the final phase of auditions to the prestigious Ensemble Studio was opened to the public with a vocal competition on Nov. 28, 2011. It was an extraordinary opportunity to hear the stars of tomorrow, today!



SPECIAL 2012/2013 SEASON SUPPLEMENT

EXCEPTIONAL ARTISTS THAT THRILL AND MOVE YOU

VITAL PRODUCTIONS THAT STIMULATE AND ENGAGE

AN ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS OF THE HIGHEST INTERNATIONAL CALIBRE

**AN OPERA HOUSE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO
SHOWCASE THE POWER AND PASSION OF OPERA**



“OPERA DOESN’T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS”
TORONTO STAR, 2010

FALL 2012

IL TROVATORE

GIUSEPPE VERDI
(1813 – 1901)

FOUR SINGERS SET THE STAGE AFLAME

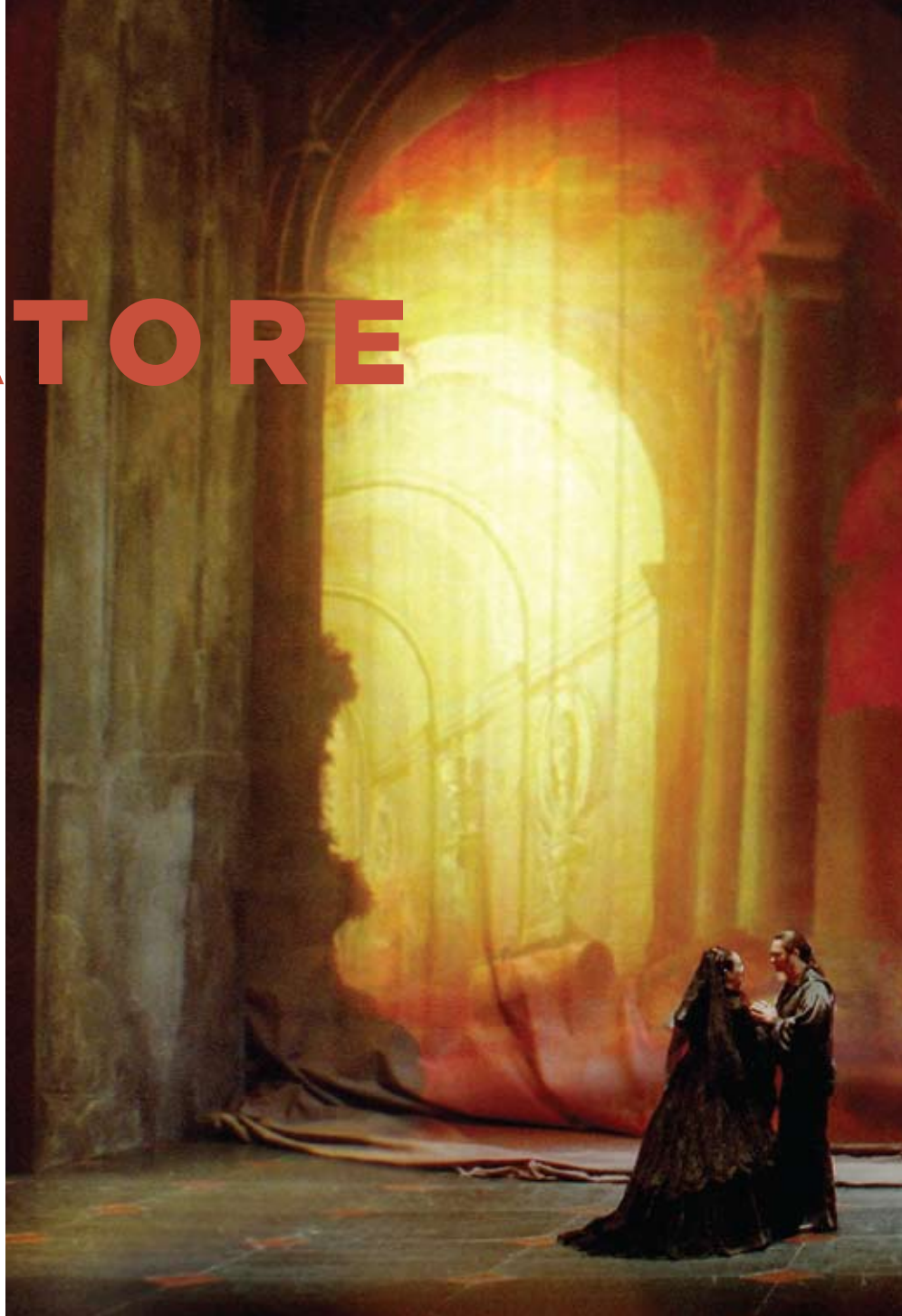
Enrico Caruso famously remarked that all one needs for a good performance of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* are "the four greatest singers in the world." This season our production boasts no less than the best: internationally renowned tenor Ramón Vargas makes his much-anticipated role debut as Manrico; baritone Russell Braun also makes his role debut as the Conte di Luna, returning to the COC after his celebrated performance in *Iphigenia in Tauris*; mezzo-soprano Elena Manistina reprises her acclaimed role as the gypsy Azucena; and fast-rising soprano Elza van den Heever, soon to make her Met debut, takes on the role of Leonora.

