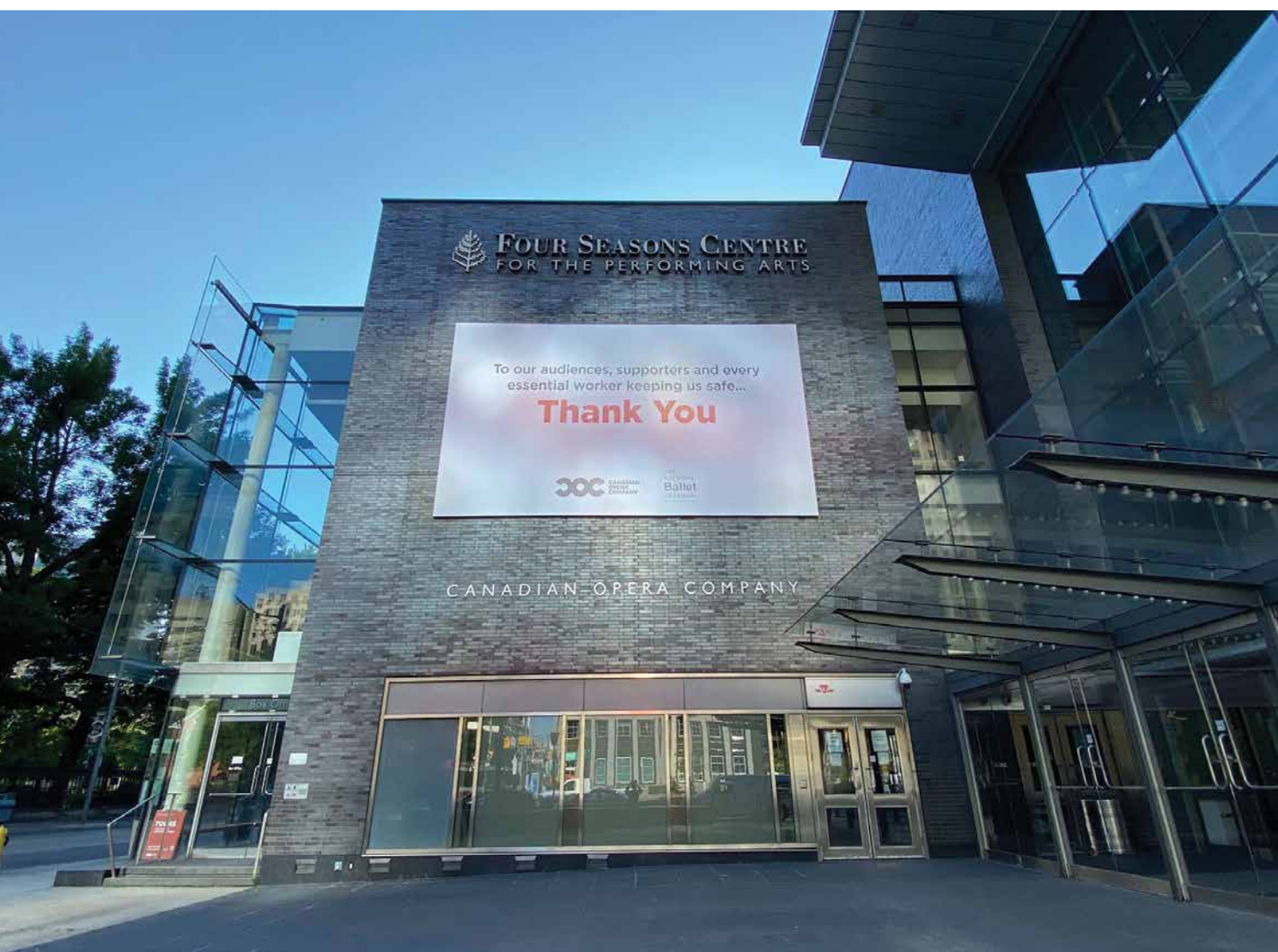


AUDIENCE IMPACT REPORT



SPRING AND SUMMER 2020



THE MUSIC CONTINUES

As you all know, we are in the midst of an incredibly challenging time.

But thanks to the inspiring support of our community, the Canadian Opera Company has been able to respond to the public health and safety demands of this moment with innovative new ways to bring music into patrons' homes, wherever they are in the world.

