

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 8 p.m. ET on February 4, 2019

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY EXPLORES MYTHS AND LORE WITH INTERNATIONAL OPERA LEGENDS IN 2019/2020 SEASON

Three new productions to appear at Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

Toronto –The **Canadian Opera Company** offers three bold new productions in 2019/2020 that hone in on the stories and myths that shape our perceptions – and the ones that offer escape from all things ordinary. This 69th season features new productions of Puccini’s *Turandot*, Dvořák’s *Rusalka*, and Humperdinck’s *Hansel & Gretel*, as well as COC revivals of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, Verdi’s *Aida*, and Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*.

“The need to hear and share stories is essential to the human experience,” says **COC General Director Alexander Neef**. “It begins with the fairy tales told to us as children, is developed through the history and literature learned as students, and later inspires the art we seek and create as adults. Stories can entertain, but they are also a powerful way to inform and give voice to important topics and perspectives. This season, we have curated a selection of operas that are magnetic for their extraordinary scores and vivid storytelling – and remarkable for their ability to tap into the emotions and motivations that unite us.”

“Our 19/20 operas also represents a valuable opportunity for ourselves, as creators, to challenge existing notions of how best to tell these stories,” says **Neef**. “Opera, by its very nature, is a collaborative art form, and presents us with endless ways to reimagine them for a renewed sense of resonance, amid changing times and better cross-cultural understanding.”

The COC welcomes back to the Four Seasons Centre a number of internationally acclaimed artists who have thrilled Toronto audiences in previous seasons, including: soprano **Sondra Radvanovky** in *Rusalka*’s title role with soprano **Keri Alkema** as the opera’s Foreign Princess; soprano **Tamara Wilson** as the title roles of *Turandot* and *Aida*; soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** as Liù in *Turandot*; mezzo-soprano **Emily D’Angelo** as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*; tenor **Michael Colvin** as The Witch in *Hansel & Gretel*; tenor **Russell Thomas** as Radames and baritone **Roland Wood** as Amonasro in *Aida*; and tenor **Michael Schade** as Erik in *The Flying Dutchman*. Directors **Tim Albery**, **Christopher Alden**, **Joan Font**, and **Joel Ivany** also return for the 19/20 season.

This season also marks the COC mainstage debut of some of the most accomplished opera artists in the world, including tenor **Sergey Skorokhodov**, as Calaf in *Turandot*; bass **Matthew Rose** as Vodnik in *Rusalka*; baritone **Vito Priante** as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*; and bass **Vitalij Kowaljow** as the Dutchman in *The Flying Dutchman*. This season is also the first to showcase visionary directors **Robert Wilson** and **David McVicar**, as well as the orchestral leadership of Italian conductors **Speranza Scappucci** and **Jader Bignamini**.

19/20 SEASON AT-A-GLANCE

Turandot by Giacomo Puccini

Nine Performances: September 28, October 4, 9, 15, 17, 19, 23, 25, 27, 2019

New Production (COC co-production with Teatro Real Madrid, Houston Grand Opera, and the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Vilnius)

Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™

Princess Turandot has a fierce reputation that precedes her royal name. Adamantly opposed to being passively matched with a husband, she counters with a high-stakes challenge to admirers: answer her three riddles and win

her hand in marriage. Answer incorrectly and pay dearly – with your life. As a steady stream of suitors find themselves face-to-face with the executioner, Prince Calaf takes on the deadly game and has a mystery of his own that turns the tables on icy Turandot.

Renowned theatre director **Robert Wilson** lends his innovative visual artistry to this production; he and designer **Stephanie Engeln** have created a distinctly modern set that echoes Turandot’s glacial demeanor in its clean lines and sleek minimalism. **Wilson** and lighting designer **John Torres** paint the stage in dramatic chiaroscuro. Against this backdrop, costumes designed by **Jacques Reynaud** create striking figures, cloaked in rich colour, shape, and texture. Makeup design is by **Manu Halligan**; and **Tomek Jeziorski** completes the creative team as projection designer.

American soprano and Richard Tucker Award-winner **Tamara Wilson** shares the title role with soprano **Marjorie Owens**; Turandot is a role debut for both artists. Russian tenor **Sergey Skorokhodov** and Bulgarian tenor **Kamen Chanev** share the role of the daring Calaf while Slovak bass **Stefan Kocan** takes on the role of Calaf’s father, the vanquished King Timur; all three performances are COC debuts. Lebanese-Canadian soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** and Colombian-American soprano **Vanessa Vasquez** share the role of the devoted Liù. Taking on the roles of Turandot’s ministers are three internationally acclaimed artists: Moldovan baritone **Adrian Timpau** as Ping; Korean-American tenor **Julius Ahn** as Pang; and Taiwanese-American tenor **Joseph Hu** as Pong.

