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## **ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR WAJDI MOUAWAD REVITALIZES MOZART'S *THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO* IN NEW COC PRODUCTION**

**Toronto** - Returning to the COC stage after an absence of nearly 40 years is Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) in a new COC production from Lebanese-Canadian **Wajdi Mouawad**, a playwright and director whose work is internationally recognized for its moral impulse. His reinterpretation of Mozart's opera—a piece about relations between Enlightenment-era Europeans and Muslim Turks—was first presented in 2016 at Opéra de Lyon, where the *New York Times* suggested **Mouawad**'s artistic vision could be an example of opera becoming an agent of change. Seven performances take place at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **February 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 22, and 24, 2018**.

*The Abduction from the Seraglio* tells the story of Europeans taken captive by a Muslim pasha in the Ottoman Empire and the efforts of their beloveds to rescue them. The possibility of a violent culture clash seems inevitable but **Mouawad**'s direction avoids caricature and cultural stereotypes, while heightening the humanity of Mozart's characters and maintaining the integrity of the original score. He has reworked and modernized some of the original text, introduced his own dialogue, and reframes the narrative with a new prologue. In making these changes, **Mouawad** was motivated by the desire to challenge the confrontational binary of East versus West.

Leading the cast is Canadian **Jane Archibald**, the COC's inaugural artist-in-residence, in one of her most acclaimed and favourite roles. She brings her "commanding, compassionate soprano" (*New York Times*) to the character of Konstanze, which she performed in this production's 2016 premiere in France. She is joined by rising star Swiss tenor **Mauro Peter** who makes his Canadian debut as Belmonte, Konstanze's fiancé, and was praised as "a revelation" (*Bachtrack*) in a recent performance of the role at La Scala.

Two recent Ensemble Studio graduates return to the COC stage as Konstanze's fellow captives: soprano **Claire de Sévigné** is Blonde, a role in which she seemed to "fully flourish" (*Bachtrack*) at Opernhaus Zürich, and **Owen McCausland**, with his "ringing tenor tones" (*Vancouver Classical Music*), sings Pedrillo, Belmonte's servant and Blonde's betrothed.

Croatian bass **Goran Jurić** is Osmin, the Pasha's overseer who is given new depth and humanity through **Mouawad**'s staging details and revised dialogue, and was praised for a "sublime performance" (*Toronto Star*) as Sarastro in the COC's 2017 production of *The Magic Flute*. In the spoken role of the Pasha, Bassa Selim, is Israeli actor **Raphael Weinstock**.

Last heard at the COC in 1980, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is conducted by COC Music Director **Johannes Debus**. Musically, the opera is considered the first of Mozart's great masterpieces. It's characterized by the use of unusual instruments such as cymbals, Turkish drums, piccolo flutes and triangles and contains some of the composer's most beautiful music.

This production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* contrasts elegant, 18th-century period costumes by **Emmanuelle Thomas** with a minimalist, yet sophisticated, set design by **Emmanuel Clolus**. Lighting design is by **Eric Champoux**. Revival director **Valérie Nègre**, a frequent collaborator of **Mouawad**, stages its Toronto presentation.

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

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Single tickets for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* range from \$35 – \$225 and box seats, when available, are \$350. Tickets are now on sale, available online at [coc.ca](http://coc.ca), by calling 416-363-8231, or in person at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts Box Office** (145 Queen St. W.). For more information on **specialty priced tickets** available to **young people under the age of 15, standing room, Opera Under 30** presented by **TD Bank Group, student groups** and **rush seating**, visit [coc.ca](http://coc.ca).

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**The COC Ensemble Studio, underwritten in part by Peter M. Deeb, Marjorie and Roy Linden, Sheila K. Piercey, RBC Foundation and The Slight Family Foundation, is Canada's premier training program for young opera professionals and provides advanced instruction, hands-on experience, and career development opportunities. The Ensemble Studio is also supported by the Government of Canada, the Hal Jackman Foundation and other generous donors.**

### **ABOUT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY**

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the largest in North America. The COC enjoys a loyal audience support-base and one of the highest attendance and subscription rates in North America. Under its leadership team of General Director Alexander Neef and Music Director Johannes Debus, the COC is increasingly capturing the opera world's attention. The COC maintains its international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation by creating new productions within its diverse repertoire, collaborating with leading opera companies and festivals, and attracting the world's foremost Canadian and international artists. The COC performs in its own opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. Designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects, the Four Seasons Centre opened in 2006. For more information on the COC, visit [coc.ca](http://coc.ca).

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