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## **NEW PRODUCTIONS HEADLINE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S 2023/2024 SEASON OF PROGRAMMING**

**Lineup features five new-to-Toronto productions, including rarely performed *Medea*, and a world premiere opera based on Canadian contralto Portia White**

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company** announced its 2023/2024 season today featuring a slate of exciting new productions and rare musical gems that showcase the most celebrated of international stars, as well as incredible homegrown talent.

“The Canadian Opera Company is a beacon for the very best in operatic storytelling and experience,” says **COC General Director Perryn Leech**. “In creating this season, we collaborated extensively with creators and companies from all over the world to share new programming with our audiences. Throughout 2023/2024, we can explore familiar and less familiar repertoire through innovative and thought-provoking new productions and also hear the most thrilling singing to be heard anywhere. It is a heady mix.”

“We are proud to continue the creation and presentation of contemporary opera,” continues **Leech**. “As part of our ongoing commitment to introducing distinctive new voices and reaching a wider audience, we are honoured to present the world premiere of *Aportia Chryptych: A Black Opera For Portia White* at the Canadian Opera Company Theatre in summer of 2024.”

For complete cast and creative team information, please [download the media kit here](#) or visit [coc.ca/2324](http://coc.ca/2324).

### **COC's 2023/2024 SEASON AT-A-GLANCE**

#### **Fidelio by Ludwig Van Beethoven**

**September 29, October 1, 7, 12, 14, 18, and 20, 2023**

**Sung in German with English SURTITLES™**

**A production from San Francisco Opera**

The **Canadian Opera Company** launches its season with Beethoven's only opera, a work unseen at the COC in nearly 15 years. Finnish soprano **Miina-Liisa Väre** stars as Leonore, a woman who has disguised herself as a man named Fidelio in order to save her husband from being imprisoned for his revolutionary political views. American tenor **Clay Hilley** sings the role of the prisoner Florestan, and rising Canadian soprano and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Anna-Sophie Neher** is Marzelline, the daughter of the prison guard Rocco. American director **Matthew Ozawa** transports the storyline to a modern-day prison facility, creating a powerful reminder of the continued conflict between corruption and tyranny, and justice and freedom. **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** conducts the master composer's triumphant musical score.

#### **La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini**

**October 6, 8, 11, 13, 19, 21, 22, and 28, 2023**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A Canadian Opera Company co-production with Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera**

The irresistibly charming production by Tony Award-winning director **John Caird** returns this fall, inviting audiences on a whirlwind of youthful pleasure and ill-fated romance. Set against the blustery winter streets of 19th century Paris, the opera follows a band of struggling artists on a quest for love and purpose. Real-life husband and wife, tenor **Pene Pati** and soprano **Amina Edris**, play the poet Rodolfo and seamstress Mimì who captures his heart; this is **Pati**'s COC debut and a return to Toronto for **Edris**, whose portrayal of Violetta in the COC's *La Traviata* last spring earned her the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Performance. Two performances of Rodolfo will be sung by Australian-Chinese tenor **Kang Wang**, and a vibrant cast of fresh voices round out the cast, including baritone **Joo Won Kang** as Marcello, current **Ensemble Studio** soprano **Charlotte Siegel** as Musetta, Congolese bass **Blaise Malaba** as Colline, and Canadian baritone **Justin Welsh** as Schaunard. Magnetic Canadian maestro **Jordan de Souza** makes his COC debut, conducting one of Puccini's most achingly beautiful operas.