In this report, you will learn more about what our partners, members, subscribers, donors, and audience members have continued to make possible, from community performances and new concerts created especially for this time, to our first-ever virtual watch party, which proved that we can still experience the joys of opera with our fellow music lovers.

These new programs were each made possible by financial support of our members, donors, subscribers, and partners, and so I would like to extend a special thank you to each of you who have made a gift during this difficult time. We know this global health crisis has had a challenging impact on our audience members, too; we are incredibly grateful for every dollar of support, which we are using to secure a bright future of Canadian opera, in addition to mounting these new online programs.

While this is an often difficult time, we are finding silver linings in the accessibility and artistic intimacy that we can provide through these new digital stages. Many of our online participants are experiencing opera for the very first time through these new programs, concerts, and events — and I would like to thank all of our audience members for helping us welcome new opera lovers into our community.

Given the many successes enclosed in this report, we look forward to continuing to share these kinds of digital initiatives to complement our usual programming, even after we are able to safely return to live performances with in-person audiences.

The world has changed — and thanks to our generous and committed supporters, I know we will be able to continue evolving with it.

Sincerely,

Christie Darville
Deputy General Director
Executive Director, Philanthropy & Audiences





CREATING NEW DIGITAL STAGES

In response to current health and safety demands, the COC has created new ways to connect with our audiences online. This digital programming has reached a global audience, with viewers in more than **50 countries**, and made over **2.5 million impressions** across our platforms.

With the launch of our new **Digital Content Hub** in March, the COC gave patrons an easy destination for these initiatives, including **#OperaAtHome**, which provided a daily dose of opera during those early days of the pandemic through favourite clips from past productions and new, filmed-at-home performances by COC artists.

We also adapted our usual in-person community programming into new, original mini-concerts hosted online, featuring artists from the COC's **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre** and our **Opera for Babies** event series.



In addition to these adaptations of our spring concerts and events, we created innovative new programs designed especially for this moment, which are detailed in the following pages:

- ◆ **Songs of Hope**, an intimate concert of personal favourites from the Ensemble Studio;
- ◆ our first-ever **Virtual Choir**;
- ◆ the interactive educational series, **Opera Makers: Activities for Young Creatives**;
- ◆ and the one-night-only **Hadrian Watch Party**.

In total, over **5,000 hours** of digital programming were viewed between March 27 and June 30.



VOICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

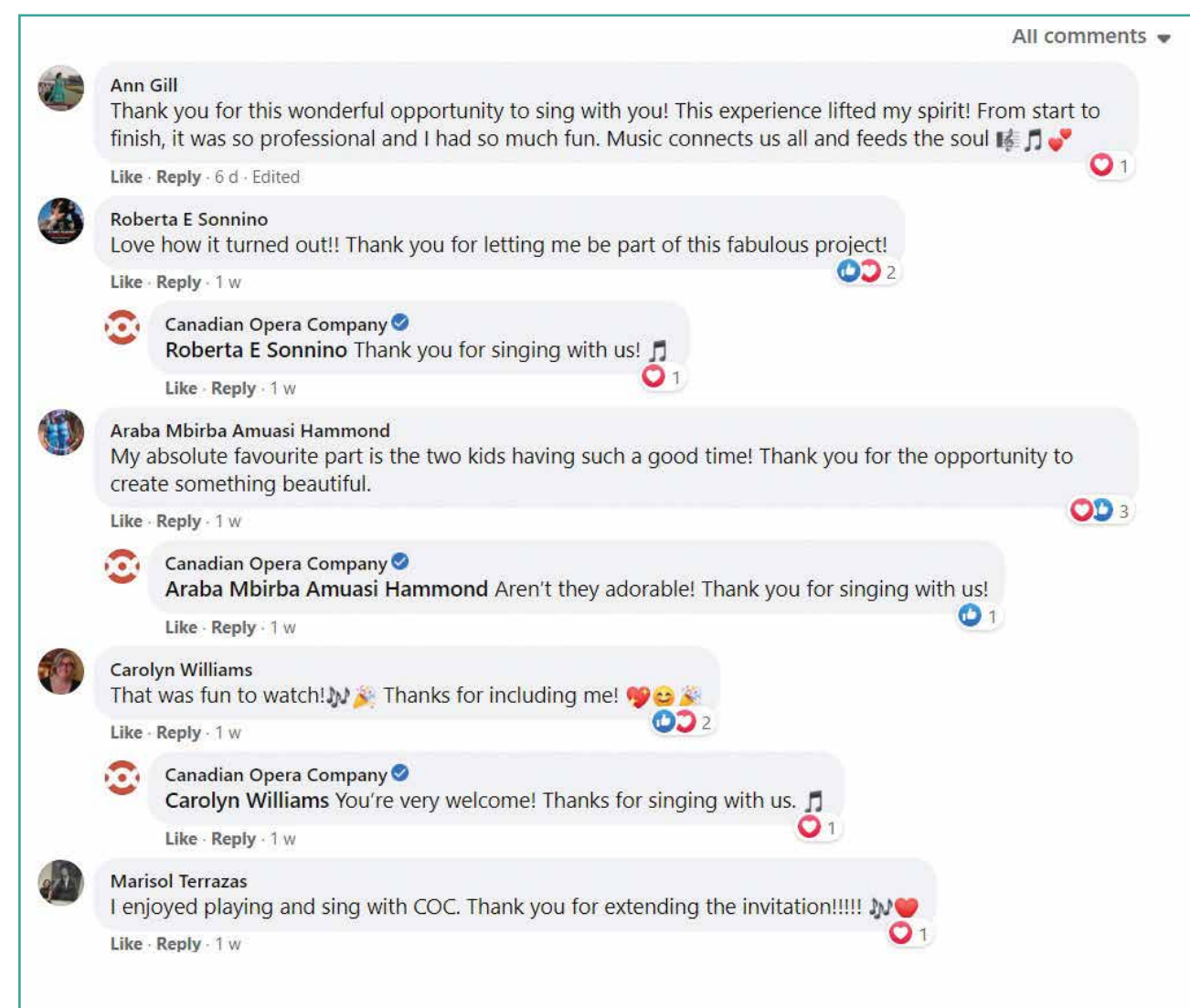
The **COC Virtual Choir** united **215 participants**, of all ages and musical backgrounds, from **22 countries** to sing or play homemade percussion to Verdi's famous "Anvil Chorus" from *Il Trovatore*. Led by

Price Family Chorus Master **Sandra Horst**, participants practiced along with tutorials featuring artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio**, then submitted recordings of their performances to create a truly global choir.

"The COC's Virtual Choir fits into this rising tide as a leading example of how digital platforms can deepen community engagement with performing arts organizations."

— Opera Canada

Watch the Virtual Choir's performance at coc.ca/VirtualChoir.