Italian conductor **Carlo Rizzi** is praised by singers and audiences alike for his mastery of the operatic craft; he leads the **COC Orchestra** through a score that was designed to thrill and that features the widely-performed classical crossover aria, “Nessun dorma.” The **COC Chorus**, led by Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst**, perform some of opera’s most epic music together with the **Canadian Children’s Opera Company**.

Cast and Creative Team

Turandot	Tamara Wilson and Marjorie Owens*
Calaf	Sergey Skorokhodov and Kamen Chanev*
Liù	Joyce El-Khoury and Vanessa Vasquez**
Timur	Stefan Kocan
Ping	Adrian Timpau
Pang	Julius Ahn
Pong	Joseph Hu
The Mandarin	Joel Allison
The Prince of Persia	Matthew Cairns
Conductor	Carlo Rizzi
Director	Robert Wilson
Set Designer	Robert Wilson and Stephanie Engeln
Costume Designer	Jacques Reynaud
Lighting Designer	Robert Wilson and John Torres
Make-up Designer	Manu Halligan
Projection Designer	Tomek Jeziorski
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst

*October 23, 25, 2019

**October 15, 17, 23, 25, 2019

Rusalka by Antonín Dvořák

Seven Performances: October 12, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 2019

New Production (Lyric Opera of Chicago production)

Sung in Czech with English SURTITLES™

Rooted in classic mermaid mythology, *Rusalka* is the tale of a sensitive water nymph that falls for a charming prince. Desperate to join him, she enlists the help of the witch Ježibaba, and sacrifices her voice and idyllic immortality in water for human life on land. But the prince has a fickle heart and Rusalka soon finds that she's an outcast in both realms. Haunting her is the knowledge that a single dark solution remains- if she's ever to reverse her fate.

Sir David McVicar makes his COC debut at the helm of this dreamy production. Knighted in 2012 for his services to opera, **McVicar** has worked with the world's leading opera houses, including Royal Opera House, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Metropolitan Opera. Scottish set designer **John Macfarlane** brings Rusalka's watery realm to life, while **Moritz Junge** has created the cast's elaborate and whimsical costumes. Moody lighting by **David Finn** immediately transports the senses, while Welsh choreographer **Andrew George** lends his expert touch to whirling ballet sequences.

American soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** returns to the COC following her triumphant run in *Anna Bolena* in spring 2018. The star singer takes on the title role of Rusalka with Czech tenor **Pavel Černoch** as the Prince who captures her heart. In role debuts, British bass **Matthew Rose** and Slovak bass **Stefan Kocan** share the role of Rusalka's father, Vodnik. They are joined by Russian mezzo-soprano **Elena Manistina** as the witch Ježibaba and American soprano **Keri Alkema** as the Foreign Princess, who reunites with her *Anna Bolena* co-star, **Radvanovsky**.

Dvořák's sweeping score is full of nocturnal serenades and includes the beloved "Song to the Moon" aria; it's conducted by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**, leading the **COC Orchestra**. Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus**.

Cast and Creative Team

Rusalka	Sondra Radvanovsky
Vodnik	Matthew Rose and Stefan Kocan*
Ježibaba	Elena Manistina
Prince	Pavel Černoch
Foreign Princess	Keri Alkema
First Wood Nymph	Anna-Sophie Neher
Second Wood Nymph	Jamie Groote
Third Wood Nymph	Lauren Segal
Gamekeeper	Matthew Cairns
Hunter	Vartan Gabrielian
Conductor	Johannes Debus
Director	Sir David McVicar
Set Designer	John Macfarlane
Costume Designer	Moritz Junge
Lighting Designer	David Finn
Choreographer	Andrew George
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst

*October 24 & 26, 2019

The Barber of Seville by Gioachino Rossini

Eight Performances: January 19, 22, 25, 30, February 1, 2, 4, 7, 2020

COC Revival (COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia)

Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™

Fast-talking Figaro is everyone's go-to guy. He cuts hair, he trims beards, and – given the chance – he'll help land the girl. So when Count Almaviva shares his heartache over the lovely Rosina, Figaro has a plan to help. But first, the pair will have to outsmart Rosina's lecherous guardian Bartolo, who has been angling to marry the wealthy orphan himself, and they're sparing no long-shot schemes along the way. Delightful chaos and infectiously catchy music have made this an audience favourite for centuries and this production from Spanish theatre troupe **Els Comediants** does not disappoint.

