

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 20th, 2019

**NEWFOUNDLAND SOPRANO ANNA MERCER WINS DEBUT ATLANTIC’S AWARD FOR MUSICAL EXCELLENCE**

Halifax NS - Debut Atlantic is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2019 Award for Musical Excellence is 17 year old soprano, Anna Mercer from Coleys Point NL. In addition to the cash prize of $1000, Anna will be a featured artist at the Indian River Festival’s Youth Legacy concert on June 16th, 2019 at 2pm, in the historic St. Mary’s Church, Indian River, PE.

Established in 1999, the Debut Atlantic Award for Musical Excellence is awarded annually to an Atlantic Canadian high school music student as chosen by a member of our distinguished alumni. The award recognizes talented youth and is designed to support and encourage the development of young musicians in Atlantic Canada. The Award consists of a $1,000 cash prize and a featured performance, as well as mentorship opportunities with a Debut Atlantic artist or alum. This year’s juror praised Anna’s performance, saying, "It is a voice you want to hear more of, and certainly the applicant that I'd most want to hear in a recital tonight; her passion and diligence shine through in every note she sings."

Anna Mercer grew up in a musical family, and has been making music her whole life. She has studied with COC soprano, Sonya Gosse since 2014, and in both 2017 and 2018 she attended the Vocal Technique Workshop where she studied with Wendy Nielsen. She has performed in numerous master classes and recitals at Memorial University’s School of Music and has been attending MUN’s Song Academy program since 2015.

Along with being an accomplished soprano, Anna is an active choral conductor. She founded and conducts the Storm Jib youth choir. This choir works exclusively on authentic NL folk music and the music of Indigenous people of the region. Anna has been recognized and supported by the *Bruneau Centre for Excellence in Choral Music* for her work with Storm Jib. Anna is mentored by renowned choral conductor, Kellie Walsh and is a choral apprentice with the Shallaway Choir. Anna is currently a finalist for the prestigious TD Scholarship 2018.19 for her work with Storm Jib and other musical work in her community.

Anna has been the recipient of many awards, scholarship and bursaries for her musical work. She won the Kiwanis Jr. Rose Bowl in 2015 and 2017. In 2018 she won the Senior Vocal Rose Bowl, the Provincial Music Festival and competed in the National Music Festival in Sackville. She is the first ever voice recipient of Debut Atlantic’s Award for Musical Excellence.

Anna is currently a student at Ascension Collegiate and will be starting her university music studies in vocal performance in September 2019 and looks forward to a lifetime of music making.

Congratulations Anna!

Debut Atlantic wishes to recognize the partners and sponsors that come together to bring its artists to the region in communities and venues of all sizes. Touring these artists would not be possible without the generous support of sustaining partners including the Canada Council for the Arts, Arts Nova Scotia and the Province of New Brunswick. Debut would also like to thank its educational partner the Nova Scotia Department of Education and its season partners including the Halifax Regional Municipality, The Lloyd Carr-Harris Foundation, The Craig Foundation, Pink Larkin, InnVest Hotels (Comfort Inn) and Strategic Arts Management.

One of the most respected music touring organizations in the country, **Debut Atlantic’s** first season in 1979 featured then-emerging and still-unknown artists, pianist Jon Kimura Parker, tenor Ben Heppner, and Canada’s Baroque orchestra Tafelmusik.

Full details on Debut Atlantic’s concert seasons and education programs can be found at [www.debutatlantic.ca](http://www.debutatlantic.ca)

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