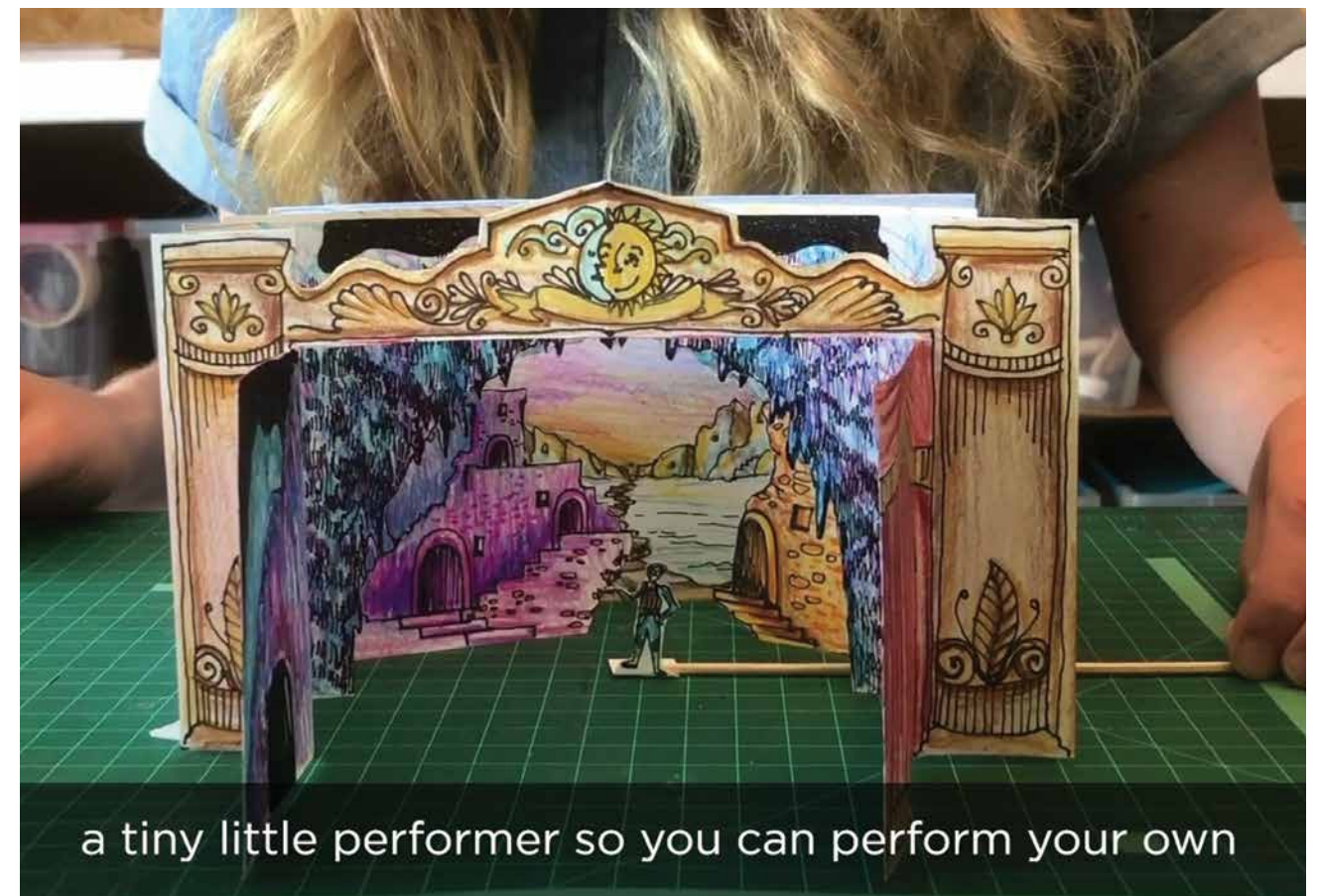
OPERA MAKERS: ACTIVITIES FOR **YOUNG** CREATIVES

Over **2,000** participants learned about our unique art form through **Opera Makers: Activities for Young Creatives**, an eight-week video series of hands-on activities led by experienced COC teaching artists.

Each week, participants learned about a new element of what makes an opera, from singing and movement to composing and set design — and were then invited to try it out themselves through interactive activities.

To bring this educational program to an even wider audience, teaching artists soprano **Makenzie Morgan** and composer **Chris Thornborrow** led two live-streams for the **Toronto Star**, further igniting the opera spark in young people across Toronto.

The full eight-week video series is still available online at coc.ca/OperaMakers.