Spanish director **Joan Font** is the founding member of **Els Comediants** and has brought more than 30 productions to the stage; he leads this lively and exceptionally animated version of *The Barber of Seville*. **Joan Guillén** takes on set and costume design, creating colourful, asymmetrical backdrops and larger-than-life characters that mimic the comedy unfolding onstage. The production features lighting by **Albert Faura** and buoyant choreography by **Xevi Dorca**.

Italian baritone **Vito Priante** makes his COC debut as the wily Figaro, opposite fast-rising Italian-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Emily D'Angelo; D'Angelo**, a graduate of the COC Ensemble Studio, returns to the COC in her role debut as Rosina. Argentinian tenor **Santiago Ballerini** makes a COC debut as Count Almaviva, and Italian baritone **Renato Girolami** takes on the role of Bartolo. American bass-baritone **Brandon Cedel** rounds out the cast as the cunning Don Basilio.

Italian-born and Julliard-trained conductor **Speranza Scappucci** is considered one of the leading conductors of her generation; she makes her COC mainstage debut in leading the **COC Orchestra** through Rossini's playful score, chock-full of the most memorable melodies in all opera. Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus**.

Cast and Creative Team

Figaro	Vito Priante
Rosina	Emily D'Angelo
Almaviva	Santiago Ballerini
Bartolo	Renato Girolami
Basilio	Brandon Cedel
Berta	Simona Genga
Fiorello	Joel Allison
Officer	Vartan Gabrielian
Conductor	Speranza Scappucci
Original Director	Joan Font
Set & Costume Designer	Joan Guillén
Lighting Designer	Albert Faura
Choreographer	Xevi Dorca
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst

Hansel & Gretel by Engelbert Humperdinck

Seven Performances: February 6, 8, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 2020

New Production (COC co-production with the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity)

Sung in German with English SURTITLES™

The familiar childhood fable gets the full-scale opera treatment in this exciting new production. When Hansel and Gretel's mother sends them into the woods to gather berries, the pair finds a candy-coated cottage – and a witch who's looking to make them her next meal. But the evil sorceress is no match for these siblings, who gamely launch a cunning storybook showdown to reunite with their parents.

Joel Ivany, the award-winning Canadian stage director and artistic director of Against the Grain Theatre, brings his theatrical vision to this well-loved classic. **Ivany**'s cutting-edge work has been credited with "chang[ing] the opera game" (*National Post*) and, together with **Katherine Syer** as dramaturg, the pair have created something entirely unique for the COC stage. **S. Katy Tucker** is set and projection designer and Toronto-based **Ming Wong** is behind the costume design. Lighting is by **JAX Messenger**, who designed the lighting for the COC's world premiere presentation of *Pyramus and Thisbe* in 2015.

American mezzo-soprano **Emily Fons**, called one of opera's rising stars by *Opera News*, sings Hansel. She is joined by three acclaimed COC Ensemble Studio graduates: soprano **Simone Osborne** as Gretel, mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó** as the children's mother, Gertrude, and tenor **Michael Colvin** as the diabolical witch. Distinguished Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** sings the role of the children's father, Peter.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts the **COC Orchestra** through Humperdinck's lighter musical take on the darker Grimm fairy tale, with the **Canadian Children's Opera Company**.

Cast and Creative Team

Hansel	Emily Fons
Gretel	Simone Osborne
Peter	Russell Braun
Gertrude	Krisztina Szabó
The Witch	Michael Colvin
Dew Fairy / Sandman	Anna-Sophie Neher
Conductor	Johannes Debus
Director	Joel Ivany
Set & Projection Designer	S. Katy Tucker
Costume Designer	Ming Wong
Lighting Designer	JAX Messenger
Dramaturg	Katherine Syer

Aida by Giuseppe Verdi

Seven Performances: April 18, 22, 26, 30, May 2, 5, 8, 2020

COC Revival

Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™

Love charges past borders in this powerful war-time epic. The opera begins in Egypt where Aida, an Ethiopian princess, is held as a political pawn in the ongoing conflict between nations. Unbeknownst to all, she has developed a tender relationship with the Egyptian general Radames – a situation that pits Aida's love for him against her love for country when Radames is suddenly called to lead the troops in Ethiopia.

Stage director **Tim Albery** creates a clean, modernist *Aida* that transposes the opera's action from ancient Egypt to the modern Middle East with the help of award-winning German set designer **Hildegard Bechtler**. Costume designer **Jon Morrell** draws inspiration from the geometrical influence and colour palette of iconic 1960's style, while lighting designer **Thomas C. Hase** uses moody light and striking shadows to play up the drama onstage. Canadian **Laila Diallo** returns to the creative team as choreographer for the production.

