

For Immediate Release

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Michigan Opera Theatre Announces 2019-2020 Studio Artists

Mezzo-Soprano Katherine DeYoung and Bass Allen Michael Jones Return, Joined by Soprano Avery Boettcher, Tenor Edward Graves and Baritone Darren Drone

DETROIT, May 30, 2019 - Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) is pleased to announce its 2019-2020 Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artists. The roster includes the return of mezzo-soprano Katherine DeYoung and bass Allen Michael Jones. Joining them are soprano Avery Boettcher, tenor Edward Graves and baritone Darren Drone.

Entering its fifth year, the MOT Studio is the product of MOT Founder Dr. David DiChiera's long and passionate commitment to providing opportunities for talented young singers. Studio Artists receive up to two years of advanced training and performance opportunities as they hone their skills through master classes and individual work with an array of world-class professionals, guest artists and coaches.

"Supporting the next generation of opera professionals has always been a priority for Michigan Opera Theatre," said MOT Principal Conductor Stephen Lord. "We can't wait to showcase this amazing up-and-coming talent with Metro Detroit."

Celebrated American tenor Richard Leech continues to lead the program as Director of Resident Artist Programs.

"It's a joy to watch these artists grow throughout their time at the MOT Studio," Leech said. "We invite our patrons to experience these young singers while they're here and follow them along throughout their promising careers."

MOT Studio Artists have performed in a growing number of prestigious houses worldwide, including Theater an der Wien, The Musikverein in Vienna and San Francisco Opera and have gone on to perform in world premieres including: Studio alumna Raehann Brice Davis in Paul Morevcc's "Sactuary Road" at Carnegie Hall and Briana Elyse Hunter in her creation of the leading role of the Mother in Jeanine Tesori's "Blue" this summer with the Glimmerglass Festival and next season with Washington National Opera. They have also received numerous international honors that include winning the prestigious George London Award, The Hilde Zadek Competition and The Concorso Lyrico Internazionale di Protolino and have been National Semi-Finalists and District and Regional winners of The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and featured in Opera News and Classical Singer magazines.

"The Michigan Opera Theatre Studio is part of MOT's commitment to supporting the next generation of performing artists in tandem with strengthening ties throughout our community," said President and CEO Wayne S. Brown. "Through the generous support of the William Davidson Foundation and individual donors,

these young singers are able to hone their crafts in a professional environment in performance on the stages of the Detroit Opera House and throughout Southeast Michigan."

Supported by a major grant from the William Davidson Foundation, the MOT Studio also serves as a central component of MOT's enhanced presence in the community through productions in the Detroit Opera House and community venues, as well as through concerts and special events. In addition to providing performance opportunities in its main stage operas, MOT produces a full-scale production dedicated to the Studio Artists. This season's Studio production will be a double bill of Giacomo Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi" and its 1997 sequel, Michael Ching's "Buoso's Ghost," performed at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts (Clinton Township) Feb. 29 and March 1.

The 2019-20 Studio Artists:

Avery Boettcher



Soprano Avery Boettcher has performed a wide array of roles both in the United States and abroad, ranging from Susanna in "The Marriage of Figaro" with La Musica Lirica in Italy to the lighter operetta and musical theater roles of Yum-Yum in "The Mikado" with Viterbo University. Recently she was seen as Donna Elvira in Indiana University Opera Theater's production of "Don Giovanni" and Zweite Dame in "The Magic Flute" with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. She also performed Fredrik Sixten's "Requiem" and Tarik O'Regan's "Triptych" with the Bel Canto Chorus of Milwaukee. Prior to MOT, Avery was an opera fellow in the Aspen Music Festival where she performed John Harbison's "Mirabai Songs" with the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, as well as Mahler's "Symphony No. 4" with the Aspen Conductors

Orchestra. Her awards include being named the third place winner in the Central Region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the first place winner of the National Society of Arts and Letters Voice Competition. This summer, she will sing the role of the countess in "The Marriage of Figaro" at the Aspen Music Festival. Next season, she will make her role debut as Zerlina in "Don Giovanni" with MOT and sing the role of Lauretta in "Gianni Schicchi" and "Buoso's Ghost."

