

# MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

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## MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE STUDIO ARTIST WINS GREAT LAKES REGION OF METROPOLITAN OPERA NATIONAL COUNCIL AUDITIONS

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*Jeff Byrnes, baritone, to represent MOT at Semifinals in New York*

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**DETROIT, February 5, 2016** – This weekend, Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artist **Jeff Byrnes** was named the winner of the Great Lakes Region for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, which were held at the Detroit Opera House on Sunday, January 31, 2016.

Byrnes, a baritone and resident artist of MOT's Studio program, impressed council judges when he sang "È sogno? o realtà" from Verdi's *Falstaff*, and "Hai già vinta la causa" from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Byrnes will advance to compete with singers from 13 districts at the National Council semifinals in New York next month.

"I'm really excited to have the opportunity to travel to New York and represent Michigan Opera Theatre in the semifinals of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions," **Byrnes** said. "The MOT Studio has really helped me hone the skills that were needed to make it this far in the competition, and I am very grateful for all of the love and support that MOT has provided me. This past weekend was made even sweeter by the fact that I was able to perform on my own turf and win in front of a home crowd!"

"Jeff has taken a giant step toward achieving his goals," said **Richard Leech, MOT's Director of Resident Artist Programs**. "His talent, hard work, and preparation met this very special opportunity and an artist emerged that perhaps he hadn't even realized he had become. We are all very proud and excited for him."

The first Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions took place in 1954 in the Twin Cities. For more than 60 years, the annual competition has helped young singers gain exposure and launch careers. Some of opera's greatest singers were once finalists in the competition. Every season, more than 100 former participants in the National Council Auditions appear in the Met's opera productions.

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### **About the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio**

The Michigan Opera Theatre Studio is Michigan Opera Theatre's resident artist program. Founded in 2015, the MOT Studio offers advanced training and professional performance opportunities to a select group of highly talented emerging artists. From September to June each season, Studio Artists gain valuable experience through performance opportunities in main stage and community productions, and hone their skills through master classes and individual training. Each season, Studio Artists fill leading and featured roles in an opera mounted specifically for the program and presented on multiple stages throughout metro Detroit.

### **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](http://www.michiganopera.org).

### **About the Metropolitan Opera National Council**

The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions is a program designed to discover promising young opera singers and assist in the development of their careers. Starting with the Auditions of the Air in the 1930s and continuing today, the Auditions have been a defining step in the careers of our greatest opera stars.