The Canadian Opera Company is looking for people to be a part of our Production of LOUIS RIEL. We are looking for volunteers to be non-singing, non-speaking Supernumeraries ( Extras).

LOUIS RIEL was the first opera written by a Canadian to be presented by the Canadian Opera Company. This is a contentious and provocative “celebratory” work. It is our intention that a more inclusive and expansive history shall be restored for our 2017 production.

The COC production of LOUIS RIEL will feature a physical chorus, who will be called THE LAND ASSEMBLY. This ensemble of 35 indigenous women and men will represent those who are directly affected by the outcomes, victories and losses of history. Onstage through-out the opera, they are a silent chorus in protest. They are the people for whom the opera has not provided a voice. They are the blood and human life of what is at stake. THE LAND ASSEMBLY shift and transform sitting, standing, and falling to the ground, only to rise again as Riel’s story is told. They form the barricade against The Governor General’s arrival in Act One, they surround Riel when Fort Garry is seized, they are the fires by which Riel has his first vision, they are the bend of the South Saskatchewan River and the depot in which Riel is imprisoned, they are the strength of the Metis Assembly and the spirit of those fallen at Batoche, and the people who continue today. They are the people AND the land. They are an active voice in the opera, though completely silent. They represent themselves: contemporary citizens of Mètis and Aboriginal ancestry. Their ancestors were denied a voice throughout history: denied government representation, denied the vote, denied claim to their land. The Land Assembly’s presence makes us confront their reality, their “otherness”. Their participation makes this opera a meaningful and active part of the national discourse.

The challenges are many – and well worth the undertaking. Perhaps the most considerable challenge is the Eurocentric tradition of Opera as a form. Rather than avoid this tension, or suppose the score and libretto can authenticate a reality, the production uses these tensions to expose the lines between truth and mythology and co-existing perspectives of settler and indigenous stances as Riel’s story is debated and re-told. LOUIS RIEL will be sung in English, French, Cree and Michif. The notion of history is not linear but a circle; a circle which is inclusive and expanding. These are the teachings of Indigenous communities that inform our interpretation for LOUIS RIEL. We offer an open and respectful experience of storytelling, physical theatre and cultural exchange.

THE LAND ASSEMBLY will be directed by LOUIS RIEL’s stage director, Peter Hinton and lead by Assistant Director, Estelle Shook. Estelle is a Metis artist from British Colombia, she was artistic director of the Caravan Farm Theatre in Armstrong BC for 10 years and more recently completed her MFA in directing with York University and Canadian Stage Company. Estelle brings personal, professional and cultural perspective to the production. The Land Assembly will also be led by 4 Indigenous members of the principal ensemble.

The COC is looking for a variety people with a range in ages to participate in this exciting project. Families are welcome to come as a group to be in the production. Everyone must be available for evenings and weekends during our rehearsal period: March 17 – April 17, as well as all performance dates: April 20, 23, 26, 29, May 2, 5, 13, 2017. Everyone who participates will receive an honorarium.

If you are interested in having someone come and speak to your group, we would be happy to do so. For anyone interested in participating or finding out more information, please contact Shawna Green at the COC: shawnag@coc.ca, 416-306-2360 by February 15th.