This world-class cast helms Verdi's most searing melodrama. Abduction, delirium, witch-burnings, poison, and a gypsy's curse combine to establish a savage, violent atmosphere. Three mesmerizing plots – that of vengeful Azucena's dark secret, her son Manrico's romance with noblewoman Leonora, and Manrico's rivalry with the Conte di Luna – swiftly carry the opera to its fateful final act.

The dusky atmosphere of Spain pervades every corner of the music, from the popular arias of Azucena ("Stride la vampa!"), Manrico ("Di quella pira") and the gypsies' Anvil Chorus to the finely nuanced *cantabiles* of Leonora

and Conte di Luna. Verdi's masterful treatment of this most exhilarating of operatic tales – the collision of love and lust, vengeance and execution – never fails to stir the human heart.

The COC mounts Charles Roubaud's acclaimed production with celebrated conductor Marco Guidarini handling Verdi's rich score, which highlights some of Romantic opera's most beautiful and recognizable music. Set designer and sculptor Jean-Noël Lavesvre sweeps the audience into a sepulchral Romanesque hall that is at once castle, gypsy camp, and lovebirds' haven. The exciting collaboration of such creative powerhouses peeks into the elemental cauldron that contains the spirit of Verdi's dynamic opera. ■



Elza van den Heever as Leonora and Giuseppe Gipali as Manrico in Opéra de Marseille's production of *Il Trovatore*, 2003. Photo: Christian Dresse

FALL 2012

NEW PRODUCTION

DIE FLEDERMAUS

JOHANN STRAUSS II
(1825 – 1899)

BLAME IT ON THE CHAMPAGNE!

Tragedy's lighter, funnier cousin – comedy – is too often dismissed as being insignificant. Yet the right comedic work, in the right hands, deserves to be called “high art” as much as the most moving of tragic masterpieces. Johann Strauss's ever-popular operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, is one such work, and we are thrilled to be staging a brand new production of this brilliant romp.

In this hilarious comedy, Strauss virtually outdid his own reputation as the “waltz king” of Vienna by penning some of the most gorgeous dance music on either side of the Danube. COC Music Director Johannes Debus will lead our orchestra and chorus through these toe-tapping tunes, which have become the embodiment of ebullient celebration since the opera's premiere in 1873. A sterling ensemble cast of acclaimed voices, including Michael Schade, Tamara Wilson, Peter Barrett, David Cangelosi, James Westman and Laura Tucker, gives this comic masterpiece its due as it returns to our stage after 20 years.

The plot is pure slapstick: bourgeois and affluent Gabriel von Eisenstein is due to begin a short prison sentence for a minor civil offence. But he sees nothing wrong with a quick frolic before he reports to jail. An extravagant party thrown by a young, world-weary Russian prince offers him the perfect opportunity to do just that. The only problem is that Eisenstein's wife Rosalinde shows up at the party herself, disguised as an Hungarian countess.

Our new production by director Christopher Alden conjures a fantasy world bubbling with champagne and sophisticated wit. Set in early 20th-century Vienna, *Die Fledermaus* is an exquisite entertainment that gently mocks the duplicity of people and the larger social hypocrisies they inhabit. Escapism with substance. ■



WINTER 2013

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

RICHARD WAGNER
(1813 – 1883)

**“EVERY PARTING GIVES
A FORETASTE OF DEATH,
EVERY REUNION A HINT
OF THE RESURRECTION.”**

– Arthur Schopenhauer

Bill Viola, *Tristan und Isolde*, 2004, video still. Photo: Kira Perov

VIOLENT LONGING, BLISSFUL INFINITY

In his COC debut, legendary director Peter Sellars brings his awe-inspiring production of *Tristan und Isolde* to Canadian audiences for the first time. Sellars teams up with internationally renowned video artist Bill Viola whose imagery complements the score's irresistible sensuality.

Sellars' 21st-century conception was drawn from the composer's manifestos on art: "Wagner was trying to create what he called 'the artwork of the future.' He was trying to create something that transcended theatre, transcended opera, transcended the concert hall... an experience that actually we're beginning to have the technology to realize."