Katherine DeYoung



Traverse City, Michigan native Katherine DeYoung is the resident mezzo-soprano of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. Her recent MOT roles include Mae in "The Grapes of Wrath," Sandman in "Hansel and Gretel," the Old Lady in "Candide" and the Mother in "Amahl and the Night Visitors." She holds a master's degree from the University of Houston where she performed Isabella in "The Italian Girl in Algiers," Gertrude in "Romeo and Juliet" and Elizabeth Proctor in "The Crucible." She also performed the title role in "Carmen" with Opera in the Ozarks. In February, she won the Online Viewers' Choice Award in Houston Grand Opera's Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. She is also a

District Winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is an alumna of Michigan State University. This summer she returns for a second season performing with Santa Fe Opera as part of their apprentice program. Next season she will perform the role of Zita in "Gianni Schicchi" and "Buoso's Ghost."

Darren Lekeith Drone



Darren Lekeith Drone comes to the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio as its resident baritone. With a repertoire in both opera and musical theater, his performance credits include roles in "The Daughter of the Regiment," "La Cambiale di Matrimonio" and "Lohengrin" as well as performances in "Newsies," "Dreamgirls" and "Les Miserables." Darren has been an apprentice with Tulsa Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Opera Southwest, Opera in the Ozarks and Opera Neo and also performed with Heartland Opera Theatre, Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma, Arkansas Repertory Theatre and the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. His awards include first prize in the Benton-Schmidt Competition, a two-time finalist in Trinity Showcase Presents and a winner and finalist for numerous National

Association of Teachers of Singing musical theatre and classical competitions. He holds a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Tech University and has continued additional post-graduate studies at the University of Oklahoma. He will perform the title role of MOT's production of "Gianni Schicchi" and "Buoso's Ghost" next season.

Edward Graves



Tenor Edward Graves is a native of Oxon Hill, Maryland. Recent performances include Robbins in "Porgy and Bess" with South Florida Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Opera. He was also a soloist with the NSO Pops with the Heritage Signature Chorale at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and performed President H.W. Bush's funeral with the Cathedral Choir at the Washington National Cathedral. Prior to MOT, he was a 2017-18 Baumgartner Studio Artist at Florentine Opera in Milwaukee, where he performed in "The Merry Widow," "Venus and Adonis," "Dido and Aeneas" and "The Magic Flute." He received his Performer Diploma and Master of Music degree in Voice Performance from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and holds a

Bachelor of Music degree in Voice Performance from Towson University. This summer he will take part in a world premiere of "Blue," a newly-commissioned opera written by Jeanine Tesori at The Glimmerglass Festival. Next season, he will perform Rinuccio in "Gianni Schicchi" and "Buoso's Ghost" with MOT.

Allen Michael Jones



Atlanta native Allen Michael Jones is the resident bass of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. He recently performed Maximilian in "Candide," Balthazar in "Amahl and the Night Visitors" and Zaretsky in "Eugene Onegin" with MOT. Previous roles include Don Bartolo in "The Marriage of Figaro" with the University of Georgia, Sarastro in "The Magic Flute," Colline in "La bohème" with Georgia State University (GSU) and Don Basilio in "The Barber of Seville" with both GSU and Atlanta Opera's Touring Company. He holds a master's degree in Voice from Georgia State University and is also a professional voice-over and radio artist. This summer he is a Young Artist with the Glimmerglass Festival, including the cover of the leading role of the

Father in the world premiere of "Blue." Next season he will perform Masetto in "Don Giovanni" and Betto di Signa in "Gianni Schicchi" and "Buoso's Ghost" with MOT.

For more information visit <https://michiganopera.org/about-us/studio-artists/>.

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About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre, 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 by Dr. David DiChiera, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. The organization is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown, Principal Conductor Stephen Lord and Chairman of the Board Rick Williams. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.