



Loose Tea Music Theatre and Highlands Opera Studio Announce Partnership For BIPOC Composer-Librettist Development Program

May 5, 2022 - Toronto, ON // Toronto-based opera company [Loose Tea Music Theatre \(LTMT\)](#) and Haliburton-based [Highlands Opera Studio \(HOS\)](#) have today announced a new partnership to develop LTMT's landmark **BIPOC Composer-Librettist Development Program**. This August Highlands Opera Studio will host artists from both companies to present two productions for in-person performances.

The Loose Tea Music Theatre BIPOC Composer-Librettist Development Program, now in its second year, is a program that supports the development of diverse creators new to opera and music theatre. Highlands Opera Studio provides advanced operatic training and professional development to a select group of approximately 20 Canadian emerging operatic professionals chosen through an annual cross-Canada competitive audition process. The partnership of these two companies with a shared vision for the future of opera, was a natural fit.

LTMT's *Inertia* and *The Museum of the Lost and Found* will both have significant workshops this summer culminating in a presentation during the Highlands Opera Studio July/August performance season. The HOS season includes 16 public performances/events in Haliburton County including concerts, masterclasses, fully staged operas, and community outreach events. Further to that, the LTMT and Highlands Opera Studio will host two other Creators in Residence: Troy Defour and JT Rivera to develop new works with mentors [Lila Palmer](#), Andrew Balfour, and Philip & Patricia Morehead.

Inertia by Ashley Au and Christene Browne is a story about elderly isolation and perceptions of death and a meditation on stagnation, dying, love, and friendship. It tells the story of two elderly neighbours, Evelyn and Addison, who live next door to each other for decades but have little interaction with each other or anyone. When Death comes to collect the two, he instead decides to allow them to live, if they can get past their entrenched ways to become friends.

The Museum of the Lost and Found, by Olivia Shortt, focuses on a fictional museum in the woods whose exhibits are items from various Lost and Found boxes. What happens to people and items when they are no longer being looked for? It is an allegory about how Western society

treats missing person cases (specifically MMIWG2S: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People).

Troy Defour is exploring a piece about the relationship between a black father and gay son, breaking down stereotypes and barriers of the 'hardness' and volatility that exists in cis male blackness. JT Rivera continues to develop *Warrior*, which is a coming-of-age story about a young Ojibway girl who confronts her spirit to understand her calling in life. The narrative is told through music and spoken word while mashing together styles like opera, rap, spoken word, synth metal.

From Loose Tea Music Theatre Executive Artistic Director Alaina Viau - "LTMT is dedicated to the exploration of cross-cultural and social relationships and collaborating deeply with our communities. With this in mind, I am thrilled to partner with the Highlands Opera Studio for the next stage of our BIPOC Composer Librettist Development Program. We share a vision that is passionate in believing that we can change the world for the better by thinking differently. This collaboration shows that, by effectively gathering our efforts, we can bring forward productions that furthers this goal. Together we are fostering a plethora of fascinating opera exploration that encompasses a vast range of human experiences"

From Highland Opera Studio Co-Artistic and General Director Valerie Kuinka - "Since HOS was established, emphasis has been placed on embracing difference, acknowledging diversity of all kinds and making every effort to provide opportunities to remedy the negative impacts, structural barriers, and power dynamics that can be present in the world of opera. We endeavor to represent and support diverse cultural and social perspectives and preferences throughout the organization and in all our activities, including the commissioning and presentation of new Canadian works telling the stories of today. Welcoming LTMT to the HOS 2022 Professional Program community and performance season will continue our established commitment at HOS to tackling the very real issues around systemic racism in opera, supporting all marginalized groups of society, and focusing on increasing awareness and implementing positive change."

Public performances will take place August 18 and 20, 2022, and tickets are available at <https://www.highlandsoperastudio.com/events/>

Highlands Opera Studio Box-Office & Administration - Toll-free: 1-855-455-5533

About Highland Opera Studio: The main objective is to provide Canada's next generation of operatic professionals with the necessary resources to embark on a career in opera. The focus of the 5-week intensive summer professional training residency, offered free of charge to successful Canadian candidates, is not only on performance and production excellence, but on top level coaching and professional development/networking. Maintaining relevance in the ever-changing professional opera world is a core goal. The 2022 season of Highlands Opera Studio will include 16 public events/performance, including concerts, masterclasses, and free community outreach events, culminating in the presentation of the new LTMT operatic works and 4 performances of Tchaikovsky's operatic masterpiece, *Eugene Onegin*, a story of deep love and sacrifice. Established in 2007, HOS has been guided and operated since then by

General & Co-Artistic Director Valerie Kuinka, and Artistic Director Richard Margison. In 2017, through the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage, HOS' first opera commission, *Mishabooz's Realm/Le Royaume de Michabous*, by Cree First Nation composer, Andrew Balfour, was created, produced and presented in Haliburton and Montreal in collaboration with l'Atelier Lyrique de l'Opera de Montreal. In 2020 the Highlands Opera Racial Equity Advisory Council (HOREAC) was established, and, since then, multiple online public meetings have taken place exploring, sharing, and encouraging conversation on the subject of racism, offering a safe platform in which to share, listen, learn, and find ways together to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

<https://www.highlandsoperastudio.com>

About Loose Tea Music Theatre: Loose Tea Music Theatre was founded in 2013 by Director and Creator Alaina Viau. LTMT centers its creation on addressing critical social issues and curating ensembles that showcase the diversity of humanity. Our mandate is to create new and reimagined music theatre productions in an inclusive and compassionate environment that supports creators and welcomes diversity in creation. It's Vision: Through interdisciplinary performative arts, innovation, and exploration, Loose Tea will dismantle systemic barriers within the performing arts industry, ultimately revolutionizing its impact within society.

<https://looseteamusictheatre.com>

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For more information

Tim Crouch - tcrouch@looseteamusictheatre.com

General Manager, Loose Tea Music Theatre

Valerie Kuinka - valerie@highlandsoperastudio.com

Co-Artistic and General Director, Highlands Opera Studio

The BIPOC Composer Librettist Development Program is supported by:



For Highlands Opera Studio:



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