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***DON PASQUALE* GETS A COLOURFUL MID-CENTURY MAKEOVER AT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY**

Toronto – The **Canadian Opera Company** ushers in spring with a feel-good comedy that hasn't been seen on the COC stage in 30 years: *Don Pasquale* by Gaetano Donizetti. This colourful adaptation from acclaimed French-Canadian creative duo **Barbe & Doucet** transposes the opera's storyline to 1960s Rome, where the eccentric owner of a crumbling hotel is wreaking hilarious havoc on his nephew's love life, together with a rag-tag group of staff that includes a chain-smoking chambermaid, a greasy cook, and a positively prehistoric porter.

Don Pasquale runs for seven performances on **April 26, May 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 18, 2024**, at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, with an additional one-night-only performance starring current and graduate artists of the COC's **Ensemble Studio** on **May 14, 2024**.

A CLEVERLY DESIGNED, FEEL-GOOD COMEDY

When curmudgeonly Don Pasquale learns his already smitten nephew won't marry for money, he decides to get hitched himself so Ernesto can't inherit a dime. Unbeknownst to Pasquale, however, is that his bride-to-be is none other than his nephew's beloved—and that some friendly scheming is underway to not-so-subtly convince him to do the right thing.

Following earlier careers in dance, television, and theatre, stage director **Renaud Doucet** and set and costume designer **André Barbe** joined forces in 2000, creating over 40 new opera productions that have been recognized for their creativity and sense of spectacle. In this production, an Italian *pensione* serves as the backdrop to the story with scenes changes taking place with the innovative use of a clothesline incorporated into the set. Bright colours and cartoonish angles abound, as well as a bevy of faux felines in an eye-catching neon green—because in this staging, helmed by Associate Director **Kathleen Stakenas**, the aging title bachelor has a deep affinity for cats...as well as an unfortunate allergy to them. Lighting from **Guy Simard** perfectly spotlights the Technicolor playground.

A SHOWCASE FOR VOCAL FIREWORKS

As a composer, Donizetti is known for sparkling scores that are delightful to the ear and incredibly demanding to perform. For *Don Pasquale*, the COC has assembled a brilliant cast that is more than capable of delivering vocal fireworks, led by Canadian conductor **Jacques Lacombe**.

In a COC debut, **Misha Kiria** brings his “beautiful baritone voice” (*Giornale della Musica*) and “charismatic” (*Financial Times*) acting prowess to the title role of the reclusive uncle. He's joined by Juno Award-winning and Grammy-nominated baritone **Joshua Hopkins** as the clever Dr. Malatesta; **Hopkins** was last seen on the COC stage in 2017 as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*. Canadian soprano and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Simone Osborne**, hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as “a joy to hear,” returns to Toronto as the fiery Norina opposite **Santiago Ballerini** as Ernesto, following the Argentinian tenor's “outstanding” performance in the COC's 2020 production of *The Barber of Seville*. And Canadian bass-baritone and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Alex Halliday** joins the robust cast in the role of the Notary.

For the **Ensemble Studio** performance of the opera, **Alex Halliday** steps into the role of Don Pasquale alongside first-year tenor **Wesley Harrison** as Ernesto. Both **Halliday** and **Harrison** were featured in the COC's 23/24

season productions of *Fidelio* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Final-year soprano **Ariane Cossette** takes on the role of Ernesto's beloved Norina, after an earlier season appearance in *The Cunning Little Vixen*. First-year baritone **Korin Thomas-Smith** performs as Dr. Malatesta, following his mainstage debut this past fall in *La Bohème*, and baritone and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Doug MacNaughton** completes the cast on May 14 as the Notary.

Don Pasquale is sung in Italian and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

Don Pasquale is a production from Scottish Opera.

CAST INFORMATION

For Performances on April 26, May 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 18

Don Pasquale	Misha Kiria
Dr. Malatesta	Joshua Hopkins
Norina	Simone Osborne
Ernesto	Santiago Ballerini
Notary	Alex Halliday

For Ensemble Studio Performance on May 14

Don Pasquale	Alex Halliday
Dr. Malatesta	Korin Thomas-Smith
Norina	Ariane Cossette
Ernesto	Wesley Harrison
Notary	Doug MacNaughton

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Jacques Lacombe
Director	Renaud Doucet
Associate Director	Kathleen Stakenas
Assistant Director	Marilyn Gronsdal
Set and Costume Designer	André Barbe
Lighting Designer	Guy Simard
Choreographer	Renaud Doucet
Price Family Chorus Master	Sandra Horst
Stage Manager	Lesley Abarquez
Assistant Stage Manager	Meghan Speakman
Assistant Stage Manager	Jessica Severin
Fight and Intimacy Coordinator	Siobhan Richardson

With the COC Orchestra and COC Chorus

TICKET INFORMATION

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Single tickets for *Don Pasquale* range from **\$35 – \$250 for adults**, with Grand Ring seats available at **\$290** and **\$350**, and **\$22 tickets available for guests between the ages of 16 and 29** through the COC's **Opera Under 30** program.

Single tickets for the **Ensemble Studio Performance** of *Don Pasquale* are priced from **\$35-\$75 for adults**, including Grand Ring seating.

Tickets can be purchased online at coc.ca or by calling the Four Seasons Centre Box Office at **416-363-8231**. For more information on booking **student groups**, **standing room**, and **rush tickets**, as well as other specially priced tickets available to **young people under the age of 15**, please visit coc.ca.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Season Sponsor: BMO Financial Group

Simone Osborne is generously sponsored by **June Shaw & the late Dr. Ralph Shaw**.

The **Ensemble Studio Performance** is generously underwritten in part by **the Estate of Thomas Charles Messecar Logan**.

Arianne Cossette is generously sponsored by **Tony & Anne Arrell**.

Wesley Harrison is generously sponsored by **Brian Wilks**.

Korin Smith-Thomas is generously sponsored by **Cathy Fauquier**.

The COC Ensemble Studio is Underwritten By:

The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, with major support from Anne & Tony Arrell, Marjorie & Roy Linden, The Estate of Tom C. Logan A.R.C.T., The MacNeill Family Foundation, Wendy J. Thompson, The Azrieli Foundation, RBC Foundation, and Stingray with additional support from ARIAS: Canadian Opera Student Development Fund, Marcia Lewis Brown, Neil & Blanche Carragher, Catherine Fauquier, George & Irene Hamilton, Patrick and Barbara Keenan Foundation, Joy Levine, Patricia & Frank Mills, and Brian Wilks.

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.

For more information, please contact:

Avril Sequeira, Director of Public Relations, email: avrils@coc.ca

Davin Leivonen-Fok, Communications Coordinator, email: davinlf@coc.ca