

“Having a space to grow, explore, learn, test boundaries, and even fail in a safe place allows us to craft the artist that we will become. I am so proud to oversee the Detroit Opera Resident Artist Program and support the creation of the next generation’s stars.” —Christine Goerke

## Detroit Opera announces five 2023–24 Resident Artists; program is led by Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke and Head of Music Nathalie Doucet



Left to right: Detroit Opera Resident Artists Rolfe Daux, Lisa Marie Rogali, Ben Reisinger, Melanie Spector, and River Guard

**DETROIT, June 14, 2023**—After an international search, Detroit Opera has announced the five singers who will train in Detroit Opera’s Resident Artist Program during the 2023–24 season: soprano **Melanie Spector**, mezzo-soprano **Lisa Marie Rogali**, tenor **River Guard**, and baritones **Rolfe Daux** and **Ben Reisinger**. The five were chosen from more than 850 artists who applied to the program, which is spearheaded by Associate Artistic Director **Christine Goerke** and Detroit Opera’s Head of Music, **Nathalie Doucet**. This is the second season of Detroit Opera’s recently reworked residency program, which builds on the strong foundations of the Studio Artist program founded in 2015 by Dr. David DiChiera, the company’s founder, while embodying the forward-looking leadership of Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director, and President and CEO Wayne S. Brown, embracing individualized study and direct performing experience to provide world-class educational opportunity to the next generation of opera talent.

“I am delighted at the success of Detroit Opera’s Resident Artist Program, which just wrapped up its 2022–23 season,” says Detroit Opera President & CEO **Wayne S. Brown**. “This season’s participating artists told us they have had extraordinary experiences with our organization and the Detroit community. In anticipation of the upcoming season, an unprecedented number of artists applied for five positions, which reflects the need for individualized, nurturing training programs for early-career professionals. Detroit audiences

can look forward to an exciting and engaging season made possible in part by our Resident Artists.”

The five Resident Artists have committed to an intensive program while living in Detroit from September 2023 through June 2024, training directly with Goerke, Doucet, and other members of the Detroit Opera community in specially crafted and individualized curricula of voice, movement, language and career guidance. In addition to their hands-on training, Resident Artists have opportunities to perform with Detroit Opera in mainstage productions, giving them access to work with guest artists, directors, and conductors. Guest artists and industry professionals who worked with the 2022–23 Resident Artists include Richard Cox, Valerio Galli, Wendy Bryn Harmer, Ricardo Herrera, Matthew Horner, Dr. Paul Kwak, Ana María Martínez, and Janet Williams. In keeping with Detroit Opera’s longstanding focus on making opera accessible to the surrounding community, Resident Artists will forge direct ties to Detroit through recitals, concerts, and other collaborations with local schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and institutions. Resident Artists perform regularly during the season for patients at Henry Ford Hospital and in public concert series at Christ Church Cranbrook and The War Memorial. All Resident Artists will begin on a one-year contract; selected artists will be invited to participate in a second year.

Celebrated soprano Christine Goerke, Detroit Opera’s Associate Artistic Director, was instrumental in reshaping the Resident Artist Program in 2022 to keep pace with the spirit of innovation, outreach, and community-building that has characterized Detroit Opera’s programming and administration since the arrival of Yuval Sharon as artistic director. Goerke appointed internationally renowned opera coach and pianist Nathalie Doucet as Director of the program; together they created a program that offers individualized study to cater to the unique needs of each artist and aligns with the country’s top training programs. Detroit Opera serves as a nurturing home for these rising stars, supporting and helping them achieve their full potential in the highly competitive industry.

“Having had the good fortune to have a career spanning the better part of three decades and counting, I know without a doubt that I would not be where I am today without having benefited from various training programs,” says Detroit Opera Associate Artistic Director **Christine Goerke**. “Having a space to grow, explore, learn, test boundaries, and even fail in a safe place allows us to craft the artist that we will become. I am so proud to oversee the Detroit Opera Resident Artist Program and to support the creation of the next generation’s stars.”