SONGS OF HOPE: FROM OUR HOMES TO YOURS

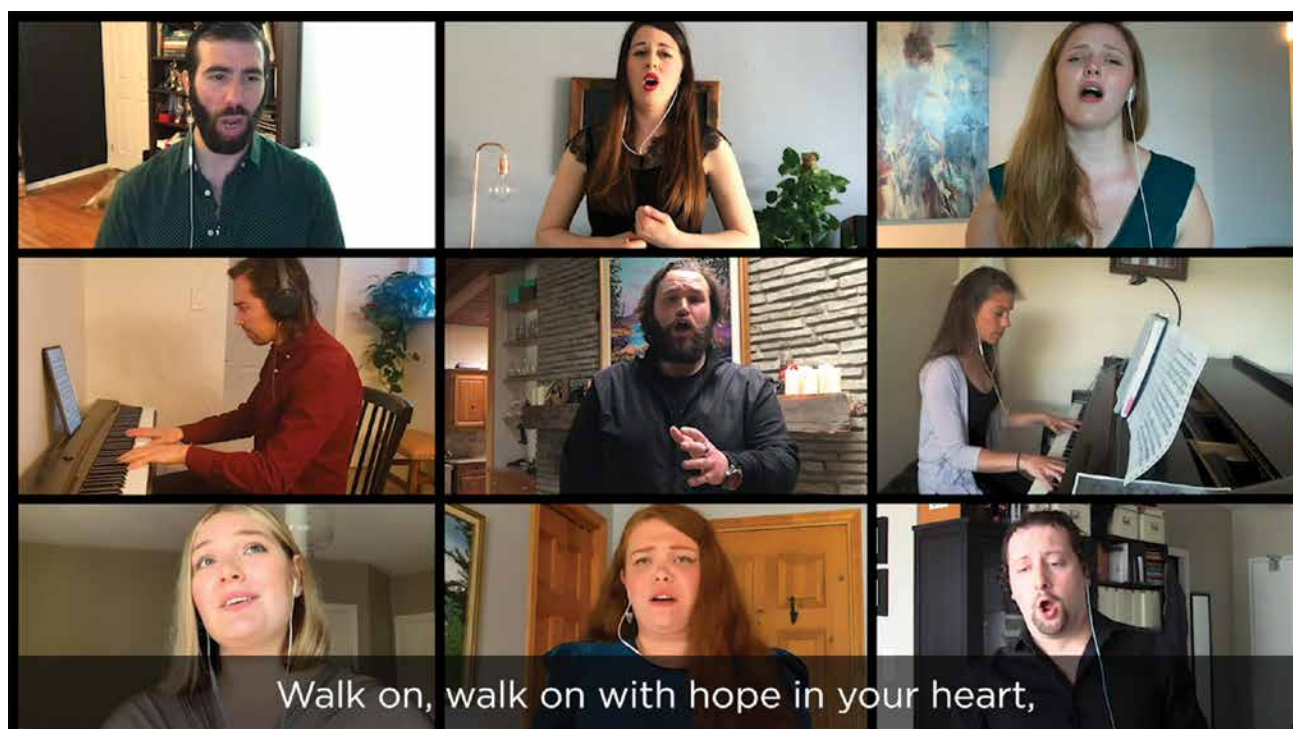
This new concert provided over **4,000 viewers** with a message of hope for brighter times ahead.

The intimate, salon-style concert was hosted by Ensemble graduate **Simone Osborne** and featured an eclectic mix of art song, folk tunes and Broadway favourites that were personally curated and performed by the COC Ensemble Studio's young artists, in their own homes.

In addition to the performances by Ensemble Studio members **Joel Allison, Matthew Cairns, Vartan Gabrielian, Simona Genga, Jamie Groot, Rachael Kerr, Lauren Margison, Anna-Sophie Neher**, and **Alex Soloway**, COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** and Head of the Ensemble Studio **Liz Upchurch** made surprise guest appearances to perform a special piano duet – and Liz's young son Jack even joined in the fun with a percussion accompaniment!

*“The Songs of Hope concert was amazing!
Congratulations to all the very gifted artists
of the Ensemble Studio!”*

– Mary-Jayne VanPypen





HADRIAN WATCH PARTY

In partnership with the Montréal Pride Festival, we hosted a one-night-only streaming event of *Hadrian*. It was the first chance to watch this stunning queer love story in its entirety since its world premiere in 2018.

Nearly **3,000 viewers** from **55 countries around the world** tuned in, many staying up into the small hours of their time zones to enjoy the opera. After the show, **we received over 100 questions** for the live Q&A with composer Rufus Wainwright, librettist Daniel MacIvor and director Peter Hinton.



Social media lit up with more than **1,500 tweets** flooding **#HadrianWatchParty** — and for many, it was their very first opera experience!

Elizabeth Friesen
@emfriesen

Have you ever felt like you were a part of something bigger than yourself? That's what I felt tonight with the @CanadianOpera livestream of #Hadrian. What a magical, transformative experience!
[#HadrianWatchParty](#)

Twin Jade of Lan
@JadeDBirch

This Opera is singlehandedly changing my mind about 2020. What a time to be alive!
[#HadrianWatchParty](#)

8:02 PM · 2020-08-10 · Twitter for Android

Arden Hux
@Arden_Hux

Just watched Hadrian performed by the Canadian Opera Company and WOAH that was an excellent story and performance. I've never watched an opera before, but how could I pass up a beautiful LGBT focused production? Might watch some more opera. It's wild lol
[#HadrianWatchParty](#)

9:31 PM · 2020-08-10 · Twitter for iPhone

COC ACADEMY: A PLATFORM FOR OPERA'S EMERGING ARTISTS

COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE AND DIRECTOR/DRAMATURG-IN-RESIDENCE

Our Composer-in-Residence **Ian Cusson** is currently working on *Fantasma*, a completely new opera specifically designed for young audiences, in collaboration with COC Director/Dramaturg-in-Residence **Julie McIsaac** and librettist **Colleen Murphy**.

