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## **COC'S 2025/2026 SEASON BLENDS ICONIC OPERATIC BLOCKBUSTERS WITH BOLD NEW VISIONS**

**Newly announced lineup includes an all-new, Canadian-built production of *Werther***

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company** has announced its 2025/2026 season today featuring bold new productions, blockbuster audience favourites, and landmark works from two of Canada's leading creative visionaries. The exciting mainstage season, to be presented at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, includes a new-to-Toronto staging of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, an all-new co-production of Massenet's *Werther*, Verdi's always popular *Rigoletto*, Rossini's family-friendly *The Barber of Seville*, as well as Robert Carsen's haunting adaptation of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Robert Lepage's captivating take on Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung*.

"The Canadian Opera Company has long established itself as a global leader in artistic excellence," says **COC General Director David C. Ferguson**. "However, even more important than international reputation, is one of our company's key, value-driven priorities: that Canadians, of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences, fully understand and share our pride in the incredible opera being performed right here at home. In curating our 2025/2026 mainstage season, we have put great thought into programming a lineup that offers a variety of entry points and layers of engagement with the art form so that there are just as many thrilling experiences to be had for a seasoned subscriber as there are for anyone making their very first visit in 25/26. It's going to be a terrific year to join us at the opera house."

For detailed information on cast and creative teams, please visit [coc.ca/2526](https://coc.ca/2526).

### **COC's 2025/2026 SEASON AT-A-GLANCE**

#### **Roméo et Juliette by Charles Gounod**

**September 27; October 5, 8, 10, 14, 16, and 18, 2025**

**Sung in French with English SURTITLES™**

**A production from Malmö Opera**

The **Canadian Opera Company's** 2025/2026 season kicks off with a bold and colourful new take on literature's greatest romance. Director **Amy Lane**, whose cabaret-infused production of *Faust* at the COC delightfully "blurr[ed] the lines between fantasy and reality" (*Broadway World*), sets the action in Gilded Age New York where a simmering, long-standing rivalry is about to ignite at a lavish costume party. **Bekhzod Davronov** and **Kseniia Proshina** make their COC debuts as the classically star-crossed lovers. The opera also features a number of alumni from the **Ensemble Studio**: bass **Robert Pomakov** is the well-intentioned Frère Laurent, bass-baritone **Gordon Bintner** and baritone **Korin-Thomas Smith** share the role of Mercutio, tenor **Owen McCausland** is hot-tempered Tybalt, bass-baritone **Alex Halliday** is The Duke, and mezzo-soprano **Alex Hetherington** is Stéphano.

#### **Orfeo ed Euridice by Christoph Willibald Gluck**

**October 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 25, 2025**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A Canadian Opera Company co-production with Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Fondazione Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Opéra Royal Château de Versailles Spectacles, and Lyric Opera of Chicago**

Internationally known and acclaimed for his brilliant creative direction, **Robert Carsen** brings his signature stylized simplicity to the haunting Greek myth at the heart of *Orfeo ed Euridice*. After the death of his beloved wife, Orfeo begs the gods to bring her back from the Underworld—a request that is granted on the condition he neither look at nor speak to her throughout his perilous journey home, at the risk of losing her forever. Countertenor **Iestyn Davies** stars as lovelorn Orfeo alongside soprano and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Anna-Sophie Neher** as Euridice. With the opera's unique musical sound, bridging the gap between baroque and classical, Canadian conductor **Bernard Labadie** leads the **COC Orchestra** with **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leading the **COC Chorus** through the poignant swells and emotional arias of Gluck's powerful score.

**Rigoletto by Giuseppe Verdi**

**January 24, 28; February 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14, 2026**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A COC co-production with English National Opera**

One of Verdi's most popular and enduring works, *Rigoletto* is a riveting, high-stakes drama that features some of opera's most recognized and referenced arias and melodies. Baritone **Quinn Kelsey**—widely considered the world's reigning Rigoletto—stars in the title role as a tragic jester alongside tenor **Ben Bliss** as his morally corrupt employer, the Duke of Mantua. Soprano **Andrea Carroll** returns to the COC as Rigoletto's daughter, Gilda, whose seduction by the Duke launches her father's fateful quest for revenge. Director **Christopher Alden**'s widely praised production evokes a Victorian men's club, lavishly realised by set and costume designer **Michael Levine** (*Eugene Onegin*). **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** leads the **COC Orchestra** and **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leads the **COC Chorus** through Verdi's unforgettable score in this “musical jackpot” (*The Globe and Mail*) and masterpiece of Italian grand opera.