Bill Viola's video responds to the elemental forces present in the sweeping story. Forests and a sunrise unfolding in real time, mix with staged scenes of actors plunging into water or walking through fire. Sellars says of Viola, "he has come up with an image of the scale and scope, grandeur and immensity, and genuine transcendence that Wagner was imagining."

Originally a Welsh myth set in Arthurian legend, it was left to Wagner to develop an entire opera from the short-lived romance between the fiery Irish princess and the knight Tristan. A love potion unites Tristan with Isolde, yet their violent longing does not reach its resolution until Isolde's *Liebestod* – an ecstatic climax for love finding fulfillment in the transfiguration of death. From Wagner's core-shaking score came the seeds of modern music, of restless, passionate emotion that would ignite a new generation of composers.

Under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek, Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, leading dramatic tenor Ben Heppner returns to the COC in his signature role that critics hailed as a "translucent and exalted performance." German soprano Melanie Diener joins him as Isolde along with Daveda Karanas, Alan Held, and Franz-Josef Selig. ■

Production Sponsor

BMO  Financial Group

Tristan und Isolde has been generously underwritten by Lisa Balfour Bowen and Walter M. Bowen; Philip Deck and Kimberley Bozak; Donald O'Born; Colleen Sexsmith; and Sandra L. Simpson.

WINTER 2013

LA CLEMENZA DI TITO

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756 – 1791)

MOZART SAVES HIS BEST FOR LAST

For his final opera Mozart was at the pinnacle of his powers. While working on *The Magic Flute* he was asked to compose an opera to commemorate the coronation of Leopold II as King of Bohemia. What was intended as a simple operatic ode to an emperor became, in Mozart's hands, a sophisticated piece of musical theatre with a sublimely beautiful score.

The title character is a wise, just, and beloved monarch, whose virtues would have been flattering to the sovereign. In the face of betrayal by those closest to him, the Emperor Tito chooses to forgive rather than punish, becoming the symbol of enlightened leadership for generations to come, inspiring countless composers, poets, painters and sculptors to immortalize his clemency.

Canadian tenor and Mozart specialist Michael Schade performs Tito, a role which has won him acclaim from Salzburg to Washington where his singing was praised

for its “unflagging intensity and musical intelligence.”
(*Washington Post*)

Making her COC debut as the impetuous yet ultimately loyal Sesto is American mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, whose high profile engagements this season include Rosina and Zerlina at the Met. We also welcome back two Ensemble Studio alumni: mezzo-soprano Wallis Giunta and bass Robert Gleadow. COC Music Director Johannes Debus leads the soloists, COC Orchestra and Chorus.

Director Christopher Alden's approach illuminates the real, human emotions at the heart of the opera. When it premiered in 2009, his production was universally praised: “Behold, if you will, *La clemenza di Tito* boldly liberated from the stilted conventions of *opera seria*. This is an evening of modern music theater you mustn't miss.”
(*Chicago Tribune*) ■



SPRING 2013

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

GAETANO DONIZETTI
(1797 – 1848)



Anna Christy as Lucia (centre) in a scene from English National Opera's production *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photo: Clive Barda

GOTHIC DRAMA, *BEL CANTO* BLISS

The spring season opens with Gaetano Donizetti's *bel canto* masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor* which returns to the COC in a riveting production from English National Opera (ENO). Making a much-anticipated COC debut, director David Alden transports us into the darkly brooding world of the iconic Sir Walter Scott Gothic novel in which Lucia is treated as little more than chattel within a brutal, power-driven society. In the operatic iteration of the tale, she ultimately finds release – but only after severing all ties with reality, escaping into the dream world offered by Donizetti's cascading romantic melodies.

After its 2008 ENO premiere and subsequent 2010 revival, Alden's revelatory production was showered with praise: "[he] ...makes *Lucia di Lammermoor* seem like a novel that Emily Brontë or the young Charles Dickens should have written but didn't... It's a magnificent conception." (*The Daily Telegraph*)

A huge part of this production's success stems from American coloratura soprano Anna Christy's shattering portrayal of the title role which she'll bring to Toronto for her COC debut. Critics noted in Christy an ideal combination of the physical and histrionic attributes demanded by Alden's conception, together with a mastery of Donizetti's challenging, high-wire vocal writing. Hers is a doll-like, Alice-in-Wonderland-inspired Lucia. The character's resultant, harrowing slide into insanity inspired Donizetti to compose one of the most moving, virtuosic scenes ever written for the soprano voice. In Christy's hands the "dazzlingly sketched coloratura in the mad scene is electrifying..." (*The Daily Telegraph*) ■

Production Co-sponsors



SPRING 2013

SALOME

RICHARD STRAUSS
(1864 - 1949)

ATOM EGOYAN'S RETURN

Celebrated Canadian director Atom Egoyan, whose award-winning films include *The Sweet Hereafter*, *Exotica* and *Chloe*, returns with his searing COC production of Richard Strauss's *Salome*.

