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## **AMPLIFIED OPERA NAMED DISRUPTOR-IN-RESIDENCE AT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY**

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company** welcomes Toronto-based **Amplified Opera** to the **COC Academy** as part of the company's newly developed **Disruptor-in-Residence** program. The two-year residency will offer resources and support to the emerging opera company during the critical transition period from start-up to established organization, as well as share valuable learnings about digital content creation in the current cultural climate. The artistic collaboration aims to support increased equity, diversity, and inclusivity within the arts through workshops and training for fellow artists and activities that foster greater community engagement.

"The idea for this program evolved organically from the COC's Company-in-Residence," says **COC Deputy General Director Christie Darville**. "We are proud to support emerging opera creators through our COC Academy. As a national performing arts organization, it is our responsibility to boost the voices of those that regularly challenge artistic norms, practices — and us. In naming Amplified Opera our Disruptor-in-Residence, we are committed to supporting the work to make opera more relevant and resonant than ever."

**Amplified Opera** is co-founded by Canadian performing artists **Teiya Kasahara** 笠原 貞野 (they/them), **Marion Newman** (she/her), **Asitha Tennekoon** (he/him), and Canadian stage director **Aria Umezawa** (she/her). The company launched publicly in the fall of 2019 with *AMPLIFY*, a series of concert recitals and panels that explored stories of blindness and vision loss; gender expectations in opera; and differences in Black identity across the US-Canadian border. One of the featured recitals, *The Queen In Me*, was created by **Kasahara** and welcomed by critics and audiences alike for its candid exploration of conventional opera roles and their reliance on gender and sex stereotypes. The opera-inspired solo piece is being further developed through **Amplified Opera**, **Nightwood Theatre**, and **Theatre Gargantua**, with plans for a Toronto premiere to be announced soon.

"Amplified Opera places artists at the centre of public discourse," say **Amplified Opera's** co-founders. "We are pushing to decolonize how we create and share opera by welcoming and including the voices of creators and opera fans in all aspects of the performance. We look forward to this unique residency with the Canadian Opera Company which will allow us to work together in a way that is slow and deliberate. By building a foundation of trust, we will navigate the difficult and challenging conversations that are integral to interrupting the status quo and forging new, generative paths forward."

"Through our early – and enthusiastic – conversations with Amplified Opera, it was clear that the name for this residency needed to reflect the very mutual partnership we hope to achieve through this collaboration," says **Nina Draganić, Director of the COC Academy**. "In less than two years, the team at Amplified Opera has already carved a name for themselves as creators with a bold artistic vision and understanding of opera as a means for social change. Their work invites important conversations about representation and inclusivity, within the industry and beyond, and we are just as keen to learn from them as our Disruptor-in-Residence as we are to lend guidance and mentorship in their path forward."

Members of **Amplified Opera** will take a lead role in hosting **COC in Conversation: Gender and Opera** on **March 5, 2021**. The digital roundtable and live Q&A focuses on the confluence of gender, music, and

drama. Online audiences can submit questions in real-time to panellists who regularly confront the question of how gender constructs affect those working in opera, the art form itself, and beyond: **Amplified Opera** co-founders **Teiya Kasahara**, **Marion Newman** and **Asitha Tennekoon**; **COC Ensemble Studio** baritone **Jonah Spungin**; performer, creator and transgender advocate **Avery Jean Brennan**; and actor/singer **Jonathan Christopher**. The virtual event will be moderated by **Aria Umezawa** and full details are available at [coc.ca/GenderAndOpera](http://coc.ca/GenderAndOpera).

More information on all the **Canadian Opera Company's** artistic residencies can be found at [coc.ca/Academy](http://coc.ca/Academy).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABOUT AMPLIFIED OPERA**

Amplified Opera is a new collective based in Toronto that aims to make the case for opera's continued existence and relevance within the modern world. Officially launched in 2019, the company's core values are rooted in 'five Cs' that govern its mission and artistic practices: conversation, community, creativity, curiosity, and compassion. Amplified Opera is dedicated to rethinking common creative practices in the art form, deepening opera's relationships with its communities, and forging meaningful paths forward for the entire performing arts sector. The company is passionate about commissioning new works, as well as reframing older opera, and championing diverse perspectives as the necessary building blocks for a sustainable, and more inclusive, art form. Amplified Opera was co-founded by Aria Umezawa, Asitha Tennekoon, Marion Newman, and Teiya Kasahara. For more information, visit [amplifiedopera.com](http://amplifiedopera.com).

## **ABOUT THE COC ACADEMY**

The COC Academy is focused on building a vibrant community of Canadian artists and creative professionals through a series of early career development programs, which provide participants with the skills, experiences and resources to thrive in a global opera environment. Current residencies include the COC Ensemble Studio, a rigorous training program for singers and pianists/coaches, and the COC Composer-in-Residence. The COC Academy is open to exploring residencies in any field relating to opera and welcome proposals from all emerging creators including, but not limited to, composers, librettists, directors, dramaturgs, independent opera companies and artists collectives, performers, artisans, and administrators.

## **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](http://coc.ca).

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