



CANADIAN CHILDREN'S
OPERA COMPANY

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CCOC PREMIERES NEW ARMENIAN-CANADIAN OPERA IN THE 2022-2023 SEASON

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 22, 2023 The Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC) proudly announces the return of its annual main stage production with its newest and 14th opera commission, *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs*, by Juno award-winning composer Serouj Kradjian and Dora award-winning librettist Marjorie Chan.

The world premiere of *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs*, the latest new opera in the CCOC's long history of new commissioned works, will be performed by and for young people and audiences of all ages June 9 to 11, 2023 at the Lyric Theatre at the Meridian Arts Centre, located in North York.

The opera is based on a fairy tale, known in Armenian as "Hazaran Bibul." The story follows the journey of two siblings, Leah, and Ari, as they emerge from a tragedy in their homeland. They embark on an adventure to find the Nightingale of a Thousand Songs to bring back life and joy to their world. Along the way, the children remember their lost friends and family and face many challenges and obstacles. The story is one of healing and hope and exploring what it means to be able to move on from a terrible event; to honour those who are no longer with us and celebrate what is still to come.

The opera will be performed by 70 young people between the ages of 7 to 18 in English, Armenian and Arabic. The CCOC is happy to welcome back a CCOC alumna, Armenian-Canadian soprano Lynn Isnar, to the role of The Nightingale. CCOC Music Director Teri Dunn, will lead a professional chamber orchestra, including the *duduk*, an ancient Armenian double-reed wind instrument that has been compared to the human voice in its expressiveness and ability to convey deep emotion. The *duduk* will add an extra layer of depth and meaning to the performance with its hauntingly warm tone, evoking the rich cultural heritage of Armenia and immersing audiences in an unforgettable musical experience that will reflect both Armenian and Western sonorities and musical traditions.

Canadian pianist and composer Serouj Kradjian was inspired to create a work to represent the rich culture and music that unites the Caucasus & the Middle East. As the lead characters travel from the plains of Mount Ararat, through the region to Lebanon, the music changes to reflect a more distinct Arabic style, incorporating traditional instruments and texts, and throughout, the relationship between the two siblings - navigating different needs and wants, but nonetheless rich in connection, love and support - lends universal resonance. While he has composed for children's voices in the past, *The Nightingale* is Kradjian's first full opera.

Librettist Marjorie Chan, who co-created the CCOC's *The Monkiest King* commission (2018), was excited to work on the new project. She was inspired by the hope and resilience of the children in the story, and how they cope with tragedy. "Serouj presented me with this tremendous fairy tale filled with survival, hope and healing. It was so incredibly rich, filled with prophecy, magic and humanity. I was struck by the resiliency of the child characters. I could not stop thinking of the children who survive war and genocide. What happens to them? How do they find their way out of darkness and towards light?"

Together, with a production team featuring director Julie McIsaac, designer Jung-Hye Kim, and lighting designer Mikael Kangas, and Armenian-Canadian visual artist Amy Kazandjian as Creative and Cultural

Director to create a unique expression and celebration of Armenian and Arabic culture, accessible and intended for young people and families to enjoy.

“Opera offers a dynamic medium in which young people can explore their emotions, shared experiences, and how they connect with the world,” says Executive Director Katherine Semcesen. “In addition to growing the Canadian operatic canon, commissioning new operatic works allows young people to welcome new stories, experience new musical aesthetics and traditions, and connect with and learn from new artists and communities. *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs* is rooted in Armenian culture and history, but its themes of loss, courage, hope, and healing are themes to which we can all relate. Opera reminds us all that we’re all part of something bigger than ourselves.”

Creative and Cultural Director, Amy Kazandjian, believes that *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs* speaks to the Armenian experience but one can easily draw parallels to other recent and past atrocities and significant events: “Our aim is to engage in meaningful conversations with the CCOC choristers and audiences about genocide, while making an important connection to our Canadian roots. Canada was “built” on the (stolen) ancestral lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and as non-indigenous Canadians, we hold an important role in the ongoing recognition of Indigenous history and its active reparation. Through this production, we hope to facilitate a deeper understanding of cultural exchange and the complexities of our shared (human) history, and create a compelling experience for audiences of all ages.”

Board Chair Maria Ringo agrees; “the world is changing constantly, and these new commissions give us fresh perspectives to appreciate through these new stories. We love the dramatic reflections of our world presented to us by these modern commissions, especially when performed by our children.”

Performance and Ticket Information

School Previews (school groups only): June 9, 2023 – 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Public Performances (four): June 9, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.
 June 10, 2023 at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
 June 11, 2023 at 3 p.m.

The opera runs for approximately 65 minutes with no intermission and is suitable for ages 7 and up.

More information on the opera can be found at canadianchildrensopera.com/TheNightingale.

Tickets go on sale at 2 p.m. on March 7, 2023. Single tickets are \$35 for adults, \$25 for seniors/arts worker, and \$20 for youth (ages 18 and under). Tickets can be purchased online at TO Live’s website, tolive.com, or by calling the TO Live Box Office at 416-366-7723. For more information regarding student group tickets for the school previews and public performances, please contact the TO Live Box Office at 416-366-7723.

The CCOC would like to acknowledge the generous support of the following organizations for their support of *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs* and its season activities:



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For more information, please contact:

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The [Canadian Children's Opera Company](#) is a world-class ensemble that introduces the magic of opera to children and youth through professional musical and dramatic education and the performance of established and newly commissioned operatic and choral repertoire. The first of its kind in this country, the CCOC has commissioned 14 major operatic works by Canadian and international composers and librettists. Every year, children are involved in a production with professional directors, designers, singers and coaches from the international opera and theatre communities.

The company was designed to offer top quality instruction in operatic and choral singing, stagecraft and drama. This training, paired with numerous annual performance opportunities, places the CCOC in a central position in the Canadian opera scene. The CCOC has over 100 children and youth participants and remains the only permanent children's opera company in Canada.

Information on how to join is available at canadianchildrensopera.com/join