

NEW ON THE SCENE

# ÉLISABETH BOUDREAU

BY OLIVIER BERGERON



## Élisabeth Boudreault's international career took flight, against all odds, during the pandemic.

Originally from Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, the 26-year-old soprano first appeared on stage at the age of 9, taking part in Québec Issime's hit production of *Décembre*. She continued to perform with the company for many years while singing pop and writing songs for her own pleasure.

Soon after taking her first classical voice lessons in high school, she started singing small roles with the Société d'art lyrique du Royaume and made her debut at 16 as Lisa in *La sonnambula*. A recent McGill graduate from the class of Aline Kutan, she finished her degree a semester early in order to make her European debut as Barbarina in a production of *Le nozze di Figaro* by acclaimed film director James Gray at Opéra national de Lorraine in Jan. 2020.

"I was lucky. During my third year at McGill, an important French casting director happened to be in Montréal to hear some young singers. One of them ended up being sick and had to cancel so I took their audition slot and got offered a few engagements in Europe."

As the run of *Figaro* ended in Nancy, she was already rehearsing with the same company for Handel's *Alcina*, in which she was set to sing the role of Oberto. France shut down after the first performance.

"I was faced with an important decision: should I stay in France or should I go back to Canada? We were all convinced that things would get back to normal in three weeks so I decided to stay with my boyfriend in London until I could go back and finish our run."

All things considered, staying in Europe turned out to be the right decision. After


months of cancellations and waiting around for things to improve, she received a call from the casting director who got her her first gig in Nancy.

"A pregnant colleague who was scheduled to sing Gretel decided to cancel for health reasons. The same casting director who hired me for Barbarina had moved to a different company in Strasbourg and thought of me. It just so happened that I was nearby, available and ready to sing the role. Once again, it was luck."

That run of performances ended up getting canceled due to a new wave of COVID-19 but the production was filmed and shown on French television over the holidays. It was later streamed on the internet and garnered critical praise for the young Canadian soprano.

A few months later, in July, she made her Aix-en-Provence festival debut, again as Barbarina, surrounded by a star-studded cast and then reprised the role in October for a third time in Luxembourg alongside fellow Canadian soprano Florie Valiquette, who was singing her first Susanna.

Still very attached to her Québec roots and hoping she'll be able to perform back home soon, Élisabeth is currently settled in London where she plans to focus on her career in Europe.

"I'm about 30 minutes from Covent Garden and 2 hours by train from the Palais Garnier in Paris. I can easily get to meetings with casting directors and auditions all over Europe. There's also something to be said about the size of houses here. I was surprised to see how many colours one could use when singing in a smaller theatre. Artistically, I find that very interesting." 

### Speed Round with ÉLISABETH BOUDREAU

#### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

I'm halfway through *War and Peace*—it's a real commitment!

#### WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PANDEMIC BINGE?

My boyfriend and I just finished watching *New Girl*, we loved it.

#### WHAT SKILL WOULD YOU LIKE TO HONE?

I would like to continue getting better at German. I've studied the language for two years, but I need to practice more.

#### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE RECIPE?

I love preparing tourtières! During the holidays last year, I was Facetimeing my sister, my mother and my grandmother from London and we prepared them together.

#### AISLE SEAT OR WINDOW SEAT?

Window, always!

