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COC GENERAL DIRECTOR RESPONDS TO MEDIA REPORTS OF AN EARLY DEPARTURE FOR PARIS

Toronto – In response to recent media speculation out of France that **COC General Director Alexander Neef** plans on exiting his role with the **Canadian Opera Company** ahead of July 2021, **Neef** confirms that no decision has been made on accelerating a departure date.

In July 2019, **Neef** was appointed the next General Director of **Opéra national de Paris**, with plans for him to succeed current head, Stéphane Lissner, after the close of the COC's 2020/2021 season. Yesterday, France's Ministry of Culture confirmed that Lissner is departing the historic opera house a full seven months ahead of schedule, vacating his post following December 31, 2020. An article from *Le Monde* further speculated that **Neef** could now start his Paris appointment as early as January 2021.

"I certainly did not anticipate Lissner's early departure," says **Neef**. "I have not yet had any formal discussions – either with the Paris Opera or members of our Board of Directors – about accelerating the start of my engagement in Paris. Moreover, the ongoing global health crisis makes it difficult to envision how any significant changes to the intended timeline could be accommodated."

"The COC continues to navigate an extraordinarily challenging time for the performing arts industry and that is where my focus is centred right now," adds **Neef**. "I remain committed to our company and the work before us."

Alexander Neef took over as General Director for the **Canadian Opera Company** in 2008. Over the course of his tenure, he has transformed the COC into one of the most significant opera producers in the world. Most recently, in the wake of COVID-19, **Neef** has spearheaded the launch of a number of digital programs and initiatives, housed on the company's Digital Content Hub, as way of bridging audience members and the art form, at a time of physical distancing around the world.

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 including a dedicated base of subscribers. Under its leadership team of General Director Alexander Neef and Music Director Johannes Debus, the company has an international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation. Its diverse repertoire includes new commissions and productions, local and international collaborations with leading opera companies and festivals, and attracts the world's foremost Canadian and international artists. The COC Academy is an incubator for the future of the art form, nurturing Canada's new wave of opera creators with customized training and support. 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. For more information, visit coc.ca.

- 30 -

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