**The Cunning Little Vixen by Leoš Janáček**

**January 26, 28, February 3, 8, 10, 14, and 16, 2024**

**Sung in Czech with English SURTITLES™**

**A production from English National Opera**

In a poignant and topical exploration of humans' relationship with nature led by English director **Jamie Manton**, *The Cunning Little Vixen* tells the tale of a chance encounter that forever changes the lives of everyone involved. In this new-to-Toronto production, Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald** steps into the role of Sharp Ears, a clever fox who narrowly escapes a local forester that captures and attempts to domesticate her, sung by British baritone **Christopher Purves**. Janáček's lush score has not been presented at the COC since 1998, and **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** expertly leads the **COC Orchestra** through the opera's poetic beauty and unique rhythms. On-stage, colourfully costumed creatures from London-based designer **Tom Scutt** are juxtaposed against the modern reality of deforested landscapes, also by **Scutt**. With its mesmerizing storytelling, this family-friendly opera is a perfect introduction for new audiences and a rarely performed treat for seasoned opera-goers.

**Don Giovanni by Wolfgang A. Mozart**

**February 2, 4, 7, 9, 15, 17, and 24, 2024**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A co-production of Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Gran Teatre del Liceu; The Israeli Opera; and Houston Grand Opera**

Mozart's dark, twisted masterpiece is presented as never seen before. When infamous predator Don Giovanni's latest attempted seduction ends in murder, what follows is a twisted, supernatural tale of guilt and vengeance that is equal parts glamour and gloom. UK-based director **Amy Lane** takes on **Kasper Holten**'s original vision of a sensory fusion of breathtaking visuals, light, and music. Here, a high-tech revolving set by award-winning and sought-after set designer **Es Devlin** converges with imaginative video projections from **Luke Halls** to create an Escher-like web of interlocking rooms. Canadian bass-baritone and **Ensemble Studio** alumnus **Gordon Bintner** stars as Don Giovanni, returning to the COC following his "compulsively watchable" (*The Globe and Mail*) performance as the Count in the COC's *The Marriage of Figaro* (2023). Romanian soprano **Anita Hartig**, Armenian soprano **Mané Galoyan**, and Italian baritone **Paolo Bordogna** also star in COC debuts.

**Don Pasquale by Gaetano Donizetti**

**April 26, May 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 14\*, and 18, 2024**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A production from Scottish Opera**

This new-to-Toronto production marks the first appearance of *Don Pasquale* at the COC in 30 years. The fizzy, feel-good opera follows the aging title character and his love-struck nephew Ernesto, as they pursue the same young woman in a comic clash of generations. Georgian baritone **Misha Kiria** makes his COC debut as Don Pasquale, with Argentinian tenor **Santiago Ballerini** returning to Toronto as Ernesto, alongside Canadian baritone **Joshua Hopkins** as Pasquale's friend Dr. Malatesta. The French-Canadian creative team of **Renaud Doucet** and **André Barbe** make a company debut, setting the action in 1960s Rome and topping it with Technicolor and Pop

Art-inspired visuals. The work of Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti is known for challenging the best *bel canto* artists, upping the vocal ante at every possible opportunity, and Canadian conductor **Jacques Lacombe** returns to the COC podium to showcase these artists' and musicians' musical virtuosity.

**\*Don Pasquale – Ensemble Studio Performance**

**Tuesday, May 14, 2024**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

In a special one-night-only performance, artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio** will perform *Don Pasquale*, illustrating the crucial mainstage experience provided through the country's leading career development program for emerging opera artists. Support the exceptional talents of these artists and the future of Canadian opera! For more information, please visit: [coc.ca/EnsemblePasquale](http://coc.ca/EnsemblePasquale).

**Medea by Luigi Cherubini**

**May 3, 5, 9, 11, 15, 17, and 25, 2024**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera, Greek National Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Lyric Opera of Chicago**

Never before seen on the COC stage and seldom performed anywhere in the world, *Medea* is an exquisite rarity, featuring one of the most challenging title roles in opera history. The ancient Greek myth details a powerful sorceress who aids Giasone (Jason), leader of the famous Argonauts, in stealing the Golden Fleece, only to soon be abandoned by him for another. What follows is a chilling, no-holds-barred unleashing of fury that sees Medea get the last word against all who have wronged her. Canadian soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** takes on the daunting title role with a performance that is ferocious, committed, and viscerally intense. She reunites with renowned Scottish director **Sir David McVicar** who she previously collaborated with on the COC's *Rusalka* in 2019 to widespread acclaim, and is joined by an unmissable cast featuring a number of Metropolitan Opera regulars: American tenor **Matthew Polenzani**, American soprano **Janai Brugger**, and American bass-baritone **Eric Owens**.

