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LUCA PISARONI, ENSEMBLE STUDIO AND MORE ARTISTS HEADLINE COC'S FREE CONCERT SERIES RETURN TO LIVE PERFORMANCES IN 2022/2023

**“An example to the world of the very best kind of sharing between the arts
and its surrounding community.” – *Toronto Star***

Toronto – The Canadian Opera Company’s **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre**, returns to live performances for the first time in three seasons on **September 20, 2022**. The company’s 15th season as Toronto’s go-to venue for diverse cultural programming features 70 concerts, from September to June, that showcase global and local artists across a variety of genres and disciplines.

“The Free Concert Series has become a destination for people to come together, enjoy and reflect on human experiences shared through music and dance,” says **Meaghan Froh Metcalf**, in her first season as **Free Concert Series Manager**. “Following more than two years of lockdowns and social distancing, we believe that audience members will be eager to engage with stories that reflect the various communities that comprise this great city.”

22/23 Season Highlights

Notable artists and organizations appearing in the Free Concert Series for the first time include:

- Critically acclaimed Italian bass-baritone **Luca Pisaroni** (Figaro in the COC’s upcoming production of *The Marriage of Figaro*) will delight audiences with an afternoon of sweet and melancholy melodies, including works by Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Gounod, and Saint-Saëns
- Renowned British baritone **Roland Wood** (Scarpia in the COC’s upcoming production of *Tosca*) demonstrates to audiences the professional life-cycle of a baritone
- Acclaimed Canadian mezzo-soprano **Carolyn Sproule** (The Page in the COC’s upcoming production of Richard Strauss’ *Salome*) in a vocal showcase of expressive mezzo-soprano pieces
- Turkish bass and frequent COC artist **Önay Köse** (Banquo in the COC’s upcoming production of *Macbeth*) demonstrates his voice’s emotional range through a series of works by Brahms, Ibert, Wolf, and Rubinstein
- The **LARK Ensemble**—comprised of members of the COC Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and National Ballet of Canada Orchestra—performing Bach’s masterpiece, *The Musical Offering*
- Critically acclaimed pianist **Ishay Shaer**, in a recital spotlighting Chopin, including preludes from his Opus 28, and works that he inspired by Rachmaninoff and Scriabin
- JUNO-winning ensemble **Duo Concertante** in a performance featuring Dawn Avery’s *Iotsistokwaron:ion* (The Stars) and former COC Composer-in-Residence Ian Cusson’s *Garden of Earthly Delights*
- Winner of the 2021 American Prize in Instrumental Performance and American cellist **Anita Graef** performing works by Joseph Dall’Abaco, Gaspar Cassadó, and J.S. Bach

- **Indigenous Enterprise**, a new dance collective featuring champion dancers and singers from many tribes and nations across Canada and the U.S., perform an eclectic and exciting performance of dances such as the Native American Flute, Men's Chicken Dance, Women's Fancy Shawl among others

Audience favourites returning to the **Free Concert Series** in the 22/23 season include:

- American tenor **Miles Mykkanen** (The Steersman in *The Flying Dutchman*)
- An **Opera Atelier** soloist, Artists of **Atelier Ballet**, and harpsichordist **Christopher Bagan** bring to life costumed excerpts from *Dido and Aeneas*, one of the greatest operas in the English language, in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre
- **Canada's Ballet Jörgen** with an adaptation of the Canadian classic, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Cinderella*
- **Peggy Baker Dance Projects** will be returning for their final season, with dance artist **Katherine Semchuk** premiering *to be here*, a solo arising through her dedication to journaling, physical practice and improvisation
- Artists of the **COC Orchestra** in a variety of chamber combinations
- The **Mike Downes Trio** performing a mix of original music and jazz standards
- Musicians **Padideh Ahrarnejad** (tar) and **Ali Massoudi** (tombak), accompanied by the beautiful voice of **Mahnaz Raad**, in a performance of traditional Persian melodies highlighting the musical systems of Dastgah (Maqam)
- **Ballet Creole**, one of Canada's first professional Black dance companies, present a high-energy and educational performance of African and Caribbean-centered programming
- Acclaimed Toronto-based, mixed East/West **PhoeNX Ensemble** and celebrated tenor **Lawrence Wiliford** join forces to present a new cross-cultural revisit of Alec Roth's *Songs in Time of War*

Since its inception, the **Free Concert Series** has also served as a showcase for breakout young artists. This season includes performances by:

- Artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio**, the COC's professional development program for emerging Canadian opera artists, in nine concerts, including a holiday concert and a celebration of the late, world-renowned composer, songwriter, and lyricist Stephen Sondheim
- The **York University Gospel Choir**, directed by gospel powerhouse **Nicole Sinclair-Anderson**, presents a concert of stirring choral works with a distinct gospel sound
- Returning young artists organizations such as: **The Glenn Gould School** and the **Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists** of the **Royal Conservatory of Music**, the **Schulich School of Music at McGill University**, **Humber College**, and the **University of Toronto**

For a full calendar of events, please visit coc.ca/FreeConcerts.

The Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre is a focal point of the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, with a striking glass wall that allows for natural lighting and a view of University Avenue. Linking Rings 3 and 4, the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre provides seating for 100 patrons. Additional seating and standing locations on the walkway and the upper floor are also available for up to 130 patrons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BMO Financial Group: Season Sponsor

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Free Concert Series Media Sponsor: **The New Classical 96.3 FM**

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.

For more information or photographs, please contact:

Davin Leivonen-Fok, Communications Coordinator, email: davinlf@coc.ca
Avril Sequeira, Director of Public Relations, email: avrils@coc.ca