



Atelier lyrique to welcome five new recruits

Montreal, November 27, 2017 – The **Opéra de Montréal** held its very first **Atelier lyrique** National Auditions Gala in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts on November 15. This prestigious event, entitled **TALENT 2017**, brought together over three hundred music lovers who gathered to celebrate Canada's emerging operatic talent on an unforgettable evening benefitting the Opéra de Montréal and its Atelier lyrique.

The eleven finalists, chosen from among more than 120 artists across the country, vied for a spot in the Odm's prestigious artist-in-residence program. The end result: five young soloists will be making their way into the Atelier lyrique in September 2018. They are: **Florence Bourget** (Montreal), **Spencer Britten** (Vancouver), **Brenden Friesen** (Saskatchewan), **Andrea Núñez** (Toronto), and **Elisabeth Polese** (Toronto).

As an artist residency program for opera singers, pianist-vocal coaches, and stage directors, the Atelier lyrique serves as a veritable springboard to a professional career. Offering training and on-stage experience at the Opéra de Montréal, the program aims to adequately equip young artists for every aspect of their careers: vocal technique, musical and dramatic performance, operatic diction, languages, health, mental preparation for performance, fiscal matters, professional image, etc. Several internationally renowned artists have been Atelier members over the years, including Julie Boulianne, Etienne Dupuis, Marianne Fiset, Marc Hervieux, Marie-Josée Lord, and Michèle Losier.

Opéra de Montréal

Founded in 1980 and based in Montreal, the Opéra de Montréal is the largest francophone opera company in North America. Each season, close to 50,000 spectators make their way through the company's doors. Under the direction of General Director Patrick Corrigan and Artistic Director Michel Beaulac, the company's season is made up of four to five operas, activities and concerts by the Atelier lyrique, and outreach activities. The Opéra is a key player in the city's economic, cultural, and social development as, each season, it maintains working relationships with over 360 local businesses, and hires no less than 800 artists and craftspeople. Close to 80% of the artists appearing at the company are Canadian.

-30-

ALAIN LABONTÉ COMMUNICATIONS : MEDIA RELATIONS

514.523.9922 | alain@alainlabonte.ca



Fondation J.A. DeSève



Spencer Britten (British Columbia)

Tenor

Spencer Britten possesses a Bachelor's and a Master's from the University of British Columbia. He has performed several roles by Mozart, Strauss, and Britten (to whom he is related). In addition to opera, Spencer has also studied theatre and dance. www.spencerbritten.com

Andrea Núñez (Ontario)

Soprano

A former member of the Santa Fe Opera's young artist program and the Gerdine Young Artist Program at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis—where she will return in 2018 to sing Private Sonia Gonzalez in the world premiere of *An American Soldier*—, she has been heard as Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Norina in *Don Pasquale*. She is a winner of the Roberta Peters Award from the George London Foundation, the Richard Gaddes Career Award, and the Toronto Mozart Competition.

Florence Bourget (Quebec)

Mezzo-soprano

Florence Bourget has just completed her Master's with Catherine Sévigny and John Fanning at the Université de Montréal where she has performed the following roles: the Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas*, three roles in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Florence will soon appear in two title roles in operas presented at the Université de Montréal.

Brenden Friesen (Saskatchewan)

Bass-baritone

Born in Saskatchewan, Brenden Friesen is currently completing his Master's in opera at the University of Toronto, in addition to studying privately with Lorna MacDonald. His upcoming roles include Leporello and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* at the University of Toronto and Colline in *La bohème* at the Saskatoon Opera in 2018.

Elizabeth Polese (Ontario)

Soprano

Canadian soprano Elizabeth Polese is a graduate of the University of Toronto. In 2016-17, she was a resident artist at the Banff Centre, at the Rebanks Family Fellowship, and at the Highlands Opera Studio. She made her debut in the role of Despina in *Così fan tutte* and in *Carmina Burana*; in concert, she has appeared in Latin America (Havana, Cuba), at Roy Thomson Hall, and at the Four Seasons Centre.