Julie also recently led a virtual tour of her hometown, Penetanguishene, as part of Music Monday – The Coalition for Music Education's national celebration of music education.

This past season, Ian also composed a **new aria to redress cultural appropriations in *Louis Riel***, which you can watch online at coc.ca/Hub. Set to librettist **Mavor Moore**'s text, Ian's reimagined aria is a beautiful hybrid piece, informed by the past while simultaneously creating a new future for this important work.



The COC Academy aims to create a vibrant community of Canadian artists and creative professionals through a series of talent development programs, which provide participants with the skills, experiences and resources to thrive in a global opera environment.

These activities have continued throughout our present situation, using digital adaptations and virtual forms of collaboration.

ENSEMBLE STUDIO

The Ensemble Studio is our talent development program for young opera singers and pianists/coaches, providing thousands of hours of training to ensure these incredible Canadian artists are well-prepared for a career in the competitive global opera industry.

To ensure the artists' health and safety without compromising the program's rigour, their coaches worked quickly to update their training to digital methods. For the final months of the 2019/2020 season, the group continued to sing and play together through recordings and met on Zoom for virtual coaching sessions

Every season, the Ensemble Studio performs a celebratory concert to showcase their talents and learnings from the program – and even under our unusual circumstances, this season was no exception, with this year's cohort creating a new ***Songs of Hope*** concert (detailed on page 10 of this report).



UNITING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

For many of our events and digital initiatives, we came together with community partners to keep the spirit of music alive and well during this challenging time for the entire performing arts sector.

MONTRÉAL PRIDE FESTIVAL

In this new partnership, we co-presented our *Hadrian Watch Party* and Live Q&A with composer Rufus Wainwright, librettist Daniel MacIvor, director Peter Hinton, and COC General Director Alexander Neef, hosted by pop culture critic Anthony Oliveira.

AGA KHAN MUSEUM

As part of our online version of our Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, we presented a mini-concert of music from North Africa, featuring the Fethi Nadjem Trio.



THE GLENN GOULD SCHOOL

Artists of the Glenn Gould School piano studio presented a mini-concert of Debussy Preludes for the online version of our Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre.

YEE HONG FOUNDATION

Its *Caring Heroes* online show, which was dedicated to frontline workers and those in care homes, included a performance by Ensemble Studio graduates Simona Genga and Rachael Kerr.



AN INCREDIBLE OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT

When we announced the cancellation of our spring 2020 productions of *Aida* and *The Flying Dutchman*, we were deeply moved by our community's immediate outpouring of support.

