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Opera Atelier Announces 2026/27 Season:
– A Season of Heroes –

Opera Atelier's 2026/27 season launches with the Canadian premiere of Marc Antoine Charpentier's extraordinary masterpiece, *The Descent of Orpheus*, and continues with Handel's thrilling opera, *The Resurrection*

Toronto, ON — Opera Atelier founding Co-Artistic Directors Marshall Pynkoski, C.M. and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg, C.M., today announce the company's 2026/27 Season, ***A Season of Heroes***.

The season kicks off in the glorious acoustic of Toronto's **Koerner Hall** with the company's Canadian premiere of Marc Antoine Charpentier's extraordinary masterpiece, ***The Descent of Orpheus*** on **October 22-25, 2026**. The opera is based on Ovid's myth of Orpheus, who uses his gift of music to gain entry to the underworld and to return his lover Eurydice to the land of the living.

Unlike other performance versions of this myth, Charpentier's opera defies Baroque theatrical convention by opening with the death of Eurydice. In this bittersweet tragedy, Orpheus's journey through the underworld transforms him from Arcadian shepherd to godlike hero.

The Descent of Orpheus is quintessentially French in style, and as such, includes some of the finest dance music ever created for French 17th-century lyric theatre. Opera Atelier's production will also include an important company debut: American tenor Daniel McGrew will sing the role of Orpheus, a role originally sung by Charpentier himself. Opera Atelier audience favourite, soprano Mireille Asselin, will sing the role of Eurydice. She will be joined by bass baritone David Witczak as Pluto and mezzo soprano Mireille Lebel as Persephone. The opera's onstage ensemble is made up of some of Canada's finest singers with the full corps of the Artists of Atelier Ballet, with choreography by Lajeunesse Zingg.

It is the uniquely collaborative nature of this work that has attracted Opera Atelier's elite cast of singers and dancers in addition to Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir. Opera Atelier Assistant Music Director Dr. Christopher Bagan makes his Koerner Hall conducting debut.

The staging of *The Descent of Orpheus* will extend past the orchestra and into the audience. Set Designer Gerard Gauci's unique ability to transform a space architecturally will be in full evidence thanks to the Jerry and Joan Lozinski Opera Atelier Reimagined Project at Koerner Hall.

Opera Atelier will conclude the season by revisiting the company's 2023 production of Handel's ***The Resurrection*** in **Koerner Hall** on **April 15-18, 2027**. Opera Atelier's lavish production celebrates the hero's triumph over death in a story that provides inspiration for all of us to live lives full of intention and

purpose. The production will feature an innovative, multi-level set by Gauci, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra under the baton of David Fallis, and choreography by Lajeunesse Zingg, performed by Artists of Atelier Ballet. The all-star cast includes Soprano Carla Huhtanen, Soprano Meghan Lindsay, Mezzo Soprano Mireille Lebel, Tenor Antonin Rondepierre, and Bass Baritone David Witczak.

“Handel’s expansive vision for this timeless story of rebirth resulted in the creation of one of his greatest works” says Pynkoski, who is also the stage director for the production. “I’m fascinated by this world in which the individual experiences spiritual ecstasy through a ravishing of the senses.”

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.

In a significant departure from Handel’s original composition, the role of the Archangel — written for a castrato — will be performed by Huhtanen. Last seen in Opera Atelier’s *The Magic Flute*, Huhtanen’s renowned vocal range and razor-sharp coloratura makes her a natural for the role of the Archangel. Distinctly costumed as a female Angel, Huhtanen interacts with the Artists of Atelier Ballet as a corps of male and female angelic beings.

Witczak will play the role of Lucifer. A superb linguist, Witczak is renowned for his impassioned delivery of Italian repertoire. Rondepierre is ideally suited for the role of St. John the Evangelist. Lindsay, as Mary Magdalene, and Lebel, 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* will feature both male and female Artists of Atelier Ballet armed with swords.

“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.”

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

2026/27 Season Subscriptions will go on sale on February 10, 2026. Subscriptions can be purchased at [OperaAtelier.com](https://www.OperaAtelier.com) or by calling 416-703-3767 x 700.

Single Tickets for *The Descent of Orpheus* will be on sale August 25, 2026.
Single Tickets for *The Resurrection* will be on sale February 23, 2027.

Opera Atelier gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of The Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

About Opera Atelier ([OperaAtelier.com](https://www.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 co-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.

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