

For immediate release: May 2, 2022

***THE QUEEN IN ME* RECLAIMS SPACE ON STAGE, IMAGINES NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THE ART OF OPERA**

Boundary-pushing co-production unites the Canadian Opera Company, Amplified Opera, Nightwood Theatre, and Theatre Gargantua

Toronto - Combining comedy, opera, and plenty of drama, *The Queen In Me* explores the many ways that race, gender, and sexuality are represented, and often policed, in the opera industry. The co-production from the **Canadian Opera Company, Amplified Opera, Nightwood Theatre, and Theatre Gargantua** was created by and stars interdisciplinary artist **Teiya Kasahara 笠原貞野**. The production will be featured as a **Major Cultural Event** as part of **Toronto Pride 2022**; events produced for this program will be showcased by Pride Toronto, strengthening each participating cultural organization's support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community while diversifying the array of events available to the community through the month of June. *The Queen In Me* runs for three performances on **June 2, 3, and 4, 2022** at the **Canadian Opera Company Theatre** at 227 Front St. E.

The Queen In Me is framed through the lens of *The Magic Flute's* iconic Queen of the Night. In musing what else this character could be if only released from expectations and stereotype, the show reclaims space for the multitudes of women, trans, and non-binary individuals excluded from the stage, and dares to imagine new narrative possibilities for the art form.

Teiya Kasahara is a queer, trans non-binary, multi-and- interdisciplinary creator-performer based in Tkarón:to (Toronto). Their background includes over a decade of singing both traditional and contemporary operatic roles across North America and Europe. They are also a co-founding member of **Amplified Opera**, an organization that aims to bring performers from equity-seeking groups to more opera stages, which was named **COC's Disruptor-in-Residence** in January 2021.

"I was always taught to go deep into every character I was playing, to bring as much dimensionality to those characters on the stage," says **Kasahara**. "But it always felt like, despite her power, the Queen of the Night was given so little room to grow. And so I started to dream: who *is* this character and what might she be saying off-stage? *The Queen In Me* is a place where the Queen can finally speak for the first time—and speak up not only for herself, but for characters in the canon, and various performers in this industry who may also feel like they are othered."

Co-directing on this production are Canadian Dora-Award-winning director and dramaturg **Andrea Donaldson** and Canadian stage director and producer **Aria Umezawa**. **Donaldson** is the Artistic Director of **Nightwood Theatre** with extensive experience directing productions all across the country. **Umezawa** is a co-founder of **Amplified Opera** whose work is focused on changing the culture of opera and opera creation.

The creative team for *The Queen In Me* features some of Toronto's most acclaimed local creators. Designer **Joanna Yu** is behind the production's imaginative stage and costume design, spotlighting **Kasahara** underneath their own proscenium, and placing them in a spectacularly draped 10-foot gown with accompanying headpiece. Lighting designer **André du Toit** brings drama and flair, alongside projections designed by **Laura Warren**.

The Queen In Me features a range of dramatic arias from some of the world’s most well-known and well-loved operas, accompanied by musicians of the **COC Orchestra**: Puccini’s *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Manon Lescaut*; Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Verdi’s *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto*; R. Strauss’ *Salome*, and Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*.

For **Kasahara**, the production is an important part of a larger healing journey—with the art form and with the industry. “This piece has allowed me to grow as a human and as an artist,” they say. “I’m really proud of the honesty that lies at the root of it all, and that can be a hard thing to do as a performer. I hope that people leave this show feeling challenged and feeling that their perspective on opera, and opera singers, can grow and expand, just as our perspectives of ourselves, within the industry, can—and should—evolve, too.”

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets for *The Queen In Me* are **\$65** for adults and **\$35 for Opera Under 30 tickets**. Tickets can be purchased online at coc.ca or by calling the **Canadian Opera Company Box Office** at **416-363-8231**. For more information on booking **student groups**, **Arts Worker** pricing, as well as other specially priced tickets available to **young people under the age of 15**, please visit coc.ca.

A SAFE RETURN

The Canadian Opera Company Theatre operates under strict adherence to Ontario Public Health guidelines that include rules regarding mask use, venue capacity, and the implementation of physical barriers where necessary. For the most up-to-date information regarding current health and safety protocols, please visit coc.ca/SafeReturn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COC Season Sponsor: BMO Financial Group

***The Queen In Me* is co-presented by:**

Canadian Opera Company
Amplified Opera
Nightwood Theatre
Theatre Gargantua

***The Queen In Me* is supported by:**

Canada Council for the Arts
Ontario Arts Council
Toronto Arts Council

***The Queen In Me* is underwritten in part by:**

The Wuchien Michael Than Foundation

Major Cultural Event 2022: Toronto Pride

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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 company is an incubator for the future of the art form, nurturing Canada's new wave of opera performers and creators with customized training and support. The COC's purpose-built opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, is hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. For more information, visit coc.ca.

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.

ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE

As Canada's foremost feminist theatre, **Nightwood Theatre** is driven by artistic excellence, advocacy, and the successful training and development of artists that self-identify as having lived experience touched by womanhood – this includes but is not limited to trans, cis, Two-Spirit and non-binary folks. Founded in 1979, Nightwood Theatre has created and produced award-winning plays, which have won Dora Mavor Moore, Chalmers, Trillium and Governor General's awards. To learn more about Nightwood Theatre, please visit nightwoodtheatre.net.

ABOUT THEATRE GARGANTUA

Theatre Gargantua is one of Canada's leading multi-disciplinary theatre companies. Under the direction of founding Artistic Director Jacquie P.A. Thomas, the company has been devising dynamic physical theatre for 30 years. Gargantua is committed to the creation of original, compelling, relevant work that engages multiple senses, and we strive to inspire and challenge our audience to see their world in new ways. Our productions explore socially relevant themes through bold theatricality that expertly blends provocative text, dynamic choreography, live vocal compositions, and media into our signature style. Our work, developed in a unique two-year cycle, has given Gargantua a distinct place within Canada's theatre ecology, and has garnered dozens of nominations, awards & recognitions for our outstanding work, which has toured nationally and internationally. To learn more about Theatre Gargantua, please visit theatregargantua.ca

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