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ESCAPE TO THE OPERA HOUSE THIS WINTER WITH *THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN*

Toronto – The natural and human worlds converge when Leoš Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen* hits the **Canadian Opera Company** stage this winter for the first time in 25 years. The larger-than-life production from English National Opera infuses the rarely performed gem with thought-provoking sets and fantastical costumes, creating an unforgettable journey into the woods to meet a clever fox who refuses to be fenced in. *The Cunning Little Vixen* runs for seven performances on **January 26, 28, February 3, 8, 10, 14, and 16, 2024**, at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, with an additional Relaxed Performance on **February 13, 2024**.

A POIGNANT REFLECTION ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PLANET EARTH

When a forest gamekeeper traps a fox and attempts to domesticate her, their encounter inspires a philosophical reflection on the natural cycle of life and death. Despite being composed in the 1920s, *The Cunning Little Vixen* remains surprisingly relevant today, inviting audiences to consider the advancing toll of climate change and importance and urgency of cultivating harmony with our environment.

In the hands of London-based director **Jamie Manton**, alongside associate director **Ruth Knight**, the title vixen’s home is not a lush green woodland but, instead, a landscape ravaged by logging and deforestation. Against this backdrop, set and costume designer **Tom Scutt** has created an explosion of colourful silhouettes, including iridescent insects and frilly hens that play up nature’s unique and inherent beauty. Pointed lighting from designer **Lucy Carter** underscores the contrasting realms while choreography from **Jenny Ogilvie** skillfully captures the intricacy of movement in creatures great and small.

Musically, *The Cunning Little Vixen* perfectly illustrates why Leoš Janáček is considered one of the most important opera composers of the 20th century. Drawing on a diverse range of influences ranging from Romantic, to folk and Impressionism, the lyrical score provides an innovative and complex sonic universe for the **COC Orchestra**, led by **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**, to explore. **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus**, with members of the **Canadian Children’s Opera Company (CCOC)** taking on many roles, including a pack of fox cubs.

A COLOURFUL CAST OF CHARACTERS

Celebrated Canadian soprano **Jane Archibald** returns to the COC, bringing her world renowned artistry and “enormous singing and stage power” (*Scherzo*) to the leading role of Sharp Ears, the young Vixen. **Archibald** is joined by two artists making COC house debuts: Macedonian-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Emilia Nikolovska** in the role of Gold-Stripe, the Fox, and “compelling” (*The Guardian*) English bass-baritone **Christopher Purves** as the Forester.

A number of COC favourites feature prominently in the cast, with mezzo-soprano **Megan Latham**, last seen in the COC’s *The Marriage of Figaro* (2022), singing the Forester’s Wife/Owl; bass-baritone **Giles Tomkins** as the Priest/Badger; tenor **Adam Luther** as the Innkeeper/Rooster; and mezzo-soprano **Carolyn Sproule** as the Dog, Lapák. The cast also includes four additional rising artists from the COC’s **Ensemble Studio**: soprano **Charlotte Siegel**, who starred as Musetta this fall in the COC’s *La Bohème*, is the Innkeeper’s Wife/Hen; tenor **Wesley Harrison** as the Schoolmaster/Mosquito; bass-baritone **Alex Halliday** as the Poacher; and soprano **Ariane**

Cossette sings the role of Pepik/Woodpecker. Soprano and COC Chorus member **Ilana Zarankin** rounds out the cast as Frantic/Jay.

A MORE INCLUSIVE OPERA-GOING EXPERIENCE

For the company's Relaxed Performance on **February 13, 2024**, the opera itself will remain unchanged but a number of adjustments will be made within the theatre to create a more accessible environment. Sound levels will be lowered, house lights will be dimmed rather than switched off, and audience members will be free to move in and out of their seats as needed. The relaxed performance offers a more casual opera experience which can be ideal for members of the Disability Community, Neurodiverse or Autistic individuals, or anyone who may experience anxiety and/or feel they want extra support to attend an opera.

In this performance, **Ensemble Studio** soprano **Karoline Podolak** steps into the role of the Vixen (Sharp Ears); **Podolak** previously took home First Prize in the COC's Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition in 2022. Canadian mezzo-soprano **Carolyn Sproule** brings her "irresistible charisma" (*Opera News*) to the role of the Fox (Gold-Stripe), and several current and graduate artists of the **COC Ensemble Studio** form the supporting cast: bass-baritone **Joel Allison** as the Forester, mezzo-soprano **Queen Hezumuryango** as the Forester's Wife/Owl, baritone **Korin Thomas-Smith** sings the role of the Poacher, and mezzo-soprano **Alex Hetherington** sings the role of the Dog, Lapák. Conductor **Derek Bate** will lead the **COC Orchestra**.

The Cunning Little Vixen is sung in Czech and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

The Cunning Little Vixen is a production from English National Opera.

CAST INFORMATION

For Performances on January 26, 28, February 3, 8, 10, 14, 16, 2024

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Vixen (Sharp Ears) | Jane Archibald |
| Fox (Gold-Stripe) | Ema Nikolovska |
| Forester | Christopher Purves |
| Forester's Wife/Owl | Megan Latham |
| Schoolmaster/Mosquito | Wesley Harrison |
| Priest/Badger | Giles Tomkins |
| A Poacher | Alex Halliday |
| Innkeeper/Rooster | Adam Luther |
| Innkeeper's Wife/Hen | Charlotte Siegel |
| Lapák, a Dog | Carolyn Sproule |
| Pepik/Woodpecker | Ariane Cossette |
| Frantic/Jay | Ilana Zarankin |

For Relaxed Performance on February 13, 2024

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Vixen (Sharp Ears) | Karoline Podolak |
| Fox (Gold-Stripe) | Carolyn Sproule |
| Forester | Joel Allison |
| Forester's Wife/Owl | Queen Hezumuryango |
| Schoolmaster/Mosquito | Wesley Harrison |
| Priest/Badger | Giles Tomkins |
| A Poacher | Korin Thomas-Smith |
| Innkeeper/Rooster | Adam Luther |
| Innkeeper's Wife/Hen | Charlotte Siegel |

Lapák, a Dog
Pepik/Woodpecker
Frantic/Jay

Alex Hetherington
Ariane Cossette
Ilana Zarankin

CREATIVE TEAM

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Conductor | Johannes Debus, Derek Bate (Feb. 13) |
| Assistant Conductor | Derek Bate |
| Director | Jamie Manton |
| Associate Director | Ruth Knight |
| Assistant Director | Anna Theodosakis |
| Set & Costume Design | Tom Scutt |
| Lighting Designer | Lucy Carter |
| Choreographer | Jenny Ogilvie |
| Price Family Chorus Master | Sandra Horst |
| Stage Manager | Stephanie Marrs |

With the COC Orchestra and COC Chorus

TICKET INFORMATION

The Cunning Little Vixen runs for seven performances at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** on **January 26, 28, February 3, 8, 10, 14, 16, 2024** with a **Relaxed Performance held on February 13, 2024**.

Single tickets for *The Cunning Little Vixen* 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 Relaxed Performance of *The Cunning Little Vixen* are priced at **\$25 for adults** and **\$15 for guests under the age of 15** with complimentary tickets available for support persons. Patrons are encouraged to phone the Four Seasons Centre Box Office for additional details and assistance in booking suitable 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

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

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

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.

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