“My top priority is nurturing the next generation of singers, providing a safe space for them to develop and flourish in their careers,” says **Nathalie Doucet**, Director of the Resident Artist Program. “It brings me great joy to work with these exceptionally talented artists every day during their residencies in Detroit, supporting them and equipping them to excel in this competitive industry. In September, two of this year’s Resident Artists—baritone Ben Reisinger and soprano Melanie Spector—will return for a second season, and I am thrilled to welcome the three new outstanding singers who will be joining them: mezzo-soprano Lisa Mari Rogali, tenor River Guard, and baritone Rolfe Dauz.”

“My favorite moment this past season was learning the lead role of Margarita Xirgu in Golijov’s *Ainadamar* on six hours’ notice and filling in for several rehearsals,” says returning Resident Artist **Melanie Spector**. “Nathalie called me the morning of the first rehearsal and said, ‘You’re up, buttercup!’ I immediately got to work. Nathalie dropped everything she was doing and went through the entire score with me before the first rehearsal, and Christine was texting me messages of encouragement. My fellow Resident Artists were in the rehearsal room to cheer me on and support me. It was an invaluable experience to jump in on such short notice, and I am grateful that Detroit Opera gave me that chance and trusted my musicianship.”

“This season has been a great stepping-stone in my career, and I am very grateful for the experience,” says returning Resident Artist **Ben Reisinger**. “One of my personal favorite moments was during a musical read-through in our production of *Faust*. I was making my professional debut and was extremely nervous, even though I had been preparing for months. At the end of the read-through, our maestro, Valerio Galli, told me I did a wonderful job. For the first time, I felt that I could be in the same cast as professionals from all over the world. It was a great feeling of relief knowing that after all my hard work, this career could be possible for me. I have had a great year and have learned a lot about music and myself, and I am extremely happy to be continuing that for another year here at Detroit Opera.”

## **Detroit Opera 2023–24 Resident Artists**

### **Melanie Spector, soprano**

Praised for her “beaming soprano” by *Operawire*, Melanie Spector was born and raised in New York City. She is a Resident Artist at Detroit Opera, where she made her debut as the High Priestess in Verdi’s *Aida* singing next to operatic stars Angel Blue and Christine Goerke. For this performance, Melanie received critical acclaim for her “exceptional pitch, pristine sound, and unwavering commitment to operatic excellence” (*Operawire*). Other recent performances include Brahms’ *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Op. 52, Mozart’s “Vorrei spiegarvi, o dio” K. 418 and Requiem with the Midland Symphony Orchestra and Orff’s *Carmina Burana* with the Wayne State Wind Symphony at Detroit Symphony’s Orchestra Hall. In her first season at Detroit Opera, she has covered the roles of Atalanta in Handel’s *Xerxes* and Margarita Xirgu in Golijov’s *Ainadamar*. She has been recognized by prestigious organizations including the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and the Gerda Lissner Foundation. Melanie’s recent highlights include Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* at Michigan’s Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, and in August she will make her role debut as Donna Anna in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at Savannah Opera during the 2023 Savannah VOICE Festival.

### **Lisa Marie Rogali, mezzo-soprano**

Award-winning mezzo-soprano Lisa Marie Rogali has been praised for her “nuanced voice” and “spontaneity” on the stage. She is quickly establishing herself as a versatile performer of opera, musical theater, contemporary, and concert music. During Detroit Opera’s 2023–24 season, Lisa will sing the roles of Kate Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* and Lapak in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and will cover the role of Dodo in *Breaking the Waves*. She will also make

her role debut as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with North Carolina Opera. During the 2022–23 season, she debuted the roles of Princess/Lucy/Fancy Doll #1 in Minnesota Opera's world premiere of Paola Prestini and Mark Campbell's *Edward Tulane* and performed her first Hansel in Opera Birmingham's production of *Hansel and Gretel*. On the concert stage, she was featured as a soloist with the Naples Philharmonic, the Masterwork Chorus, and Williamsport Symphony Orchestra. This summer, she will return to the Glimmerglass Festival to sing Stéphanie in *Roméo et Juliette* and Paquette in *Candide*. Lisa has been featured in roles on the stages of companies including Minnesota Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Opera Saratoga. Lisa has earned top accolades from the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, Jensen Foundation, Giulio Gari Foundation, Gerda Lissner Foundation, American Traditions Vocal Collection, Lotte Lenya Competition, and many more. Lisa holds a master of music degree in vocal performance from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music and a bachelor's degree in music education from Pennsylvania State University.

