

For immediate release: February 18, 2026

AN EXCITING WORLD PREMIERE AT THE CENTRE OF CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S NEW SEASON

2026/2027 also marks 20 years of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

Toronto—The **Canadian Opera Company's** newly unveiled 2026/2027 season will feature a bold Canadian world premiere, two new-to-Toronto productions on its mainstage at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, as well as an additional new work from **Opera 5**, the COC's **Company-in-Residence**, to be performed at the **Canadian Opera Company Theatre**.

The season's full lineup includes: *La Traviata*, Verdi's timeless tale of love and heartbreak; *Così fan tutte*, Mozart's comic test of fidelity and desire; two new productions: *The Turn of the Screw*, Britten's operatic adaptation of the chilling novella, and Richard Strauss' tragicomedy *Ariadne aux Naxos*; Donizetti's ever-charming *The Elixir of Love*; and the highly anticipated world premiere of *Empire of Wild* by composer **Ian Cusson** and librettist **Cherie Dimaline**, a thrilling fusion of myth, mystery, and raw human emotion co-produced with the **National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund, Orchestra, and Indigenous Theatre**. "The season's final opera, *Come Closer*, is a moving and deeply personal work from composer **Ryan Trew** and librettist **Rachel Krehm** that taps into the universal grief experienced at the death of a loved one.

"I am thrilled to introduce audiences to a phenomenal new season at the COC—one that invites us all to rediscover opera's capacity to bring us together in shared wonder," says **COC General Director David C. Ferguson**. "We are especially proud to present the world premiere of *Empire of Wild*. This landmark moment for Canadian storytelling is the result of nearly a decade of collaboration and consultation the Canadian Opera Company has undergone with local Indigenous artists and creators as part of our deep commitment to supporting visionary voices and perspectives on the country's largest operatic stage."

As part of the company's ongoing work to boost the profile of local artists, including through the COC's immensely popular **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Presented by TD Bank**, this year's feature season artwork, as well as the creative imagery for *Empire of Wild*, was created by **Halie Finney**, a multidisciplinary Métis artist and tattooist from the Lesser Slave Lake region of Alberta.

The 2026/2027 season also marks a major milestone for Canadian opera-goers: 20 years of unparalleled opera in the COC's stunning home, the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**. Says **Ferguson**, "It is a joy to host the world's greatest performers in a spectacular venue that ensures the same crystal-clear acoustics for every single member of our audience. That care for the democratization of the opera-going experience, the idea that opera really and truly is for everyone, is foundational to the COC's values and we are delighted to see new opera-goers fall in love with this glittering gem of a world-class opera house."

For detailed information on this season's productions, casts, and creative teams, please visit coc.ca/2627.

COC's 2026/2027 MAINSTAGE SEASON AT-A-GLANCE

La Traviata by Giuseppe Verdi

September 18, 26, 27, October 2, 4, 7, 9, 13, 15, and 17, 2026

Sung in Italian with English and French SURTITLES™

COC co-production with Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago

Hailed as “the very best that the world of opera can offer” (*Toronto Star*), **La Traviata** returns to the COC in a gorgeous and massively popular production that captures the glamour and heartbreak of one of opera’s most beloved works. Soprano **Kathryn Lewek**, named the “Queen of the Queens of the Night” by *The New York Times*, makes her COC debut as Violetta Valéry, a celebrated courtesan whose tragic secret threatens to bring her shimmering world crashing down around her; **Lewek** shares the role with soprano **Lucia Cesaroni** in a COC debut. Performing as Violetta’s lover Alfredo is **Long Long** who recently brought his “splendid lyric tenor” (*Opera Canada*) to COC audiences in 2024 in the title role of *Faust*, and **Luke Norvell**, named “a talent to watch” by *Parterre Box*, making his COC debut. Conceptualized with keen sensitivity by **Arin Arbus**, Verdi’s timeless work has been brilliantly staged as opulent spectacle juxtaposed against poignant moments of quiet despair, with **Paolo Carignani**, one of the most acclaimed maestros of his generation, returning to Toronto to conduct the **COC Orchestra**.