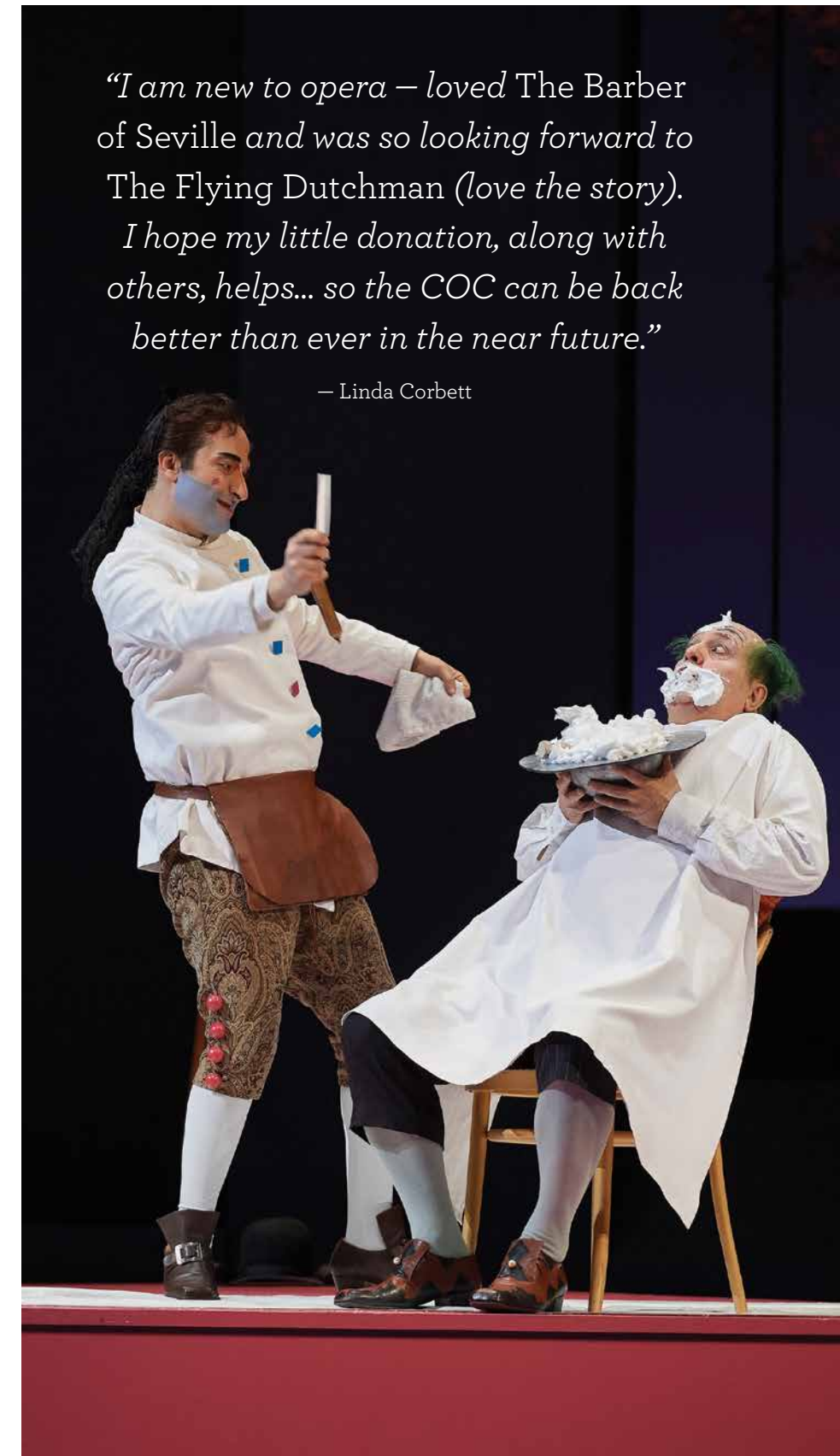
In recognition of the challenges ahead, a generous donor came forward to match every gift we received until June 30, providing the COC with critical funds as we moved forward with new digital content and planning for future performances.

1,196 patrons made a gift to this matching opportunity, with **161** of them donating to the COC for the very first time.

Together, our audience raised **\$329,000** through this opportunity.

"I am new to opera – loved The Barber of Seville and was so looking forward to The Flying Dutchman (love the story). I hope my little donation, along with others, helps... so the COC can be back better than ever in the near future."

— Linda Corbett



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR COC MEMBERS

The philanthropic leadership of our members has been foundational to all of the new programming and initiatives detailed in this report.

Their passion and commitment to this art form has allowed us to nurture a diverse and growing audience, even as our physical stage has been dark.

From everyone at the Canadian Opera company: thank you all for continuing to give as a COC member.



“This is a token of our appreciation for what the COC means to our family.”

— Albert Nocera., Friends of the COC Member



SUPPORT A BRIGHT FUTURE OF CANADIAN-LED OPERA

Whether a performance is live at our opera house or on one of our digital stages, it has the power to connect us.

Thank you for sharing our belief that art has a key role to play in getting us through this challenging time.

Every gift to the COC helps secure opera's future as we draw in new audiences with innovative and accessible digital programs, create new artistic collaborations across our cultural field, and provide world-class training to emerging artists and creators in our communities.

To ensure you receive the latest news regarding our digital programming events, sign up for our monthly *eOpera* newsletter at coc.ca/eOpera.

To make a gift today in support of our digital evolution, please visit coc.ca/Donate.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

LIFE TRUSTEES COUNCIL

The Life Trustees Council salutes the leaders of the COC community whose efforts have been integral to the company's artistic evolution and transformative history of accomplishment.

