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CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S NEW *HANSEL & GRETEL* IS AN IMAGINATION-FUELLED ADVENTURE THROUGH TORONTO

Toronto – Everyday magic comes alive in a new production that transplants Hansel and Gretel's adventures from a wooded forest setting to modern-day Toronto. As the siblings make their way through a contemporary high-rise neighbourhood in search of food, they must rely on their wits – and each other – to outsmart danger along the way. All throughout, cutting-edge stage technology paints a picture of the characters' vivid imaginations, creating a theatrical experience unlike any other. *Hansel & Gretel* runs for seven performances at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** on **February 6, 8, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 2020**.

Joel Ivany, award-winning Canadian stage director and artistic director of Against the Grain Theatre, brings his inventive theatrical vision to this beloved classic. **Ivany's** boundary-pushing work has been credited with "chang[ing] the opera game" (*National Post*) and, together with **Katherine Syer** as dramaturg, the pair have created something entirely unique for the COC stage. In this *Hansel & Gretel*, relatable fears, such as income inequality and environmental sustainability, weigh heavy on the children's minds, along with the fantastical threat of witches in wait. **COC Director/Dramaturg-in-Residence Julie McIsaac** joins the team as Assistant Director and **S. Katy Tucker** has dreamed up sets and specialized projections that weave storybook elements into modern day landscapes. Toronto-based **Ming Wong** is behind the production's costumes and lighting has been designed by **JAX Messenger**, who last joined the COC for the world premiere presentation of *Pyramus and Thisbe* in 2015.

American mezzo-soprano **Emily Fons** has been called one of opera's rising stars by *Opera News* and sings the role of Hansel. She is joined by a strong Canadian cast that includes three established **COC Ensemble Studio** graduates: soprano **Simone Osborne** is Gretel, mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó** is the children's mother, Gertrude, and tenor **Michael Colvin** is the diabolical witch, in a role debut. Seasoned Canadian baritone **Russell Braun** lends his "tremendous voice" (*Toronto Star*) to the role of the children's father, Peter, and current **Ensemble Studio** soprano **Anna-Sophie Neher** sings the role of the Dew Fairy/Sandman.

COC Music Director **Johannes Debus** conducts the **COC Orchestra** through Humperdinck's beautiful interpretation of the Grimm story, alongside the **Canadian Children's Opera Company** singing the children's chorus.

Hansel & Gretel is sung in German and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

Hansel & Gretel is presented in partnership with the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

Cast and Creative Team

Hansel	Emily Fons
Gretel	Simone Osborne
Peter	Russell Braun
Gertrude	Krisztina Szabó
The Witch	Michael Colvin
Dew Fairy / Sandman	Anna-Sophie Neher
Conductor	Johannes Debus

Director	Joel Ivany
Assistant Director	Julie McIsaac
Set & Projection Designer	S. Katy Tucker
Costume Designer	Ming Wong
Lighting Designer	JAX Messenger
Dramaturg	Katherine Syer

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *Hansel & Gretel* range from **\$35 – \$250** with Grand Ring seats available at **\$290** and **\$350**. Tickets are on sale now, 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.). **\$22** tickets are available for **guests between the ages of 16 and 29** through the COC's **Opera Under 30 program** and other specially priced tickets are available to **young people under the age of 15**. For more information on booking **student groups, standing room, and rush tickets**, please visit coc.ca.

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 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.

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