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ALEXANDER NEEF TO BEGIN AS HEAD OF OPÉRA NATIONAL DE PARIS IN SEPTEMBER 2020

Neef will also continue as General Director of the Canadian Opera Company

Toronto – The Canadian Opera Company announced today that **General Director Alexander Neef** will begin his new role as head of Opéra national de Paris, effective September 2020, while maintaining his responsibilities as COC General Director until a new COC leader is named and transitions into the role.

Earlier this summer, it was announced that Stéphane Lissner would depart as head of Opéra national de Paris by end-of-year. In light of this development, France’s Minister of Culture **Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin** made a formal request to the COC Board of Directors to allow **Neef** to accelerate his Paris start date, effectively bridging his tenure with both organizations.

“The COC Board of Directors has agreed to the Minister’s request for an earlier start in Paris for Alexander,” says **COC Board Chair Jonathan Morgan**. “We believe he can ably lead both companies in this dual capacity, particularly given the current suspension of fully staged opera in Toronto due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. In addition to over a decade of inspired leadership, Alexander has recently helped guide the COC through one of the most challenging periods in the company’s history. We are deeply appreciative of his unwavering dedication to the COC and are confident he will excel in leading both companies forward until his successor is fully on board.”

Neef will relocate to Paris as he takes on cross-continental responsibilities. “Being able to minimize air travel remains the safest course of action for my family right now,” **Neef** says. “This year’s pandemic has asked so many of us to adjust to unexpected shifts in circumstance and I am grateful for the complete support of the COC Board in arriving at this solution.”

“I’m incredibly proud of the work the COC has put into our most recent digital initiatives,” continues **Neef**. “The immense success of our Virtual Choir, *Songs of Hope* concert, Opera Makers series for youth, and, most recently, our lively *Hadrian* Watch Party speaks to the passion and innovation of our team and I look forward to sharing the details of our digital fall season very soon. I am also looking forward to getting to know my Paris colleagues, as their musical programming begins in less than a month. At a time when there are countless obstacles to the creation and sharing of opera, I am heartened to see our art form persist, and find new audiences, across the globe through innovation and adaptation.”

“The search for the COC’s next general director continues on schedule and we are encouraged by the experience and talent of the excellent candidates we are considering,” says **Colleen Sexsmith, Chair of the COC Succession Committee**. “With Alexander retaining his current role at the COC and with the support of the company’s experienced management team, the Succession Committee is able to confidently focus on securing the best possible candidate for his replacement.”

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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