Adapted from Oscar Wilde's play, the opera recounts the biblical story of Salome, who – to the horror of her stepfather Herod – demands the head of John the Baptist in return for performing the Dance of the Seven Veils. Upon seeing the play, Richard Strauss immediately set to work on the opera. It seemed to be tailor-made for musical adaptation. In fact Wilde, himself, described his play as containing “refrains whose recurring motifs make it so like a piece of music and bind it together as a ballad.”

Strauss described the character of Salome as “a 16-year-old princess with the voice of Isolde.” Rarely can a soprano meet both the physical and vocal demands of the title role. With Swedish-American soprano Erika

Sunnegårdh, the COC presents a stunning, singing actress who totally embraces Strauss's ecstatic and intoxicating music. Rounding out the impressive cast are opera stars Richard Margison as Herod, Martin Gantner and Alan Held sharing the role of Jochanaan, and Julia Juon as Herodias.

At the opera's premiere, the audience and critics were shocked by its subject matter and erotic themes, which include the infamous “dance” and the final scene in which Salome declares her love to the severed head of John the Baptist. Salome's world of voyeurism and sexual abuse still elicits an equally visceral response today.

“...this *Salome* is marvelously wicked and wickedly marvelous, which has always been the point of the work – both Oscar Wilde's play and Richard Strauss' operatic adaptation.” (Urjo Kareda, *The Globe and Mail*) ■

