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FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR CANADA’S BIGGEST EMERGING OPERA VOICE COMPETITION

Toronto – Following live auditions across the country, seven of Canada’s most promising new opera singers have been selected to compete in the **Canadian Opera Company’s Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** on **November 3, 2022** at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**. All proceeds from the evening support the COC’s groundbreaking artist development program, the **Ensemble Studio**.

With a theme this year of “A Night in the Spotlight,” the annual event aims to shed light on the newest generation of Canadian vocal talent while offering audiences an hour-long concert of some of opera’s most beautiful musical numbers. The evening invites the public in for the live final round of the competition where finalists sing one last aria, accompanied by the acclaimed **COC Orchestra**, for a shot at cash prizes, invaluable performance opportunities, and the chance to be invited to join the **COC Ensemble Studio**.

Nearly **100** candidates applied to be a part of this year’s process, with judges traveling nationwide to hear **64** young artists in-person, with stops in Calgary, Montreal, and Toronto. This year’s competition finalists are:

- **Hannah Crawford**, soprano
- **River Guard**, tenor
- **Wesley Harrison**, tenor
- **Matthew Li**, bass
- **Laura Nielsen**, soprano
- **Karoline Podolak**, soprano
- **Korin Thomas-Smith**, baritone

“All the young artists we heard have shown a dedication to their craft and an inspiring resilience to create, despite the obvious challenges of the past few years,” says **Dorian Cox, Director of the COC Ensemble Studio**. “Each of our seven finalists has a unique voice, and demonstrates an extraordinarily high level of artistry. I can’t wait to celebrate their well-deserved evening in the spotlight!”

On November 3, the singers will be evaluated by a judging panel comprised of:

- **Perryn Leech, COC General Director**
- **Roberto Mauro, COC Director of Artistic Planning**
- **Adrienne Pieczonka**, internationally-celebrated Canadian soprano
- **J’Nai Bridges**, two-time Grammy Award-winning American soprano

In an exciting, interactive element of the night, following the performances, audience members are invited to cast their vote to decide the **Audience Choice Award** winner.

As part of the fully inclusive **Competition Experience** ticket, attendees are treated to a complimentary cocktail reception, featuring canapés and refreshments curated by The Chase. With the **Premium Spotlight Experience**, attendees also enjoy a three-course dinner after the main event, presented in the stunning Henry N. R. Jackman Lounge, along with dedicated time to meet and mingle with competition winners, finalists, and current **Ensemble Studio** artists.

For full details on competition timing and tickets, please visit coc.ca/CentreStage.

TICKETS

Tickets for **Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** range from **\$150 for The Competition Experience** to **\$1,000 for The Premium Spotlight Experience**. They are available online at coc.ca, by calling **416-363-8231**, or by visiting the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office** in person at 145 Queen St. W.

ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION PARTNERS

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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.

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