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PHOTO: Jaclyn Simpson

Lyric Opera of Chicago's

The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center

Announces Singers Selected for the 2018/19 Ensemble

Final Auditions were held Saturday, September 9

CHICAGO (9/11/2017) - **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 **Emily Pogorelc**, mezzo-soprano **Kayleigh Decker**, tenor **Eric Ferring**, baritones **Christopher Kenney** and **Ricardo José Rivera**, and bass-baritone **David Weigel**, have been accepted into this prestigious program for its 2018/19 Ensemble.

These singers will join current Ryan Opera Center sopranos **Whitney Morrison** and **Ann Toomey**; contralto **Lauren Decker**; tenors **Josh Lovell** and **Mario Rojas**; bass-baritone **Alan Higgs**; and pianist **Madeline Slettedahl**, all of whom will return for another year in the world-renowned program.

Each year, the **Ryan Opera Center** holds preliminary auditions around the country; a small group of gifted young singers, mostly from the post-graduate level, are selected from approximately 400 applicants worldwide and invited to final-round auditions in Chicago each

September. This year's **Final Auditions** were held on Saturday, September 9, in the Ardis Krainik Theatre of the Lyric Opera House. For the fifth year in a row, the **Final Auditions** were attended by an invited audience of some 700 Lyric subscribers and donors, who also participated by voting for the Audience Favorite Award. The award and \$500 cash prize went to **Ricardo José Rivera**.

Lyric's dramaturg **Roger Pines** served as master of ceremonies for the **Final Auditions**, and the audience was treated to a performance by mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges**, a Ryan Opera Center alumna (2012-2015) who performs extensively in the U.S. and abroad. Lyric's general director, president & CEO **Anthony Freud**, music director **Sir Andrew Davis**, and vice president, 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 2018/19 Ensemble members will begin their tenure next spring, and will spend the summer studying – voice lessons; language, acting, and movement classes; and instruction from guest artists, in addition to performing in various concerts and recitals. Later, they will participate in Lyric's mainstage season, performing and understudying a variety of roles, as well as additional Ryan Opera Center concerts and recitals.

Current Ryan Opera Center members who will depart after the 2017/18 season are soprano **Diana Newman**; mezzo-soprano **Lindsay Metzger**; tenor **Alec Carlson**; baritones **Emmett O'Hanlon** and **Takaoki Onishi**; and bass **Patrick Guetti**.

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 Opera of Chicago

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.

To learn more about Lyric's new season, go to lyricopera.org. You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1718 #LongLivePassion



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

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