

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Opera Atelier Celebrates the Arrival of Spring and the Easter Season with** **— Handel's *The Resurrection* —**

***Handel's first acknowledged masterpiece restored to its original splendour in Canadian Premiere of Opera Atelier's fully-staged production for live audience***

Toronto, ON — **Opera Atelier** announces the much anticipated finale of its 2022/23 season **Handel's *The Resurrection***, on stage **April 6 and 8 at 7:30pm and April 9 at 2:30pm** at **Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning**. *The Resurrection* marks the Canadian premiere of Handel's first acknowledged masterpiece in a fully-staged production for a live audience. The company's lavish production will feature musical accompaniment from **Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra** under the baton of **David Fallis**, choreography by **Founding Co-Artistic Director Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg C.M.**, performed by **Artists of Atelier Ballet**, and an innovative, multi-level set by Opera Atelier's resident set designer **Gerard Gauci**. The all-star Canadian cast includes **Soprano Carla Huhtanen**, **Soprano Meghan Lindsay**, **Mezzo-Soprano Allyson McHardy**, **Tenor Colin Ainsworth**, and **Bass-Baritone Douglas Williams**.

"Handel's expansive vision for this timeless story of rebirth resulted in the creation of one of his greatest works," says **Marshall Pynkoski C.M., Opera Atelier Founding Co-Artistic Director and *The Resurrection's* Stage Director**. "I'm delighted to be presenting this work as was originally intended - a work to be experienced by a live audience in a stunning venue. We view this production as the perfect opportunity to welcome the spring and embrace a city that is returning to live theatre with great enthusiasm."

Written for Easter of 1708, Handel's *The Resurrection* details the events between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and the tension leading up to Christ's resurrection following his crucifixion and burial. The narrative plays out simultaneously across two spheres. In the celestial realm, a militant Archangel demands entrance to Hades and disputes the claims of a boastful Lucifer, insisting Christ's death was an act of sacrificial love. Always the consummate showman, Handel ensured the opera is not without its moments of humour, as the Archangel and Lucifer spar for the upperhand. Meanwhile on Earth, Mary Magdalene, Cleophas and St. John the Evangelist struggle to make sense of Christ's brutal death. Handel's astonishingly sensual score and vivid word painting act as a catalyst for an exceptional play of emotions for all of the protagonists.

Opera Atelier's production of *The Resurrection* brings Handel's transcendent work to life through an inventive transformation of Koerner Hall by **Gauci** — a major intervention unlike anything Koerner Hall has ever presented. The multi-level set features double staircases leading from the choir loft to the floor of the concert hall, delineating the supernatural and earthly worlds. The set also features two enormous pulpits for exclusive use by the Archangel and Lucifer, mirroring the story's liturgical foundation. The staging is further enhanced by the evocative lighting design of **Kimberly Purtell** and the gorgeous costume design by **Michael Legouffe**.

The role of the Archangel, who opens the production, will be sung by coloratura Soprano **Huhtanen**. Last seen in Opera Atelier's *Don Giovanni*, Huhtanen's renowned vocal range and razor-sharp coloratura make her a natural for this role. Huhtanen interacts closely with the Artists of Atelier Ballet who act as a corps of angelic beings wielding swords in order to gain access to Lucifer's kingdom.

**Douglas Williams** will play the role of Lucifer — a superb linguist, Williams is renowned for his impassioned delivery of Italian repertoire. **Ainsworth** is ideally suited for the role of St. John the Evangelist. Now one of Canada's most distinguished tenors, this is the first role Ainsworth ever sang for Opera Atelier, when he made his professional debut in the company's semi-staged production 20 years ago. **Lindsay**, as Mary Magdalene, and **McHardy**, as Mary Cleophas, round out the cast, promising deeply sensitive and nuanced performances.

The production's choreography by **Lajeunesse Zingg** celebrates the original splendour of Handel's opera, and takes great advantage of Koerner Hall's expansive stage — making use of the full corps of the Artists of Atelier Ballet. As the opera progresses, the presence of the divine becomes more palpable, and the dancers, as angelic beings consequently become more integrated into the action — interacting with the physical worlds of Mary Magdalene,

Cleophas and St. John, and the supernatural realm of the Archangel and Lucifer. *The Resurrection* represents the first time both male and female Artists of Atelier Ballet will be armed with swords. **Jennifer Parr**'s fight choreography underlines the militant tone of the production's opening aria.

"It is a delight to perform Handel's work in Toronto's celebrated Koerner Hall," says Lajeunesse Zingg. "Handel's superb score will be well-served by the hall's renowned acoustics, as our artists explore the ecstatic sensuality of Counter-Reformation Rome."

Opera Atelier Founding Co-Artistic Director Pynkoski has collaborated with many of the finest artists in the world of early music and his productions of opera and ballet have toured throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Toronto Arts Award, the Opera Canada Ruby Award for outstanding contribution to opera in Canada, the TIME Magazine award for Classical music and the Order of Canada. Most recently, Pynkoski was named Officier dans L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Government of France in an investiture ceremony that took place on the stage of the Royal Opera House/Versailles.

Opera Atelier Founding Co-Artistic Director and Choreographer Lajeunesse Zingg has choreographed and performed in major theatres internationally. She received her training in London, Copenhagen, and Paris. Lajeunesse Zingg has received a multitude of awards including the prestigious Toronto Arts Award, the Opera Canada Ruby Award for outstanding achievement in the field of opera in Canada, was named by TIME Magazine as one of Canada's most influential artists in the field of Classical music and was awarded the Order of Canada for her contribution to ballet and opera in Canada. Most recently, she was named Officier dans L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Government of France in an investiture ceremony that took place on the stage of the Royal Opera House/Versailles.

**Tickets and information, please visit: [operaatelier.com](http://operaatelier.com)**

*This presentation was made possible through the generous support of BMO and Production Underwriter Vivian Elizabeth Pilar.*

#### **About Opera Atelier ([OperaAtelier.com](http://OperaAtelier.com))**

Opera Atelier is North America's leading opera/ballet company dedicated to creating period productions realized as complete artistic statements - with equal attention given to music, dancing, acting, and design. With productions performed in partnership with award-winning period-instrument orchestra, Tafelmusik, Opera Atelier has toured to major opera houses and festivals internationally. Opera Atelier is dedicated to equity, diversity and inclusion, the education of youth and young artists, and offers a robust slate of education, enrichment and outreach opportunities to engage audience members of all ages. Since 1985, Opera Atelier has been led by founding Artistic Directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg, who most recently, were both named members of the Order of Canada and Officers of the Order of Arts and Letters (Officiers dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres) by the French Republic.

#### **LISTING INFORMATION**

#### **Opera Atelier presents Handel's *The Resurrection***

##### **Dates:**

April 6, 8 and 9, 2023

##### **Ticket Prices:**

\$49—\$199 including taxes and fees

##### **Venue:**

Koerner Hall in the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning  
273 Bloor St. W.  
Toronto, ON

##### **Tickets and Info:**

[OperaAtelier.com](http://OperaAtelier.com)  
Or by calling The Royal Conservatory of Music at 1.888.408.0208

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