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EMERITUS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The COC Emeritus Council, led by the Executive Committee, salutes those Board Members who have completed their term and whose leadership efforts have been integral to the company's artistic evolution and transformative history of accomplishment.

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Catherine Fauquier
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The COC offers its sincere thanks to the individuals listed below for their extraordinary support.

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Building a community of world-class artists, both established and emerging.

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Peter & Hélène Hunt
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COC ACADEMY SUPPORTERS

Encouraging the next generation of artists and celebrating Canada's wealth of talent.

\$1,000,000

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Providing general program support is critical to the COC's artistic mission.

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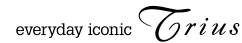
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PHOTO & IMAGE CREDITS: FRONT COVER: Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 2020, photo: COC. PAGE 2: Josef Wagner as Figaro and Jane Archibald as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* (COC, 2016), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 3: Christie Darville, photo: COC. PAGE 4: Joyce El-Khoury as Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* (COC, 2018), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 5 (clockwise from top left): Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst conducting and Ensemble alumna Hyejin Kwon at the piano during a COC Chorus Sing-a-Long (2017), photo: Gaetz Photography; Sayr Ensemble in the Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre (2020), photo: Karen E. Reeves; Ensemble tenor Matthew Cairns at the Free Concert Series (2019), photo: Chris Hutcheson; Thompson Egbo-Egbo in the Free Concert Series (2019), photo: Karen E. Reeves; Opera for Babies (2019), photo: COC. PAGES 6/7: screen captures from the *COC Virtual Choir* video (2020). PAGE 8 (bottom, left to right): Opera for Babies (2019), photo: COC; Opera for Toronto: *La Bohème* (2019), photo: Gaetz Photography. PAGE 9: Screen captures from COC *Opera Makers* video series. PAGES 10/11 (bottom): screen captures from the COC *Songs of Hope* video. PAGE 11 (top): The 2019/2020 Ensemble Studio, photo: Gaetz Photography; (bottom): screen capture of Ensemble alumna soprano Simone Osborne, host of *Songs of Hope* video. PAGES 12/13: The world premiere production of *Hadrian* (COC, 2018) with (page 12) Ambur Braid and Thomas Hampson, and (page 13) Thomas Hampson and Isaiah Bell, photos: Michael Cooper. PAGE 14 (top): Ian Cusson at a COC members' Spotlight Series event (2019), photo: Gaetz Photography; (bottom): Julie McIsaac in a screen capture of the COC's *Music Monday* video (2020). PAGE 15 (top): Ensemble Studio Competition First Prize and Audience Choice Award winner soprano Midori Marsh at the COC's 2019 Ensemble Studio Competition, photo: Michael Cooper; (bottom): screen captures of (l-r) Ensemble artists, pianist/intern coach Alex Soloway, bass-baritone Joel Allison and mezzo-soprano Simona Genga from the *At Home with the COC Ensemble Studio* video. PAGE 16 (clockwise from top left): COC at *Pride* (2019), photo: COC; Opera for Toronto: *La Bohème* (2019), photo: Gaetz Photography; screen capture of COC Ensemble artists mezzo-soprano Simona Genga and pianist/intern coach Rachael Kerr in Yee Hong Foundation's *Caring Heroes* online show (2020): Young artists and friends at the *Così fan tutte* Working Rehearsal Dinner (2019), photo: Gaetz Photography. PAGE 17: Vito Priante as Figaro and Renato Girolami as Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* (COC, 2020), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 18: COC members' Spotlight Series event (2019), photo: Gaetz Photography. PAGE 19: Russell Thomas as Don José and Anita Rachvelishvili as Carmen in *Carmen* (COC, 2016), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 20: Jane Archibald as Semele (foreground) and William Burden as Jupiter (background) in *Semele* (COC, 2012), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 22: 2019 Centre Stage Gala, photo: Gaetz Photography. PAGE 24: Russell Braun (centre) as Jaufré in *Love from Afar* (COC, 2012), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 30: Christine Goerke as Elektra and Wilhelm Schwinghammer as Orest in *Elektra* (COC, 2019), photo: Michael Cooper. PAGE 31: Ambur Braid (centre) as Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (COC, 2017), photo: Chris Hutcheson. BACK COVER: Sondra Radvanovsky as Norma in *Norma* (COC 2018), photo: Michael Cooper.