**Aportia Chryptych: A Black Opera for Portia White by HAUI x Sean Mayes**

**June 14, 15, and 16, 2024**

**A world premiere opera**

Nova Scotian contralto Portia White was the first Black Canadian concert performer to achieve international fame in the mid-20th century, hailed as the best classical voice of her generation. Yet, despite her accomplishments, her story has been largely erased from Canadians' collective memory. *Aportia Chryptych: A Black Opera for Portia White* is a bold, new Black opera from Canadian director and librettist **HAUI** and Toronto and New York-based composer **Sean Mayes** that sets out to reclaim Portia White's story, featuring Canadian soprano **Neema Bickersteth** and Emmy Award-winning soprano **Adrienne Danrich**. The opera begins at the end of Portia's life, as she is thrust into the crossroads of the spirit realm. As she is fractured into her divine feminine trinity of Body, Soul, and Spirit, she must reconcile the coded and cryptic secrets from her past to shed her earthly existence and finally ascend. Spoken word, rap, folk songs, hip-hop, R&B, and classic opera repertoire collide in an explosive score that seeks to break down musical silos and unite artistic and cultural communities.

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

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## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition**

**October 26, 2023**

Undoubtedly one of the most exciting evenings of the year where history is made, and a star is born, **Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** showcases the new generation of brilliant young singers as they compete in the final round of auditions for the **Ensemble Studio**, Canada's leading career development program for emerging opera artists. Finalists, selected through rigorous cross-country auditions, perform one aria each for the evening's live audience, demonstrating technical ability, dramatic expression, and overall stage presence. For most singers in the competition, this moment represents their biggest artistic accomplishment in their careers to date— and a potentially life-changing experience. All proceeds from the unforgettable showcase go to the **Ensemble Studio**, making it a great chance to support emerging Canadian talent.

## **TICKET INFORMATION AND SPECIAL PRICING**

**Subscriptions** to the 23/24 season are available now and may be purchased online at **coc.ca**, or by calling **416-363-8231**. Subscribe by **May 30, 2023** to guarantee your renewable seats.

**Single tickets** to all 23/24 operas will be available to the general public on **Monday, August 28, 2023**. Subscribers, donors, and newsletter subscribers will be contacted directly with details on exclusive pre-sale access.

**Opera Under 30** offers \$22 tickets to patrons under the age of 30.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**Season Sponsor:** BMO Financial Group

Production of *La Bohème* originally made possible by **Jerry & Geraldine Heffernan**.

Production of *Aportia Chrytych: A Black Opera for Portia White* produced by the **Canadian Opera Company**, in association with the **National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund**, **Canada Council for the Arts**, and **Ontario Arts Council**.

**Sondra Radvanovsky** is generously sponsored by an anonymous donor.

**Johannes Debus** is generously sponsored by **George & Kathy Dembroski**.

**Sandra Horst** and the **COC Chorus** are generously underwritten by **Tim & Frances Price**.

The **COC Orchestra** is generously sponsored, in part, by **W. Bruce C. Bailey**, in honour of **Christie Darville**, **COC Deputy General Director**, and **Johannes Debus**, **COC Music Director**, and in part by **The Schulich Foundation**.

Thank you to the entire COC community, including our [COC Board of Directors](#), our [Corporate Sponsors and Foundation Supporters](#), [generous public funders](#), [union partners](#), and — most critically — [our audience](#). Your inspiring support ensures that opera flourishes, uniting global audiences and paving the way for a vibrant future.

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

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