Così fan tutte by Wolfgang A. Mozart

October 3, 6, 8, 10, 14, 16, and 18, 2026

Sung in Italian with English and French SURTITLES™

A Canadian Opera Company revival

Love and laughter collide in this sly wink to the fickleness of the human heart. Drawing from the work’s subtitle (“The School for Lovers”), acclaimed Canadian film and stage director **Atom Egoyan** has reimagined the opera’s 18th-century setting as a private school science lab where two young men are bet their sweethearts won’t recognize them in disguise. Bass-baritone and **Ensemble Studio** graduate **Joel Allison** and acclaimed soprano **Lauren Fagan** return to the COC as the lovers Guglielmo and Fiordiligi, opposite tenor **Laurence Kilsby** as Ferrando and mezzo-soprano **Martina Myskohlid** as Dorabella, both making their COC debut. Two other familiar faces complete the cast with bass-baritone **Daniel Okulitch** starring as the cynical instigator of the bet, Don Alfonso, and soprano **Tracy Dahl** reprising her role as the witty maid Despina. **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** conducts some of Mozart’s most exquisite melodies with **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leading the **COC Chorus**.

The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten

January 23, 30, February 5, 7, 9, 11, and 17, 2027

Sung in English with English and French SURTITLES™

A Canadian Opera Company production, originated at Garsington Opera

Two of Canada’s most celebrated sopranos star in one of the most psychologically charged operas of the 20th century. **Jane Archibald** brings her “luminous” (*Toronto Star*) vocals to the role of an inexperienced governess convinced that her young charges are being corrupted by ghosts. Juno Award winner **Adrienne Pieczonka** performs as Mrs. Grose, a long-time household servant and loyal confidant to the Governess. And, after both starring in *La Reine-garçon* (COC, 2025), **Kirsten LeBlanc** and **Isaiah Bell** return to Toronto in the roles of the deceased governess Miss Jessop and valet Peter Quint, respectively. **Louisa Muller** directs, bringing the haunted country estate of Henry James’ 1898 novella to vivid and unsettling life, with *The Guardian* praising her work as “a truly great achievement, devastating and unforgettable.” **Patrick Summers**, Music Director Emeritus of Houston Grand Opera, conducts the **COC Orchestra**.

Ariadne auf Naxos by Richard Strauss

February 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 20, 2027

Sung in German with English and French SURTITLES™

Production rental from Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro la Fenice, and Teatro Verdi Trieste

Creative mayhem abounds when a wealthy patron funding rehearsals for a classic opera and a comic play suddenly requests that both works be performed at the same time! The result is a touching collision of tragedy and comedy, revealing both the absurdity and beauty of making art. A regular at the Metropolitan Opera, **Rachel Willis-Sørensen** stars as the story’s soprano tasked with singing the haughty Prima Donna as well as the mythological

figure of Ariadne, alongside baritone **Russell Braun** as the Music Master and **Clay Hilley**, last seen in the COC's 2023 production of *Fidelio*, as Tenor/Bacchus. Director **Paul Curran** embraces the work's layered theatricality, dividing the staging between a grand Viennese villa and a miniature Baroque theatre. **COC Music Director Johannes Debus** leads the **COC Orchestra** with **Price Family Chorus Master Sandra Horst** leading the award-winning **COC Chorus** through the sparkling humor and emotional grandeur of Strauss's score.

Empire of Wild by Ian Cusson and Cherie Dimaline

May 1, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, and 21, 2027

Sung in English and French with English and French SURTITLES™

A world premiere opera co-produced with the National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund, Orchestra, and Indigenous Theatre. *Empire of Wild*'s music score is co-commissioned with the NAC Orchestra.

Love, loss, and legend collide in this thrilling world premiere opera from composer **Ian Cusson** based on librettist **Cherie Dimaline**'s national best-selling novel. *Empire of Wild* is a daring blend of Indigenous folklore and contemporary drama that unfolds against the landscape of Georgian Bay, Ontario, a setting that is deeply connected to the creators as their collective home town. Director **Yvette Nolan** deftly steers audiences between the grit of small-town life and the eerie allure of the spirit world, setting the stage for the story of tenacious Joan who, in the search for her missing husband, discovers him leading a revival tent under a new identity as a reverend...and no recollection of her as his wife. Award-winning soprano and 2023 **Ensemble Studio Competition** winner **Elisabeth St-Gelais** stars as Joan, bringing her "exceptional voice" (*La Scena Musicale*) to **Cusson**'s electric score, brimming with emotional depth and cultural resonance, and **Dimaline**'s libretto, which gives voice to the myth of the Rogarou—a Métis werewolf-like figure that stalks both the forest and the human heart.