The production's all-star cast features American soprano **Tamara Wilson**, who returns to Toronto after singing Turandot in the COC's fall 2019 production, to take on the title role; her performance as Aida was declared "flawless" (*Schmopera*) when she sang it for Washington National Opera. American tenor **Russell Thomas** brings his "immense voice and gleaming high notes" (*Opera Wire*) to the role of Radames. Georgian bass **Goderdzi Janelidze** is the high priest Ramfis and French mezzo-soprano **Clémentine Margaine** is the princess Amneris,

while Welsh bass **Richard Wiegold** sings the part of her father, the king of Egypt. Baritone **Roland Wood** makes his role debut as Amonasro.

Italian conductor **Jader Bignamini** returns to Toronto to make his COC mainstage debut, leading the **COC Orchestra** in one of Verdi's greatest gifts to grand opera; **Bignamini** last conducted the **COC Orchestra** in 2017's dazzling *Trio Magnifico* concert, featuring soprano Anna Netrebko. Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus** through *Aida*'s rousing choral numbers.

Cast and Creative Team

Aida	Tamara Wilson
Radames	Russell Thomas
Amneris	Clémentine Margaine
Amonasro	Roland Wood
Ramfis	Goderdzi Janelidze
King of Egypt	Richard Wiegold
Messenger	Matthew Cairns
Priestess	Simona Genga
Conductor	Jader Bignamini
Director	Tim Albery
Set Designer	Hildegard Bechtler
Costume Designer	Jon Morrell
Lighting Designer	Thomas C. Hase
Choreographer	Laila Diallo
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst

The Flying Dutchman by Richard Wagner

Seven Performances: May 1, 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 2020

COC Revival

Sung in German with English SURTITLES™

The Dutchman has been damned to an eternity of sailing the sea. Every seven years he's given one chance to find the love of a faithful woman and finally unshackle himself from the hateful curse. When he crosses paths with Senta, a sea captain's daughter, fresh hope flickers in the darkness; Senta is already engaged to the huntsman Erik, but is drawn to the mysterious stranger, whom she knows by legend and feels fated to love and save. With the clock counting down until the Dutchman sails again, the opera charges ahead to a stormy finale.

American theatre director **Christopher Alden** revives this seafaring thriller, last seen at the COC in 2010. Designer **Allen Moyer** creates a haunted set with an enormous, tilted ship; its presence is an inescapable reminder of the sea captain's curse. **Moyer** is also behind the production's sea-weathered costume design. Lighting by **Anne Militello** evokes a ghostly pallor over the Dutchman's crew.

Vitalij Kowaljow takes on the role of the Dutchman in a COC and role debut for the Ukrainian bass. Soprano **Marjorie Owens** returns as the object of the Dutchman's infatuation, Senta, and Polish mezzo-soprano **Ewa Pionka** sings Mary. Russian bass **Dmitry Ulyanov** makes his COC debut as Daland and American tenor **Miles Mykkanen** is the Steersman, in a role debut. Noted German-Canadian tenor **Michael Schade** completes the cast with his role debut as Erik.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts the **COC Orchestra** in what is considered the first true representation of Wagner's mature style as a German Romantic composer. Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus** through a number of roiling choral numbers.

Cast and Creative Team

The Dutchman	Vitalij Kowaljow
Senta	Marjorie Owens
Daland	Dmitry Ulyanov
The Steersman	Miles Mykkanen
Mary	Ewa Płonka
Erik	Michael Schade
Conductor	Johannes Debus
Director	Christopher Alden
Set & Costume Designer	Allen Moyer
Lighting Designer	Anne Militello
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

Centre Stage Ensemble Studio Competition and Gala will take place **October 30, 2019**. This annual event consists of two separately ticketed parts: an elegant fundraising dinner and a vocal competition featuring Canada's best young opera singers compete for prizes and the opportunity to join the COC's prestigious Ensemble Studio training program. Audience members also have a chance to vote for their favourites. Further competition details to be released at a later date

Operanation takes over the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** on **May 21, 2020**. The massive annual party combines fashion, music, and interactive art, all in support of the COC Ensemble Studio.

ACCESS THE SEASON

General Public

Subscriptions to the 19/20 season are available now and 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.

Single tickets to all six mainstage operas are available to the public as of **Monday, August 26, 2019**.

Programs for Specialized Audiences

Opera Under 30 offers patrons under the age of 30 the ability to buy mainstage tickets at a discounted rate as well as subscription packages at an accessible price point.

Opera Access for New Canadians is a partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship that provides access to the COC's mainstage operas and special events for refugees and newcomers to Canada.

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 Canadian Opera Company, visit coc.ca.

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For more information or to request production photography, please contact:

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