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AN OPERA FOR OUR TIME: *HADRIAN* CONFERENCE EXPLORES OPERA'S PLACE IN THE 21st CENTURY

Toronto – Tickets are now available for **Hearing *Hadrian: An Opera for Our Time***, a conference on **Sunday, October 14, 2018**. Just one day after **Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian***, with libretto by **Daniel MacIvor**, receives its world premiere, the **Canadian Opera Company** will host a day-long series of panels and guest speakers dedicated to exploring the themes found in the opera and its broader operatic context.

Hearing *Hadrian* aims to bring the long-buried relationship between the Roman Emperor Hadrian and his lover, Antinous, to the forefront of public knowledge and discussion; it also examines *Hadrian's* place within the larger context of 21st-century opera and queer storytelling. Who was Hadrian and what makes his story a timeless classic for a modern audience? What does it mean to write an opera in the 21st century? And how can traditional art forms, like opera, be reimagined to tell marginalized stories?

COC Associate Director of Education and Outreach **Katherine Semcesen** points to *Hadrian's* complex layers of themes and visual cues as an excellent catalyst for engaging discussions. “By providing a space and a forum for these types of meaningful conversations to occur, I hope that participants will develop a deeper connection with the piece and with one another.”

Linda Hutcheon, of the University of Toronto, is one of the event's organizers. She says “With the premiere of *Hadrian*, the time has come to explore the recent and welcome changes in opera that have now made this art form more musically accessible, more technologically dazzling, and more socially provocative—and relevant.”

Discussions will be guided by some of the country's top experts in musicology, gender studies, and classics and held at **The 519**, a City agency located in Toronto's Church and Wellesley neighbourhood that is dedicated to the advocacy and inclusion of LGBTQ2S communities. **Hearing *Hadrian*** is co-produced by the **Canadian Opera Company**, the **Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies**, the **Faculty of Music at University of Toronto**, and the Humanities Initiative of **Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy**.

The program features the following panels and discussions:

“Have No Fear: Opera in the 21st Century”

Linda and Michael Hutcheon, provide an opening overview of the evolution of contemporary opera and *Hadrian's* place within it, chaired by **Katherine Semcesen**, COC Associate Director of Education and Outreach.

Speakers: **Linda Hutcheon**, Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature, at UofT
Michael Hutcheon, Professor of Medicine at UofT

“21st-Century Technological Revolutions”

What happens when tradition meets technology? This panel, moderated by **Laurie-Shawn Borzovoy**, Projection Designer for *Hadrian*, looks at the future of opera and virtual reality experiments.

Panelists: **Michael Mori**, Artistic Director of **Tapestry Opera**
Rorik Henrikson, Innovator: Human Computer Interaction, Stereoscopy, and Virtual Reality
Jake Gow, COC Associate Technical Director

“Queer Storytelling from Screen to Stage”

In this talk, chaired by **Don McLean**, Dean of Music at the UofT, music history scholar **Lloyd Whitesell** explores how contemporary storytelling mediums are being used to represent the queer experience.

Speaker: **Lloyd Whitesell**, Professor of Music History at **McGill University**

Pop-up Concert in Barbara Hall Park, Presented in Partnership with the Church-Wellesley Village BIA's Music in the Park Series

Weather permitting, enjoy an open-air performance, just outside **The 519**, by artists of the COC Ensemble Studio. The Ensemble Studio is one of Canada's most prestigious opera training programs and attracts some of country's best emerging opera talent.

“A Grand Opera for the 21st Century: The Music and Creation of *Hadrian*”

Introduced by **Wayne Gooding**, opera scholar and former editor of *Opera Canada*, **Cori Ellison** provides insights into the diverse inspiration for *Hadrian*'s unique sound world in this work that bridges classical and pop traditions.

Speaker: **Cori Ellison**, Dramaturg for *Hadrian*

“Sexualities in Ancient Rome”

Dive into the fascinating history of cultural perceptions of sexuality with classical studies scholar **Kelly Olson**. This lecture is chaired by **Scott Rayter**, Associate Director of the **Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies** at UofT.

Speaker: **Kelly Olson**, Professor of Classical Studies at **Western University**

“History of Hadrian's Rule”

Historically, Hadrian's legacy has been deeply divisive. In this lecture, chaired by **Caryl Clark**, Professor of Music History and Culture at the UofT, classics scholar **Andreas Bendlin** examines the clashes of political and religious conflicts that form the backdrop for the opera.

Speaker: **Andreas Bendlin**, Professor of Classics and Roman History at UofT

Roundtable of *Hadrian* Creative Team and Artists

The team behind *Hadrian*'s world premiere shares how and why they got involved with the production, the creative challenges of creating a brand new opera, and reflect upon the experience of seeing *Hadrian* and *Antinous* on stage.

Panelists: **Rufus Wainwright**, Composer
Daniel MacIvor, Librettist
Peter Hinton, Director
Isaiah Bell, Tenor singing role of *Antinous*
Gillian Gallow, Costume Designer
Cori Ellison (moderator), Dramaturg

TICKET INFORMATION

Admission to **Hearing *Hadrian*** is **free** but requires a ticket. Tickets are available at coc.ca/HearingHadrian or by calling **416-363-8231**. Please note seating is limited.

ABOUT HADRIAN

Hadrian is composed by famed singer-songwriter **Rufus Wainwright** with a libretto by acclaimed playwright **Daniel MacIvor**. The opera recounts the epic love story of Roman Emperor Hadrian and his young lover, *Antinous*. Erased by history, their story is reclaimed for the 21st century by its creators in a star-studded production from renowned Canadian director **Peter Hinton**. It runs for seven performances on **October 13, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 2018**. *Hadrian* is sung in English and Latin and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

ABOUT MUSIC IN THE PARK

Music in the Park is a series of concerts held in the Church-Wellesley Village to connect community, increase health, and improve the local economy while adding to the safety of this important Toronto neighborhood. The series is in its third year and has expanded to include 71 concerts held from July 1 to October 27.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.

- 30 -

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