

For immediate release: August 15, 2024

## **DANCE WITH THE DEVIL IN THE COC'S HAUNTING NEW *FAUST***

**Toronto**—Audiences are in for a darkly decadent treat when a brand new production of *Faust*, by Charles Gounod, premieres at the **Canadian Opera Company** this fall. In the opera, the aging philosopher Faust has grown disenchanted with his lifelong quest for knowledge and leaps at the chance to trade his soul for eternal youth...getting much more than he bargained for along the way. Visionary stage director **Amy Lane** returns to Toronto with a delightfully Burtonesque twist on the classic tale. *Faust* runs for seven performances at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** on **October 11, 13, 16, 18, 24, 26, and November 2, 2024**.

### **A CLASH OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC**

**Amy Lane** is known for her contemporary and thought-provoking takes on beloved operatic repertoire. Under her direction, *Faust* moves into the early 20th century with a design aesthetic largely influenced by titans of the gothic and fantasy genres: Lewis Carroll, Bram Stoker, Tim Burton, and Stephen King; **Lane** even includes Netflix's *The Haunting of Hill House* as a source of atmospheric inspiration.

Set and costume designer **Emma Ryott** taps into the inescapable nature of human mortality with trees that mirror bronchial blood vessels, a looming x-ray backdrop, and a twisting spiral staircase evoking a human spine. Meanwhile, a prominent checkerboard floor nods to the devilish game Faust finds himself embroiled in. Characters' costumes range from simplistic and bleak to Gatsby-era glamour, in synchronization with their dealings with Méphistophélès; in this imagining, two dancers (choreographed by **Tim Claydon**) portray Lucifer and Beelzebub with cabaret-style flair. Lighting from **Charlie Morgan Jones** bathes the action on-stage in an eerie glow that sets the scene for the supernatural storyline.

### **FRENCH GRAND OPERA AT ITS BEST**

*Faust* is infused with brilliant melodies and features a string of standout arias that includes the popular "Jewel Song" for soprano and "Soldiers' Chorus." Leading the **COC Orchestra** through Gounod's romantic score is **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**, with **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leading the **COC Chorus**.

Acclaimed tenor **Long Long** stars as the title scholar opposite bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** as the demon Méphistophélès; this is a house debut for **Long Long**, who has been praised for his "glorious voice" (*Bachtrack*) and a return to the COC for **Ketelsen** who last starred in the company's 2021 digital presentation of *Bluebeard's Castle*. Making her COC debut is soprano **Guanqun Yu** in the role of Marguerite, the young woman who Faust falls deeply in love with, with recent **Ensemble Studio** soprano **Ariane Cossette** singing the final performance. Mezzo-soprano and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Alex Hetherington** performs as Siebel, a young man who is also in love with Marguerite, alongside current **Ensemble Studio** baritone **Korin Thomas-Smith** as Faust's student, Wagner. **Szymon Mechliniski** makes a COC debut, bringing his "warm, dark-hued baritone" (*OperaWire*) to the role of Marguerite's brother Valentin, and mezzo-soprano **Meghan Latham** returns, following the COC's 2024 production of *The Cunning Little Vixen*, to complete the cast as Marguerite's neighbour, Marthe.

*Faust* is sung in French and presented by the COC with English SURTITLES™.

*Faust* is a new co-production with **Malmö Opera**.

## CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

**Marguerite**  
**Faust**  
**Siebel**  
**Valentin**  
**Méphistophélès**  
**Marthe**  
**Wagner**

Guanqun Yu, Ariane Cossette (Nov. 2)  
Long Long  
Alex Hetherington  
Szymon Mechliniski  
Kyle Ketelsen  
Meghan Latham  
Korin Thomas-Smith

**Conductor**  
**Assistant Conductor**  
**Director**  
**Set & Costume Designer**  
**Lighting Designer**  
**Choreographer**  
**Fights/Intimacy Coordinator**  
**Price Family Chorus Master**  
**Stage Manager**  
**Assistant Stage Manager**  
**Assistant Stage Manager**

Johannes Debus  
Derek Bate  
Amy Lane  
Emma Ryott  
Charlie Morgan Jones  
Tim Claydon  
Siobhan Richardson  
Sandra Horst  
Jenifer Kowal  
Meghan Speakman  
Anna Spencer

**With the COC Orchestra and COC Chorus**

## TICKET INFORMATION

Regularly priced tickets for *Faust* start at **\$45 for adults**, with **\$22 and \$35 tickets available for guests between the ages of 16 and 29** through the COC's **Opera Under 30** program. Tickets can be purchased online at [coc.ca](http://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](http://coc.ca).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Season Sponsor:** BMO Financial Group

**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 David C. Ferguson joined the company in 2024, 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](http://coc.ca).

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