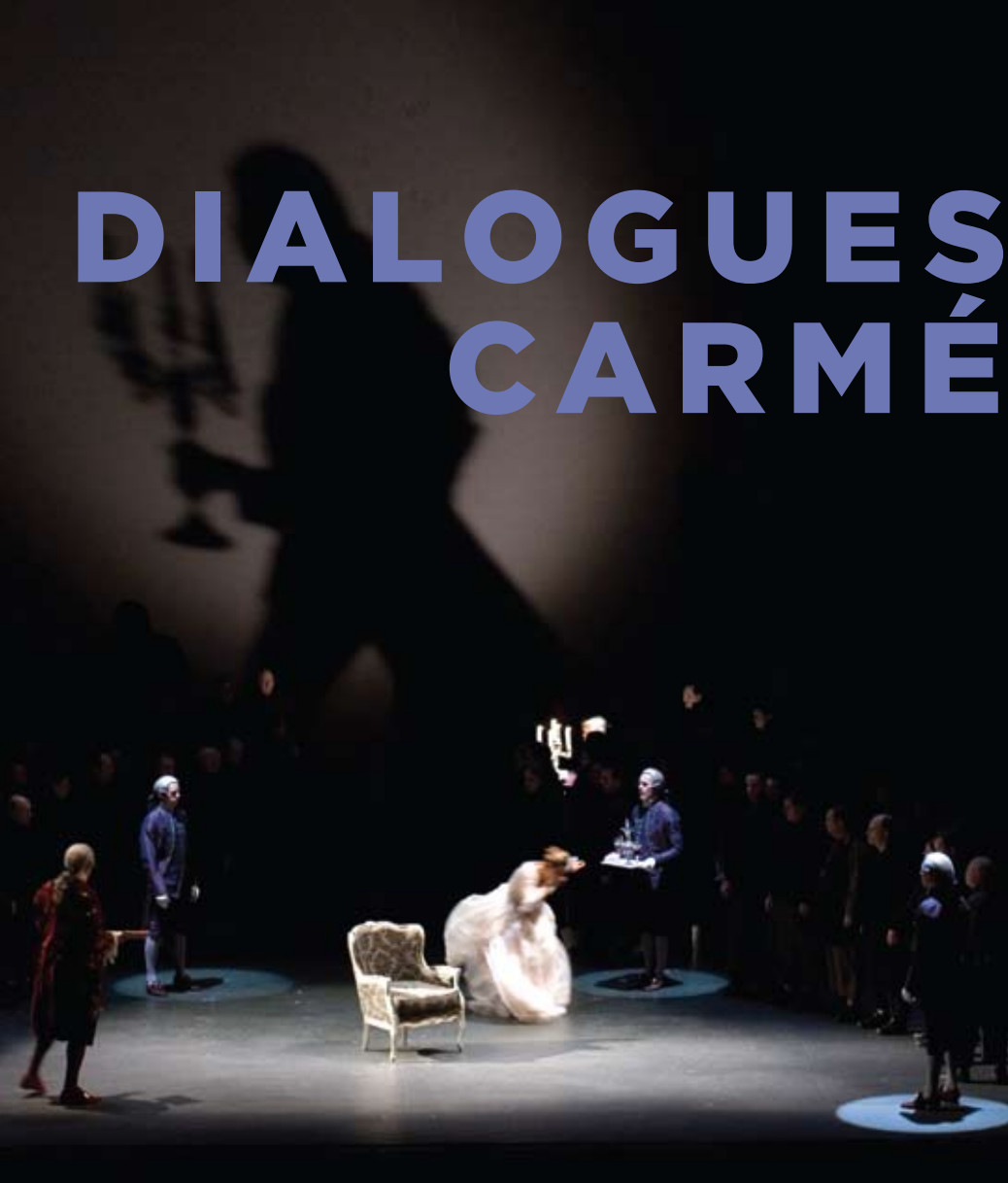


Roger Honeywell as Narraboth and Helen Field as Salome in the COC's production of *Salome*, 2001. Photo: Michael Cooper

SPRING 2013

DIALOGUES DES CARMÉLITES

FRANCIS POULENC
(1899 – 1963)



A scene from Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2007.
Photo: Robert Kusel

CARSEN'S CONSUMMATE PRODUCTION

Robert Carsen became the toast of Toronto after directing back-to-back operas at the COC (Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*) that met with overwhelming critical and popular acclaim. The *Toronto Sun* declared that "Robert Carsen's genius knows no bounds," and audiences rewarded his productions with standing ovations at every performance. He returns to Toronto for a third consecutive season to direct one of his most highly praised productions, Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. A cast of nearly 150, including beloved Canadian stars Isabel Bayrakdarian, Judith Forst, and Adrienne Pieczonka, join Carsen for his return to the COC.

Dialogues des Carmélites is Poulenc's operatic masterpiece and features some of his most aching beautiful music. At the centre of the story is Blanche, a young aristocratic woman who tries to escape the turmoil of the French Revolution by joining an order

of Carmelite nuns. She enters the convent desperate for a safe haven, but instead finds herself inevitably pulled towards a confrontation with both her personal terrors and The Terror itself. In a final scene that is one of the most devastating in all of opera, Blanche discovers her personal strength amid the violence of history.

Robert Carsen brings his signature high-impact approach to this haunting opera, using a minimalist, lighting-focused design to highlight the music, emotions, and drama. This production has been seen at some of the world's great opera houses, including La Scala, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam, and has received spectacular critical praise. *Variety* described Carsen's approach as "subtle yet gut-wrenching" and *theoperacritic.com* praised his *Carmélites* as "a truly consummate production." ■

MUSICAL STORYTELLING: A GUIDE FOR LISTENING TO OPERA

by Katherine Semcesen

The absolute heart of an opera is the score. It is the foundation on which all staging, dramatic concepts, designs and musical interpretations are built. As audience members, we seldom have the opportunity or time to deconstruct the music before arriving at the opera house, but in doing so we can gain new insights into the story and build a deeper appreciation for opera and the artistry involved in its creation.

(speed) and dynamics (loudness or softness of sound) to paint a very visceral picture of what is happening in the story, evoke specific moods, atmospheres, feelings or objects, or add dimension to a character. Different combinations of these compositional tools can reinforce feelings, contradict them, or show solidarity in thought. Using the Act I Finale from *Tosca*, the well-known and moving “Te Deum” scene, let’s unpack Puccini’s score and

reveal some of the hidden truths in his brilliant music.

The Act I Finale opens with a low *ostinato* (a repetitive figure) of church bells which are reminiscent of the noble theme of *Tosca* and Cavaradossi’s music featured earlier in the opera. *Tosca*’s and Cavaradossi’s theme in the strings underscore

through the motions of participating in the church service (i.e. kneeling and crossing himself when the Cardinal passes). Effortlessly and relentlessly the scene builds to a tremendous climax when Scarpia realizes that *Tosca* has made him forget God and with religious zeal joins the crowd in a grandiose proclamation of “Te Deum” (hymn of praise) in unison. Notice how the tempo (speed of music) remains steady throughout the piece. This hints at Scarpia’s unwavering beliefs and desire to punish *Tosca* and Cavaradossi, even if it means overruling his better judgement. The curtain falls on Scarpia’s theme sounding three times in *fortissimo* (very loud) in the orchestra, reinforcing the violent and ominous aspect of the story and highlighting Scarpia’s true sinister character. All this in less than six minutes of music!

To give you a preview of the music in the 2011/2012 season, and how the drama is reflected in an operatic score, explore the COC’s new online Listening Guides on COC Radio at coc.ca. ■

Katherine Semcesen is Associate Director, Education and Outreach at the Canadian Opera Company.



For many of us, going to the opera is about letting go of inhibitions and allowing the music and visuals to pull us into the drama and emotion of the story. But dig a little deeper and you can discover the composer’s underlying compositional tricks embedded into the score that help guide the listener through the story. Not musically trained? Not to worry. All it takes is a good ear and a sense of child-like curiosity to decipher the basic meanings in a score.

