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The 2017/18 Ryan Opera Center Ensemble with Final Auditions sponsors. PHOTO: Jaclyn Simpson

**[The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center](#)
at Lyric Opera of Chicago
Announces Singers Selected for the
2017/18 Ensemble at Final Auditions**

CHICAGO (9/26/16) - **Dan Novak**, director of **[The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center](#)**, the professional artist development program at **Lyric Opera of Chicago**, is pleased to announce that soprano **Whitney Morrison**, tenors **Josh Lovell** and **Mario Rojas**, and bass-baritone **Alan Higgs**, have been selected for the prestigious program's 2017/18 Ensemble.

These singers will join current Ryan Opera Center sopranos **Diana Newman** and **Ann Toomey**; mezzo-soprano **Lindsay Metzger**; contralto **Lauren Decker**; tenor **Alec Carlson**; baritones **Emmett O'Hanlon** and **Takaoki Onishi**; and bass **Patrick Guetti**, all of whom will return for another year in the program.

The singers were selected at the **Ryan Opera Center's Final Auditions** held on Sunday, September 25, in the Ardis Krainik Theatre of Lyric's Civic Opera House. For the fourth year in a row, the final auditions were attended by an invited

audience of some 600 Lyric Opera subscribers and donors, who also participated by voting for the “Audience Favorite” award. The award and \$500 cash prize went to soprano and Chicago native **Whitney Morrison**.

Lyric’s dramaturg **Roger Pines** served as master of ceremonies for the final auditions, and the audience was treated to a performance by baritone **Quinn Kelsey**, a Ryan Opera Center alumnus (2003-2006) who will sing the role of Enrico in Lyric’s upcoming production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Lyric’s general director **Anthony Freud**, music director **Sir Andrew Davis**, and director of artistic planning **Andreas Melinat** joined Novak, as well as Ryan Opera Center music director **Craig Terry** and director of vocal studies **Julia Faulkner**, in serving as judges for the day.

The 2017/18 Ensemble members will begin their tenure next spring, and will spend the summer studying – voice lessons, language classes and dramatic coaching – in addition to performing in various concerts and recitals. Later, they will participate in Lyric’s main stage season, performing and understudying a variety of roles.

Current Ryan Opera Center members who will depart after the 2016/17 season are soprano **Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi**; mezzo-soprano **Annie Rosen**; tenors **Jesse Donner**, **Jonathan Johnson** and **Mingjie Lei**; bass-baritone **Bradley Smoak**; and pianist **Mario Antonio Marra**.

About the Ryan Opera Center

The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center is the professional artist development program for Lyric Opera of Chicago. Since its inception in 1974*, the Ryan Opera Center has been recognized as one of the premier programs of its kind in the world. That standing is maintained by providing the finest up-and-coming singers and pianists with unparalleled training and experience. The program is administered by **Dan Novak**, director; **Craig Terry**, music director; **Julia Faulkner**, director of vocal studies; and **Renée Fleming**, advisor.

*originally The Opera School of Chicago, then the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists; known as the Ryan Opera Center since September 2006.

Each year the Ryan Opera Center selects 12-15 gifted young artists to join its program from more than 500 applicants. Beginning in the spring, they arrive to join the full-year residency program, under the guidance of Novak, Terry, Faulkner, and Fleming, as well as Anthony Freud, Sir Andrew Davis and numerous other opera professionals. Ensemble members are immediately immersed into the world of opera and vocal performance. Coaching sessions and master classes are augmented by performance and understudy experience in Lyric Opera’s regular season productions as well as other Ryan Opera Center concerts and recitals.

About Lyric

Lyric Opera of Chicago’s mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating

an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

Generous support for the Final Auditions was provided by Lead Sponsor **The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation** and Sponsor **The Cozad Family**. Finalists' airfare is generously provided by **American Airlines**, Official Airline of Lyric Opera of Chicago.



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