### **River Guard, tenor**

River Guard is a Canadian tenor from Hamilton, Ontario, living in Montréal, Québec. He holds a bachelor's degree in music and an opera diploma from Wilfrid Laurier University, and a master's degree in opera from the University of Toronto Opera School, where he studied with Wendy Nielsen. River is a 2021 recipient of the Rebanks Family Fellowship and International Performance and Residency Program from the Royal Conservatory of Music's Glenn Gould School. He is an alumnus of the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Opera in the 21st Century program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Past roles include Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (Highlands Opera Studio), Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (Glenn Gould School), Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* (Canadian Vocal Arts Institute/CVAI), Miles in Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Proving Up* (Aspen Music Festival and School), Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* (Highlands Opera Studio), Don José in *La tragédie de Carmen* and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* (l'Atelier d'opéra Université de Montréal). This summer at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, River will cover the roles of Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Sam Polk in *Susannah*, and he will be a participant in the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria.

### **Rolfe Daus, baritone**

Filipino-American baritone Rolfe Daus is quickly becoming recognized for his beautiful voice, sensitive artistry, and compelling stage presence and has garnered international acclaim for his "focused baritone, perfect diction, and dramatic acting" (*Calgary Herald*). He was selected as a Vocal Fellow at the prestigious Tanglewood Music Center this summer, when he will perform in concerts and recitals curated by soprano Dawn Upshaw, who leads the Vocal Arts Program. In September, he joins Detroit Opera as a Resident Artist for the 2023–24 season. Rolfe was a 2022 Festival Artist the Chautauqua Opera Company, performing roles in Virgil Thomson's *The Mother Of Us All* and Kamala Sankaram and Susan Yankowitz's contemporary opera-theater work *Thumbprint*. During the 2021–22 season, Rolfe performed the role of Wotan/Hingaan Jann in composer Yadi Nursalim Anugerah and librettist Miranda Lakerveld's new opera *Ine Aya'* at the renowned Holland Festival; he reprised the role in a

Holland Festival touring production throughout Indonesia. His vocal-piano duo with Lithuanian pianist Gabrielė Žemaitytė, Youth and Love, was awarded second prize at the 2021 International Copenhagen Lied-Duo Competition, and he performed a livestream recital in the Grote Zangers series at the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ concert hall in Amsterdam.

### **Ben Reisinger, baritone**

Ben Reisinger, a baritone from Rochester, New York, living in Lansing, Michigan, returns as a Detroit Opera Resident Artist for the 2023–24 season. Last season, he made his professional debut with Detroit Opera, performing as Wagner in Gounod's *Faust* and Maestro in Osvaldo Golijov's *Fountain of Tears (Ainadamar)*. He also covered the roles of Valentin (*Faust*) and Elviro in Handel's *Xerxes*. Reisinger is a two-time District of Michigan winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and a proud recipient of the Dr. David DiChiera award in 2020 and 2021. During his studies at Michigan State University, Ben worked with composer Ricky Ian Gordon during a production of Gordon's *Grapes of Wrath*. Reisinger has participated in masterclasses led by artists including renowned singers Renée Fleming, Christine Goerke, and Ana Maria Martinez and conductors Roberto Kalb and Francesco Milioto. Ben was selected as a Northeast Vocal Finalist for the esteemed Michael Feinstein's Great American Songbook Competition in New York City, and he will perform this July as a finalist in the James Toland Vocal Arts Competition in San Francisco. In October at Detroit Opera he will cover the role of Sharpless in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and grace the stage in alongside opera stars in the Detroit Opera Orchestra's concert. He will perform with Detroit Opera throughout the 2023–24 season, including April performances in Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Breaking the Waves*.

### **About Detroit Opera**

Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theatre), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, aspires to influence the future of opera and dance with a goal of invigorating audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera and dance that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration. Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. David DiChiera, Detroit Opera is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown; Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; and Board Chairman Ethan Davidson. For more information, visit [www.detroitopera.org](http://www.detroitopera.org). Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), and Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

### **PRESS CONTACT:**

Jennifer Melick, [jmelick@detroitopera.org](mailto:jmelick@detroitopera.org), 313-237-3428 (o), 973-985-5499 (m)