Composers use specific voice types and manipulate musical themes, rhythm (movement and patterns in the notes), instrumentation and orchestration (the types and combinations of instruments), tempo

the scene informing the listener that their complicated love story is at the heart of the drama. Layered on top of the *Tosca*/Cavaradossi theme is Scarpia’s floating bass, in a dreamlike monologue, with thoughts of making *Tosca* yield to his desires and sending her lover to death. The pairing of these two musical themes depicts the clash between *Tosca*’s and Cavaradossi’s love and the evil ways of Scarpia. An organ signals a processional theme and cannons punctuate the music reminding the listener as to where and why the crowd has assembled in the first place (at a church to honour Napoleon’s defeat at Marengo). All the while voicing his sinister thoughts, Scarpia is going

Give it a try!

Explore the full *Tosca* and *Love from Afar* listening guides at COC Radio, along with video trailers, artist interviews, and fun and informative podcasts.

COC OPERATOURS

THE SANTA FE OPERA FESTIVAL – BOOKING NOW OPEN

Aug. 5 – 12, 2012

The celebrated summer opera festival held in the unique outdoor Santa Fe Opera House will stage five operas:

ROSSINI *Maometto II*

World premiere of a new critical edition with Leah Crocetto, Patricia Bardon and Luca Pisaroni

BIZET *The Pearl Fishers*

c. Emmanuel Villaume with Nicole

Cabell, Eric Cutler and Christopher Magiera

PUCCINI *Tosca*

c. Frédéric Chaslin with Amanda Echaz, Andrew Richards and Thomas Hampson

SZYMANOWSKI *King Roger*

d. Stephen Wadsworth with Erin Morley and Mariusz Kwiecien in its first North American staging

STRAUSS *Arabella*

c. Sir Andrew Davis d. Tim Albery with Erin Wall and Mark Delavan

Plus, a Bach chamber music performance and sightseeing in the magnificent landscape of New Mexico. Accommodation at Inn on the Alameda.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENTS!

MILAN & VENICE

November 5 – 26, 2012

Teatro alla Scala and Gran Teatro La Fenice will celebrate the 200th anniversaries of the two greatest 19th-century opera composers – Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner – with new productions of *Rigoletto* and *Siegfried* in Milan and *Otello* and *Tristan und Isolde* in Venice. Other performances in neighbouring cities TBA.

The demand worldwide to attend these performances will be high. COC Operatours is fortunate to have been allotted 30 places. More information will be available by early spring.

The Baltic States

Early June 2013

Enjoy a music and history tour of the three Baltic States with performances by the National Operas in Vilnius,

Riga (its annual opera festival) and Tallinn. More information will be available by early June 2012.

To receive full tour and booking information (as it becomes available), please e-mail operatours@golden.net or send a self-addressed and stamped envelope (#10 business-size) to:

COC Operatours

c/o Merit Travel
101 Cherryhill Blvd.
London, ON N6H 4S4

SUPPORTING THE COC NEVER TASTED SO GOOD!

FINE WINE AUCTION



CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

FINE WINE AUCTION

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012

On Thursday, April 12, 2012, the Canadian Opera Company will host its 13th Annual Fine Wine Auction at the Design Exchange. This year we are infusing the evening with new and exciting elements, including an operatic performance. Some 400 wine aficionados and Toronto executives will gather for the event, a night you surely will not want to miss! The COC's Fine Wine Auction is an opportunity to purchase exquisite international fine wines and spirits while supporting the Canadian

Opera Company. Guests can indulge in elegant hors d'oeuvres, sample a number of different fine wines, and browse the fantastic packages in the silent auction.

Stephen Ranger, Toronto's best known auctioneer, will lead the charge with an impressive array of hard-to-find fine wines and spirits from private collections. A pre-auction cocktail will begin at 6 p.m. and the live auction starts at 7 p.m.

LOOK ONLINE AT COC.CA



ALEXANDER NEEF

Keep up with busy General Director Alexander Neef. Follow him on twitter [@alexanderncoc](https://twitter.com/alexanderncoc) and on his blog at coc.ca/Neef.

PARLANDO: THE COC BLOG

For all COC news, including behind-the-scenes reporting, productions in progress, Q&As with the stars and much more, visit coc.ca/Parlando.

PUBLICATIONS ONLINE

All our house programs and issues of *Prelude* are posted online! New this winter, read interviews with Johannes Debus on *Love from Afar*, enjoy a *Tosca* photo essay, and read *NOW* magazine's Jon Kaplan's interview with Ensemble members about their special mainstage performance of *Semele*. It's all at coc.ca/Publications.

