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## **CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY CONNECTS ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES THROUGH FREE, DIGITAL PROGRAMMING**

### **Purpose-produced fall lineup features monthly offerings recorded at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, including new production of *Gianni Schicchi***

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** is reuniting artists and audiences with an exciting, performance-packed fall for **2021/2022: A Season Like No Other**. Regular monthly offerings combine opera classics, renowned and emerging voices, as well as new commissions and innovative community collaborations that will be available for six months from the date of each premiere. In a company first, programming can be accessed from coast to coast to coast – and beyond – through the launch of a major digital streaming initiative and new, free digital membership.

“Getting singers, instrumentalists, craftspeople, technicians, and creative teams back into the opera house and creating new work is a major milestone,” says **COC General Director Perryn Leech**. “This is an important first step in paving the way toward the next stage in the recovery and return of live opera: welcoming our audiences back into the opera house as soon as it is safe to do so.”

“Being able to perform again from our stage is a wonderful moment of celebration and we’re thrilled to be able to share that with as many people as possible through digital streaming and our exciting new membership program,” continues **Leech**. “We want to make it easier than ever to sample what we do for the first time or go back and rediscover something new in a favourite piece of music.”

### **INTRODUCING THE COC DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP**

The COC’s new digital membership is an all-access pass to the company’s fall programming with year-round membership perks that include:

- New digital programming released every month at [coc.ca/watch](https://coc.ca/watch)
- Insights and backstage stories from this season’s artists and creators
- Priority ticket access to COC’s in-person performances and events, when these resume

Current COC supporters and subscribers will automatically have the membership applied to their accounts, in addition to their existing benefits. New members can sign up now at [coc.ca/stream](https://coc.ca/stream).

### **2021 FALL PROGRAMMING**

The curtain rises on the magnificent **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** on **September 25, 2021** with ***In Concert: Russell Braun and Tamara Wilson with the COC Orchestra***. The evening features one of Canada’s best-loved opera stars, baritone **Russell Braun** alongside internationally acclaimed American soprano **Tamara Wilson**. The two are reunited with **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** and the **COC Orchestra** in a lovingly curated program of iconic arias and orchestral pieces from Verdi, Bizet, Wagner, and Puccini, among others. The concert will also feature **Wilson**’s first public performance of the “Liebestod,” the climactic finale of Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

On **October 30, 2021**, the COC presents Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, in a new production directed by **Amy Lane** with music led by Italian conductor **Jader Bignamini** with the **COC Orchestra**. In this lighthearted and brilliantly paced comedy, a Florentine family mourns the death of patriarch Buoso Donati - but the tears are all for show until they learn they've been cut from the will. British baritone **Roland Wood** takes on the role of schemer Gianni Schicchi, and rising South Korean soprano **Hera Hyesang Park** makes her COC debut as Lauretta, performing one of Puccini's most recognizable, show-stopping arias, "O mio babbino caro." The strong Canadian cast includes: mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham**, bass-baritone **Thomas Goerz**, tenor **Andrew Haji**, and tenor **David Curry**, among many others.

On **November 13, 2021**, the COC presents contemporary Afro-Cuban roots and jazz group, **OKAN** in selections from their latest JUNO Award-winning album, *Espiral*. Taking their name from the word for "heart" in the Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria, this women-led ensemble performs songs about immigration, courage, and love. *Espiral* delves deeper into the group's rich Cuban roots while also drawing upon the multicultural mosaic of Toronto, which principal members **Elizabeth Rodriguez** and **Magdelys Savigne** now call home. The concert is a celebration of the larger scope of vibrant and diverse programming typically showcased in the COC's beloved **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Presented by TD Bank Group**.

As the year draws to a close, the COC partners with **Against the Grain Theatre** for Mozart's *Requiem* on **November 27, 2021**. Following the profound impact of COVID-19, this multidisciplinary presentation of Mozart's astonishingly moving work offers a powerful moment of healing and renewal. Incorporating interviews with front-line workers and community members directly affected by the pandemic, this interpretation connects individual stories of loss and resilience to the sonic world of Mozart's heartbreakingly beautiful piece. The concert features Kwagiulth and Stó:lo First Nations mezzo-soprano **Marion Newman**, as well as current and graduate artists from the COC's **Ensemble Studio**, showcasing the next generation of local opera talent. **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** leads the **COC Orchestra**, and **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus** in this stirring ensemble performance.

Finally, the COC marks the change in seasons with *In Winter* on **December 18, 2021**. The concert features the world premiere of a new commission by Métis and French-Canadian composer **Ian Cusson** and the company's full artistic ensemble will be on display for this winter celebration. *In Winter* merges instantly recognizable pieces, such as Vivaldi's exhilarating "Winter" section from his famous *Four Seasons* with classic songbook selections like "Deck the Halls." Cusson's "In Winter" is a meditative piece for chorus and orchestra that sets text by Métis writer Katherena Vermette to original music, and featured performers include: Métis soprano **Melody Courage** in a COC debut, the **COC Orchestra** under **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**, the **COC Chorus** led by **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst**, as well as artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio**.

Throughout the fall, the COC presents the *Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre: City Sessions, Presented by TD Bank Group*. These short, digital performances continue the spirit of the company's popular and long-standing concert series; recordings will take place in the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room at the Four Seasons Centre, the iconic, glass-enclosed space connecting the building to its surroundings and community. *City Sessions* support Toronto's cultural ecosystem with much-needed performance opportunities and provide a globally inspired, locally focused array of artists with a platform to share music and stories that resonate with them. All performances will be available on the COC's social channels, beginning in October.

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For further cast and creative team information, please visit [coc.ca/2122](http://coc.ca/2122).

All repertoire, dates, productions, and casting are subject to change without notice.

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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. General Director Perryn Leech joined the company in 2021, forming a leadership team with Music Director Johannes Debus and Deputy General Director Christie Darville. The COC enjoys a loyal audience, including a dedicated base of subscribers, and 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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