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VERDI'S *RIGOLETTO* RETURNS TO COC: A SEARING EXPLORATION OF PATRIARCHY, POWER AND COMMERCE

“This production is nothing short of a musical feast.” – *Toronto Sun*

“One of the most spectacular operatic productions I have seen to date... carefully considered and brilliantly executed.” – *Mooney on Theatre*

Toronto –Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, a searing exploration of patriarchy, power, and commerce, returns to the **Canadian Opera Company** this winter with a production from acclaimed American director **Christopher Alden**. A tragedy on a Shakespearean scale, the opera is brought to life by an all-star cast and conducted by pre-eminent American maestro **Stephen Lord**. Ten performances take place at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on **January 20, 27, February 1, 4, 6, 9, 11, 17, 21, and 23, 2018**.

One of the world’s most popular operas, *Rigoletto*’s subject matter was considered highly controversial at the time of its composition in 1851. Verdi and his librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, faced opposition from state censors for the opera’s depiction of an immoral and abusive nobleman. The COC’s production, set during the height of the Victorian era, unearths that culture of toxic masculinity and permissive patriarchy, in which men possess enormous wealth and influence while keeping women subservient and nearly powerless.

Internationally renowned Canadian designer **Michael Levine** illustrates the wealth, privilege and sensuality of the 19th-century court with luxurious and handsomely designed set and costumes, which earned bursts of applause when the production premiered in 2011. The darkly atmospheric lighting is by **Duane Schuler**.

The star-studded cast is led by commanding English baritone **Roland Wood** in the title role. He brings his “rich and authoritative sound, his jovial tone...hiding a stormier one that comes to the fore with volcanic intensity” (*BroadwayWorld.com*) back to the COC after an acclaimed debut in 2014’s *A Masked Ball*. He is joined by American soprano **Anna Christy**, “nimble of voice, body and spirit” (*New York Times*), as Rigoletto’s doomed daughter, Gilda.

Christy reunites with American tenor **Stephen Costello**, who “has the kind of voice that sets the audience—even at a dress rehearsal—atwitter” (*Wall Street Journal*), after their critically acclaimed performance as the doomed star-crossed lovers in the COC’s 2013 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. **Costello** shares the role of the Duke of Mantua with American tenor **Joshua Guerrero** in his Canadian debut. Praised for his “heroic, beautiful sound” (*Washington Post*), he sings the role on February 11, 17 and 23.

Georgian bass **Goderdzi Janelidze** makes his Canadian debut as the assassin Sparafucile; Canadian mezzo-soprano **Carolyn Sproule** makes her COC debut as Sparafucile’s sister Maddalena; Canadian bass **Robert Pomakov** is Count Monterone; Canadian mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham** is Gilda’s nurse, Giovanna; and Canadian tenor **John Krieter** reprises his role of Borsa from the COC’s 2011 presentation.

Recent graduates and current members of the COC Ensemble Studio round out the cast: bass-baritone **Neil Craighead** and soprano **Lauren Eberwein** are the Count and Countess Ceprano, respectively; baritone **Samuel Chan** is the Usher; and mezzo-soprano **Simone McIntosh** is the Page.

All performances of *Rigoletto* feature the COC Orchestra and Chorus. This is a co-production with English National Opera and was last performed in 2011. Verdi's *Rigoletto* is sung in Italian and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

TICKET INFORMATION

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.

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