**The Barber of Seville by Gioachino Rossini**

**February 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, and 21, 2026**

**Sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™**

**A COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia**

A perennial audience favourite for its effervescent score and fast-paced, fun-filled storyline, *The Barber of Seville* is an ideal introduction to the opera-going experience. In this larger-than-life production from director **Joan Font** and the Spanish street theatre troupe Els Comediants, comedy and colour collide as the title town barber Figaro (sung by baritone **Luke Sutliff**) aims to scheme his way into a happy ending for the sweet Rosina (performed by mezzo-soprano **Deepa Johnny**); this production marks a COC debut for **Johnny** and **Sutliff**, as well as tenor **Dave Monaco** who joins the cast as Rosina's true love, Count Almaviva. Returning to Toronto are bass-baritone **Luca Pisaroni** as Rosina's music teacher, Basilio, and baritone **Renato Girolami**, reprising his role from the COC's 2015 production as her plotting guardian, Bartolo. Internationally acclaimed conductor **Daniela Candillari** makes a much-anticipated house debut, conducting the **COC Orchestra** through Rossini's sparkling arias and uplifting score.

**Bluebeard's Castle by Bela Bartók and Erwartung by Arnold Schoenberg**

**April 25, 29; May 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16, 2026**

**Bluebeard's Castle is sung in Hungarian with English SURTITLES™**

**Erwartung is sung in German with English SURTITLES™**

**A COC production**

In the spring, an unforgettable double-bill returns to the COC led by award-winning and innovative Canadian stage director **Robert Lepage**. In *Bluebeard's Castle*, a new wife discovers that seven locked doors in her husband's home conceal stunning, and sometimes, gruesome secrets. Then, in *Erwartung*, a woman's search for her missing lover explodes into a blistering descent into madness. **Christian Van Horn**, “a bass-baritone of uncommon agility and power” (*The New York Times*) and Metropolitan Opera regular, stars as Bluebeard opposite mezzo-soprano

**Karen Cargill** returning to the COC as Bluebeard's wife, Judith, while **Anna Gabler** makes her debut performance at the COC, commanding the all-encompassing solo role in Schoenberg's psychological drama. **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** once again leads the **COC Orchestra** through the masterpieces of early modernism, deftly balancing the "magnificent mass of the sound with keen attention to its inner detail" (*Stage Door*).

**Werther by Jules Massenet**

**May 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, 19, and 23, 2026**

**Sung in French with English SURTITLES™**

**A COC co-production with Opéra de Montréal and Vancouver Opera**

A young man's romantic infatuation spirals into dangerous obsession in *Werther*, the COC's final mainstage opera of 2025/2026, and one that hasn't been staged at the company in 30 years. Tenor **Russell Thomas** returns to Toronto as the sensitive title poet, following his starring role in the COC's "revolutionary" (*Wall Street Journal*) *Otello* in 2019. Mezzo-soprano **Victoria Karkacheva** debuts on the COC mainstage as Charlotte, whose affection for Werther cannot overthrow her engagement to another. Notable **Ensemble Studio** alumni, bass-baritone **Gordon Bintner** and soprano **Simone Osborne**, also star as Charlotte's fiancé, Albert, and her sister, Sophie, alongside bass **Alain Coulombe** and tenor **Michael Colvin** as Werther's friends, Johann and Schmidt. Canadian director **Alain Gauthier** will spearhead an all-new production co-produced in the spirit of local creative collaboration by three of the country's leading opera companies.

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For detailed information on cast and creative teams, visit [coc.ca/2526](http://coc.ca/2526). All repertoire, dates, productions, and casting are subject to change without notice.

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**SPECIAL EVENTS**

**Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition**

**October 23, 2025**

One of the **Canadian Opera Company's** most exciting, fun-filled, and impactful evenings of the year returns on **October 23, 2025**. **Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** introduces the best and brightest emerging opera singers from across the country in a night of vocal competition accompanied by the acclaimed **COC Orchestra**, led by **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**. At stake that night are cash prizes and the invaluable chance to be invited to join the **COC Ensemble Studio**, Canada's leading career development program for young opera professionals. For most singers, this night represents their biggest artistic milestone in their careers to date—and a potentially life-changing experience. All proceeds go to the **Ensemble Studio**, making it a great chance to support emerging Canadian talent. Following the competition, gala guests are invited to take part in an elegant dinner held on the COC's mainstage, boasting the very best views in the opera house, for a truly unforgettable experience.

**TICKET INFORMATION AND SPECIAL PRICING**

**Subscriptions** to the 25/26 season are available now and may be purchased online at [coc.ca](http://coc.ca), or by calling **416-363-8231**. Subscribe by **April 30, 2025** to guarantee your renewable seats.

**Single tickets** to all 25/26 operas will be available to the general public on **July 21, 2025**. Subscribers, donors, and newsletter subscribers will be contacted directly with details on exclusive pre-sale access.

**Opera Under 30** offers \$28 tickets to patrons under the age of 30.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**Season Sponsor:** BMO Financial Group

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

**Johannes Debus** is generously underwritten by **Riki Turofsky & Charles Petersen**.

The **COC Orchestra** is generously sponsored by **The Schulich Foundation** and by **W. Bruce C. Bailey**.

*Rigoletto* originally made possible, in part, by **Tim & Frances Price, Judy & Wilmot Matthews, and Gail & Bob Farquharson**.

*The Barber of Seville* originally made possible by **The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen 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](#).

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