COC RADIO

New this winter, enjoy listening guides for *Tosca*, *Love from Afar* and all 2012/2013 season operas. Also online are CBC broadcasts of our fall productions of *Rigoletto* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Listen to podcasts with COC artists and so much more at coc.ca/Radio.

E-CARDS AND QUIZZES

Send a COC eCard to a friend from coc.ca/Ecard or take an opera quiz at coc.ca/Quizzes.

SCHOOL TOUR 2012

Every year, the Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour brings a one-act opera to schools across Ontario, inspiring and delighting students of all ages. With operas created specifically for young audiences, the COC Ensemble performs in full costume with sets, props and piano accompaniment. This year, almost 20,000 audience members experienced the whimsy and wonder of Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Dean Burry's *Isis and the Seven Scorpions*.

Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)



The famed Brothers Grimm tale of two brave children, an evil witch and an enchanted gingerbread house was brought to life through the beautiful melodies of Engelbert Humperdinck's opera. Michael Barrett (left) delighted audiences as a flatulent, bumbling Witch, and Rihab Chaieb and Lisa DiMaria sparkled as the spirited explorers Hansel and Gretel.

(Photo: Karen Reeves)

Isis and the Seven Scorpions (Burry)



This original children's opera by Canadian composer Dean Burry is a romping adventure featuring scorpion puppets, mystical instruments and magical hieroglyphs. Jacqueline Woodley (left) shone as the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis who must tame a poisonous league of Scorpions, played by Jon-Paul Décosse.

(Photo: Karen Reeves)

Over 30 performances later, composer/school tour manager Dean Burry summed up the experience: "Our operas for young audiences are a vital part of the COC's education activities. There is no better way to open children's minds to the joys of opera than by giving them actual operas of their own. Thousands of students will leave this experience knowing that opera can be something for their own lives." ■

Xstrata is proud to sponsor the
Canadian Opera Company's
Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour

www.xstrata.com



Simone Osborne, Wallis Giunta, Christopher Enns and Adrian Kramer
in the COC Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour production of
Isis and the Seven Scorpions, 2010. Photo: Anand Maharaj

WINTER & SPRING 2012

JANUARY 2012

Sat	7	10 a.m.	Opera for a New Age tickets for <i>Tosca</i> and <i>Love from Afar</i> available
Tue	10	12 p.m.	Little Pear Garden Collective*
Wed	11	5:30 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	Julie Michels, vocals; Kevin Barrett, guitar* Youth Opera Lab: <i>Tosca</i>
Thu	12	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Peggy Baker, choreographer/dancer* <i>Tosca</i> Working Rehearsal
Tue	17	12 p.m. 6 p.m.	Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio* Opera 101: <i>Tosca</i> , Duke of Westminster (77 Adelaide St. W.)
Thu	19	12 p.m.	Se-Doo Park, cello*
Sat	21	4:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i> opening performance
Mon	23	7:30 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i> Working Rehearsal
Tue	24	12 p.m.	Humber Latin Jazz Ensemble*
Wed	25	7:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Thu	26	12 p.m.	Alejandro Vela, piano*
Sun	29	2 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Tue	31	12 p.m. 6 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Soundstreams: Elmer Iseler Singers, Carla Huhtanen, soprano; Adam Sherkin, piano* Opera 101: <i>Love from Afar</i> , Duke of York (39 Prince Arthur Ave.) <i>Tosca</i>

FEBRUARY 2012

Wed	1	5:30 p.m.	Heather Bambrick Quartet*
Thu	2	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio, hosted by Kaija Saariaho* <i>Love from Afar</i> opening performance
Fri	3	7:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Sat	4	9:30 a.m. 4:30 p.m.	The Opera Exchange, "Long Distant Loving: Saariaho's <i>Love from Afar</i> ." 80 Queen's Park Cres. <i>Love from Afar</i>
Sun	5	2 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Tue	7	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Artists of the COC Studio Ensemble and Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal* <i>Tosca</i>
Wed	8	7:30 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i>
Thu	9	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	New Orford String Quartet* <i>Tosca</i>
Fri	10	7:30 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i>
Sat	11	7:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Sun	12	2 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i>
Mon	13	7:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Tue	14	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Julie Makerov, soprano; Anne Larlee, piano* <i>Love from Afar</i>
Wed	15	5:30 p.m.	Robi Botos, piano; Hilario Durán, piano*
Thu	16	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Russell Braun and Friends* <i>Tosca</i>
Sat	18	7:30 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i>
Tue	21	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Mehdi Ghazi, piano* <i>Tosca</i>
Wed	22	7:30 p.m.	<i>Love from Afar</i>
Thu	23	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Ileana Montalbetti, soprano* <i>Tosca</i>
Sat	25	7:30 p.m.	<i>Tosca</i>
Tue	28	12 p.m.	Ensembles of The Glenn Gould School*
Wed	29	12 p.m.	Zagreb Piano Trio*

