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MEDIA RELEASE

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Stratford Festival launches its new Forum with a Shakespeare Slam in Toronto

*Torquil Campbell, Adam Gopnik and Rufus Wainwright
will debate and entertain*

February 25, 2013... The Stratford Festival invites you to see Shakespeare in a whole new light, channeled through the remarkable perspectives of some of Canada's most provocative thinkers and performers, **Torquil Campbell**, **Adam Gopnik** and **Rufus Wainwright**.

On Shakespeare's birthday, the Festival will be in Toronto to present the Shakespeare Slam, a thought-provoking and irreverent event to mark the launch of the Festival's newest initiative, The Forum. This celebration of culture – both classical and pop – will look at how Shakespeare continues to entertain and inspire in today's world. Like The Forum itself, the evening will offer insightful debate, along with music and other entertaining explorations.

"The Shakespeare Slam brings together three of the most original, lively and unpredictable talents we could find," says **Antoni Cimolino**, the Festival's Artistic Director and creator of The Forum. "They each have a love for Shakespeare and a passion for creating new work that is on the most thoughtful edge of contemporary culture. I, of course, have money on the outcome and predict it will be a monstrously entertaining evening."

To start the evening, one of Canada's most famous essayists, *New Yorker* staff writer **Adam Gopnik**, will face off against the country's favourite hipster **Torquil Campbell**, lead singer of the indie rock band Stars and cultural contributor to CBC's Q. The subject of their polemic: classical or pop culture – which has the reigning impact on our world?

Rufus Wainwright, singer, songwriter and composer extraordinaire, will take the evening to new heights with a performance of some of his own songs set to Shakespeare's words.

The Slam will also feature a musical performance by **Torquil Campbell**, accompanied by multi-instrumentalist **Julian Brown**. They will perform Stars hits that are part of a new theatrical work, currently described as a reflection on *Hamlet*, which Mr. Campbell is developing for the Stratford Festival with Ann-Marie MacDonald and Alisa Palmer.

Mr. Cimolino is launching The Forum in this, his first season as Artistic Director of the Stratford Festival, as part of a new direction – one he hopes will make a visit to Stratford an all-encompassing, stimulating and immersive cultural experience.

“Through the diverse offerings of The Forum, I hope that we can offer transformational experiences that will allow our productions to resonate more deeply and personally with each patron,” says Mr. Cimolino.

“We have to offer audiences more ways to explore the work on our stages, to make the connections between the great classic plays and life today,” he says. “As part of that, it is critical to have contemporary voices alongside those of ancient times: it anchors our current experience to the bedrock of hard-won knowledge of those who came before us. The Shakespeare Slam will provide a taste of what is to come at Stratford, with diverse perspectives that stimulate, provoke and challenge our perceptions and assumptions about our work and our society.”

The Shakespeare Slam will be held at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23, at Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto.

Tickets, priced from \$30 to \$45, \$20 for students, go on sale Tuesday, February 26, and are available through the Stratford Festival box office, at 1.800.567.1600, or Koerner Hall’s Weston Family Box Office, at 416.408.0208.

Support for the inaugural season of The Forum is generously provided by Kelly and Michael Meighen, with media sponsorship provided by *The Walrus*.

The Stratford Festival’s 2013 season also begins on April 23. It features *Romeo and Juliet*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Tommy*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *Mary Stuart*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Taking Shakespeare* and *The Thrill*, along with more than 150 Forum events.