

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

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MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE LAUNCHES ARTIST TRAINING PROGRAM, MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE STUDIO

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Six Studio Artists have been selected for MOT's 2015-16 Season

DETROIT, October 6, 2015 – Wayne S. Brown, president, and Dr. David DiChiera, founder and artistic director, of Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) have announced the official launch of the organization's new resident artist training program: Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. This new resident artist program is comprised of six Studio Artists. MOT Studio's highly-talented inaugural class includes soprano Angela Theis, mezzo-soprano Raehann Bryce-Davis, tenor Joseph Michael Brent, baritone Jeff Byrnes, bass Brent Michael Smith and coach/accompanist Gordon Craig Schermer. The program is supported by a major grant from the **William Davidson Foundation**.

“The Michigan Opera Theatre Studio will serve as a central component of MOT's enhanced presence in the community through our productions in the Detroit Opera House, community venues, and through recitals and special events. Likewise, the participants will benefit from the advice and guidance of Dr. David DiChiera and some of the leading coaches in the opera industry,” said **Brown**.

From its inception, it was MOT's goal to immediately place this program among the most compelling in the opera industry. Under the leadership of celebrated American tenor **Richard Leech**, MOT's newly named Director of Resident Artist Programs, the Studio artists will complete a 10-month curriculum that includes advanced training and professional performance opportunities. From September 2015 to June 2016, Studio Artists will gain valuable experience through performance opportunities in main stage and community productions. The program also provides myriad opportunities for the artists to hone their skills through master classes and individual training with an array of professionals, guest artists, and coaches.

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“These young artists represent some of the finest and most exciting emerging talent in the world of opera today,” said Leech. “To be given the honor of mentoring each of them through the next critical steps in this challenging profession is both humbling and exhilarating. I find that, today, I feel much as I did when I first began to find that elusive success we all hope for.” Leech went on to say, “MOT patrons will get to share in this excitement as they proudly follow the development and careers of these, “their” Studio Artists.”

An important and unique element of the program is that MOT’s community initiative productions are now being selected and mounted specifically for the Studio program. This season the Studio artists will fill leading and featured roles in MOT’s production of Aaron Copland’s *The Tender Land*, the second installment, following last season’s *Frida*, of MOT’s community initiative to annually produce an opera outside of the Detroit Opera House in venues throughout metro Detroit.

Marc Scorca, President and Chief Executive Officer of Opera America, said, “It is thrilling to learn of the establishment of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. The program, which will include a full production performed by the Studio artists, will add an important dimension to the American training infrastructure and another element to MOT’s broad community service. It is wonderful that the program is being directed by one of America’s great singers, Richard Leech. The studio artists are very fortunate to learn from him and his many friends and associates who will enrich the training experience.”

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About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director), one of the nation’s most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded in 1971, the company’s mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.