MARCH 2012

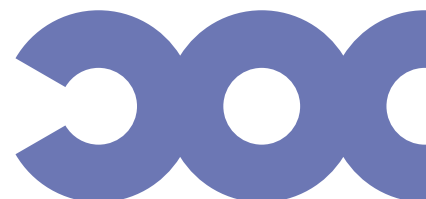
Tue	6	12 p.m.	Canadian Art Song Project (CASP)*
Wed	7	5:30 p.m.	Guido Basso, trumpet/flugelhorn; Don Thompson, piano/bass*
Thu	8	12 p.m.	Jelena Milojevic, accordion*
Wed	14	12 p.m.	Ballet Jörgen Canada*
Tue	20	12 p.m.	Artists of the UofT Faculty of Music*
Wed	21	12 p.m.	Alexander Seredenko, piano*
Thu	22	7 p.m.	Opera Talks: <i>Semele</i> , North York Central Library
Tue	27	12 p.m.	Ensemble Vivant; Dave Young, bass*
Thu	29	12 p.m.	Ryan MacEvoy McCullough, piano*
Sat	31	10 a.m. 5:30 p.m.	Opera for a New Age tickets for <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> , <i>A Florentine Tragedy</i> / <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> , and <i>Semele</i> available Youth Opera Lab: <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i>

APRIL 2012

Mon	2	7:30 p.m.	<i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> Working Rehearsal
Tue	3	12 p.m.	GGs New Music Ensemble*
Wed	4	12 p.m. 6 p.m.	Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio* Opera 101: <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> , Duke of Westminster (77 Adelaide St. W.)
Thu	5	12 p.m.	Christopher Mokrzewski, piano*
Tue	10	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Trio Arkel* <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> opening performance
Thu	12	12 p.m. 7 p.m.	Bboyizm* COC Fine Wine Auction at the Design Exchange (Cocktails at 6 p.m.)
Sat	14	4:30 p.m.	<i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i>
Tue	17	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Canadian Music Competition Winners* <i>A Florentine Tragedy</i> / <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> Working Rehearsal
Wed	18	6 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Opera 101: <i>A Florentine Tragedy</i> / <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> Duke of Westminster (77 Adelaide St. W.) <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i>
Thu	19	12 p.m.	BoucharDanse*
Sat	21	7:30 p.m.	<i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i>
Sun	22	10 a.m.	The Opera Exchange: "A Wilde Time: Zemlinsky's <i>A Florentine Tragedy</i> ." 80 Queen's Park Cres.
Tue	24	12 p.m.	Lauren Margison, vocals; Christopher Mokrzewski, piano*
Thu	26	12 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Jayne Stone* <i>A Florentine Tragedy</i> / <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> opening performance
Fri	27	7:30 p.m.	<i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i>
Sat	28	5:30 p.m.	Youth Opera Lab: <i>Semele</i>
Mon	30	7:30 p.m.	<i>Semele</i> Working Rehearsal

*These performances are part of the Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre for the Performing Arts, supported by the Free Concert Series Endowment Fund, established in honour of Richard Bradshaw by an anonymous donor.

KEEP UP
TO DATE AT
coc.ca/Calendar



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Canadian Opera Company gratefully acknowledges the generous support of these government agencies and departments:

Operating Grants



MAJOR CORPORATE SPONSORS

2011/2012 SEASON

Sun Life Financial Accessibility Program
Encompassing SURTITLES™, Wheelchair Seating,
Hearing-Assistive and Vision-Impaired Devices



Official Automotive Sponsor
of the COC at the FSCPA



BMO Financial Group Pre-Performance
Opera Chats and BMO Financial Group
Student Dress Rehearsals
Production Sponsor
Saariaho's *Love from Afar*



Major Supporter, Ensemble Studio
Production Sponsor
Handel's Semele



Xstrata Ensemble Studio School Tour



Official Canadian Wine
of the COC at the FSCPA



Presenting Sponsor
Opera for a New Age and
Operation 8: A Muse Ball



Production Co-sponsors
Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy*
and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*



Official Spirit
of the COC at the FSCPA



KPMG Opera
Golf Classic



Preferred
Fragrance

euphoria
Calvin Klein

Official Airline
of the COC



Preferred Hospitality Sponsor



Official Media Sponsors



Digital Marketing Sponsor





A scene from the COC's production of *Tosca*, 2008. Photo: Gary Beechey

Prelude

A gift to our friends

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses To:
 Canadian Opera Company
 227 Front St. E., Toronto, ON, Canada M5A 1E8
 t 416-363-6671 f 416-363-5584 e info@coc.ca w coc.ca

CANADA		POSTES
POST		CANADA
Postage paid		Port payé
Publications Mail		Poste-publications
40069491		