The Elixir of Love by Gaetano Donizetti

May 8, 14, 16, 18, 20, 26, and 29, 2027

Sung in Italian with English and French SURTITLES™

A Canadian Opera Company revival

"Just what the doctor ordered" (*Ludwig Van Toronto*), *The Elixir of Love* delights with its warmth, wit, and utterly irresistible melodies in this charming production from director **James Robinson**. Tenor **Duke Kim** makes his COC debut as shy Nemorino, who will do anything to win the heart of the lovely Adina, sung by **Ensemble Studio** soprano **Emily Rocha**—even buy a so-called "elixir of love" from the smooth-talking salesman Dr. Dulcamara, performed by bass-baritone and COC regular **Luca Pisaroni**. As it turns out, the magic potion is really wine, leading to a series of comic misunderstandings and taking audiences along on a delightful whirlwind. Conductor **Lorenzo Passerini** returns to the COC podium, bringing his renowned expertise of the *bel canto* repertoire to Donizetti's bubbly score, including one of the opera's most famous arias and popular recital selections, "Una furtiva lagrima."

AT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY THEATRE

Come Closer by Ryan Trew and Rachel Krehm

June 18, 19, and 20, 2027

Sung in English with English and French SURTITLES™

A moving new Canadian work from the COC's **Company-in-Residence Opera 5** invites audiences into an intimate exploration of love, loss, and healing. *Come Closer* draws from soprano Rachel Krehm's personal experience of losing her sister, Elizabeth, and attempting to make sense of her grief. The story follows Big Sister as she drifts through a series of waking dreams inspired by Little Sister's poetry. These dreamscapes weave together memory and imagination as she strives to understand who her sister was, what their relationship meant, and how to move forward after profound loss. *Come Closer* is a lyrical and emotional meditation on grief, reconnection, and the enduring bonds of sisterhood—where art becomes a bridge between the living and the lost.

For detailed information on cast and creative teams, visit coc.ca/2627. All repertoire, dates, productions, and casting are subject to change without notice.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition & Gala **Thursday, October 22, 2026**

One of the **Canadian Opera Company's** most exciting, fun-filled, and impactful evenings of the year returns on **October 22, 2026**. **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.

Bravissimo! **Thursday, December 31, 2026**

End the year on a high note as **Bravissimo! New Year's at the Opera** returns to Roy Thomson Hall for a one-of-a-kind concert event, featuring the **Canadian Opera Company Orchestra** led by **COC Music Director Johannes Debus**. Four international stars perform standout selections from some of the greatest operas ever written during this glamorous and unique New Year's Eve experience.

TICKET INFORMATION AND SPECIAL PRICING

Subscriptions to the 26/27 season are available now and may be purchased online at coc.ca, or by calling **416-363-8231**. Subscribe by **April 30, 2026** to guarantee your renewable seats.

Single tickets to all 26/27 operas will be available to the general public on **July 20, 2026**. Subscribers, donors, and newsletter subscribers will be contacted directly with details on exclusive pre-sale access.

Opera Under 30 offers **\$28 tickets** for the 26/27 season to patrons under the age of 30.

Tickets for **Bravissimo! New Year's at the Opera** are on sale now at glatzconcerts.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Season Sponsor: BMO Financial Group

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

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

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

Così fan tutte originally made possible, in part, by **Philip Deck & Kimberley Bozak** and **BMO Financial Group**.

Empire of Wild is co-produced with the **National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund, Orchestra and Indigenous Theatre.**

Empire of Wild's music score is co-commissioned with the **NAC Orchestra.**

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 alongside Artistic Director Roberto Mauro and Music Director Johannes Debus. Recently, Ian Derrer was appointed the next General Director of the company, slated to begin his term in July 2026. 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.

– 30 –

To access the COC's Media Gallery for high-res photography, please visit: coc.ca/press

Username: cocpress | **Login:** mediapix

For more information, please contact:

Avril Sequeira, Vice-President, Communications, email: avrils@coc.ca

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