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The Canada Council
for The Arts at 50
The Artist, the Arts
and the Future.

Soprano and Canada
Council grant recipient
Shannon Mercer

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Ottawa Life cover girl: Shannon Mercer

Ottawa-Born Soprano Becomes International Star in the World of Opera

Her voice has been described as luminous, dazzling and shining and her acting witty, delightful, and feisty — Shannon Mercer is taking on the opera world as one of Canada's most promising young stars. Critically acclaimed by the international press for her musical artistry, she has been hailed as "one of Canada's most promising young sopranos" and a "Leader of Tomorrow" by *Maclean's*.

Mercer began her operatic career as a member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Program. She has since gone on to perform major roles with the COC (Sesto in Sartorio's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, a Madrigalist in Henze's *Venus and Adonis*, Xenia in Boris Godunov, *Oscar in Un ballo in maschera* and Elvira in *L'italiana in Algeri*), l'Opéra du Québec, Opera Lyra Ottawa (Nanetta in *Falstaff*, Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* special school performance), Opera Ontario, Opera Atelier (*Médée*) and the Toronto Operetta Theatre.

Mercer begins the 2007–2008 season in Washington D.C. with concerts at the National Welsh Heritage Festival before returning to Canada where she makes her debut as Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Ontario and as Philine in a concert version of Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon* with Opera Lyra Ottawa.

Particularly praised for her performances of baroque and contemporary music, Mercer maintains a challenging balance of opera, concert and recital appearances. Recent engagements have included two performances at the Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival and a Christmas program with Thirteen Strings in Ottawa.

This past summer, Mercer appeared in the world premiere of Eric Idle's new comic oratorio *Not the Messiah* with the Toronto



PHOTO: HELEN TANSEY

Symphony Orchestra under Peter Oundjian at Toronto's first Luminato Festival and at the Caramoor Festival. Mercer also starred in Alexina Louie's Gemini-nominated comic opera *Burnt Toast*, an eight-vignette series directed by Larry Weinstein that was presented at the Toronto and Calgary film festivals and broadcast nationally on CBC Television and Bravo!

Awarded a Career Development Grant from the Canada Council for the Arts and winner of the 2004 Bernard Diamant Prize, Mercer spent most of 2005 in Vienna where she studied German operatic repertoire with renowned voice coach Margaret Singer. She has recently received the Virginia Parker Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts.

A native of Ottawa, Mercer now resides in Toronto. She will next perform in Ottawa on November 3 – a solo concert with the Ottawa Baroque Consort.

Visit Shannon Mercer's website at www.shannonmercer.com ■



CCA CHAIR

Canada Council Chair Karen Kain (left) with then Minister of Canadian Heritage Bev Oda at the Parliament Hill reception celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Canada Council on March 28, 2007. PHOTO: MARTIN LIPMAN



TREK TO NUNAVUT

Then Canada Council Director Shirley Thomson (left) with then Chair Jean-Louis Roux on a trip to Nunavut in 2000.

PHOTO: CANADA COUNCIL