

We'd like you to meet our leading lady, Ottawa-born soprano Ellen McAteer



Saint Cecilia, the Muse of Music must have been smiling down that day when we found her —hiding in plain sight! Ottawa-born and bred soprano Ellen McAteer had come to sing our New Discoveries Auditions in the fall of 2016— and won our hearts with her lovely, clear soprano and expressive stage presence. On Saturday, March 17th at Christ Church Cathedral, the Choral Society will be making up for lost time by inviting to her to sing some of the most heart-breaking and exquisite music ever written for soprano, the *Pie Jesu* from Gabriel Fauré's Requiem *Op. 48*, and the poignant soprano arias of genre-bending British sensation Howard Goodall's *Eternal Light ...a requiem*.

Accolades just want to follow Ellen wherever she sings —Hailed by CBC Radio as a “young, rising star“, Ellen is the two-time recipient of the prestigious Richard Bradshaw Graduate Fellowship in Opera, along with numerous other career -defining awards and praised for her “lovely, full sound” (Greater Hamilton Musician), “joy and ebullient charm” (Bach in Bethlehem), and “stupendous singing” (Calgary Herald). Her performances have been described as a “powerhouse of dramatic assuredness, and the ultimate in vulnerable intensity” (Opera Canada).

Ellen's voice can be heard on several CDs, most recently the Juno-nominated *Le refuge du cœur* (Analekta 2015); *The Vale of Tears* (Analekta 2015); *Four Thousand Winter* (Sony 2015), *The Tree of Life* (Sony 2016), and *The Path to Paradise* (Sony 2017) all directed by Daniel Taylor; in the audio drama, *Six Stories, Told at Night*; and on acoustic folk-band October Gold's first CD release, *Into the Silence*.

Ellen holds a Master of Music Degree in Voice Performance from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Music Degree in Voice Performance from McGill University where she graduated with Excellence in Voice. She has furthered her studies at the Victoria Conservatory of Music, the Orford Arts Centre, The Banff Centre, Opera on the Avalon, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and as a Rebanks Fellow at the prestigious Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

We talked to Ellen and asked her about growing up musically in her home town of Ottawa.

Your life-long friends and family all live here. Who were your schoolmates?

I grew up in Ottawa's Far West End and went to Lakeview Public School, D. Aubrey Moodie middle school, which is now closed, and Bell High School. I was very proud to be a founding member and sing with girls my own age in Mrs. Hawley's excellent Cantiamo Girls Choir.

A lot of youngsters go for pop – how did you find your “classical voice”?

I sang in choirs from the age of 8 and took private singing lessons for several years, but it really wasn't until the end of high school that I considered studying music. I didn't actually realize that you could pursue music, let alone singing, as a career until the very end of high school and had been planning on continuing with math and physics, my two favourite subjects. My love of analysis helped me graduate with an honours in music theory, and with the support of teachers and mentors, I have been studying singing ever since!

You've had tremendous success in a lot of different genres –Do you have a favourite rep list?

My favourite repertoire changes often, but I have been quite devoted to J S Bach for the past few years. There was a time when I struggled to understand why his music was so popular, but now I could sit and listen for hours. What opened my eyes to the magnificence of Bach's music was performing the St Matthew Passion at the Church of St Andrew and St Paul with conductor Jordan de Souza. The piece perfectly embodies each moment of the story and was so compellingly beautiful.

CBC Radio Host Ben Heppner loves to tell stories about his funny and frantic onstage experiences. You haven't been in the business for very long yet but does anything spring to mind that has left an indelible memory?

I have had several memorable moments on stage; however my favourite moments often occur off stage. I have met so many fascinating people with unbelievable life stories through singing, and being able to touch someone's life in even the most insignificant way is such an honour.