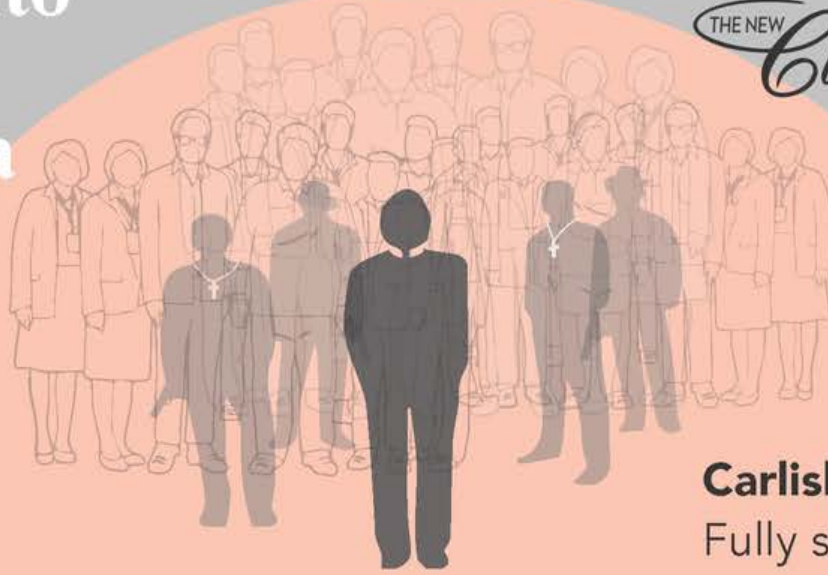


Toronto
City
Opera

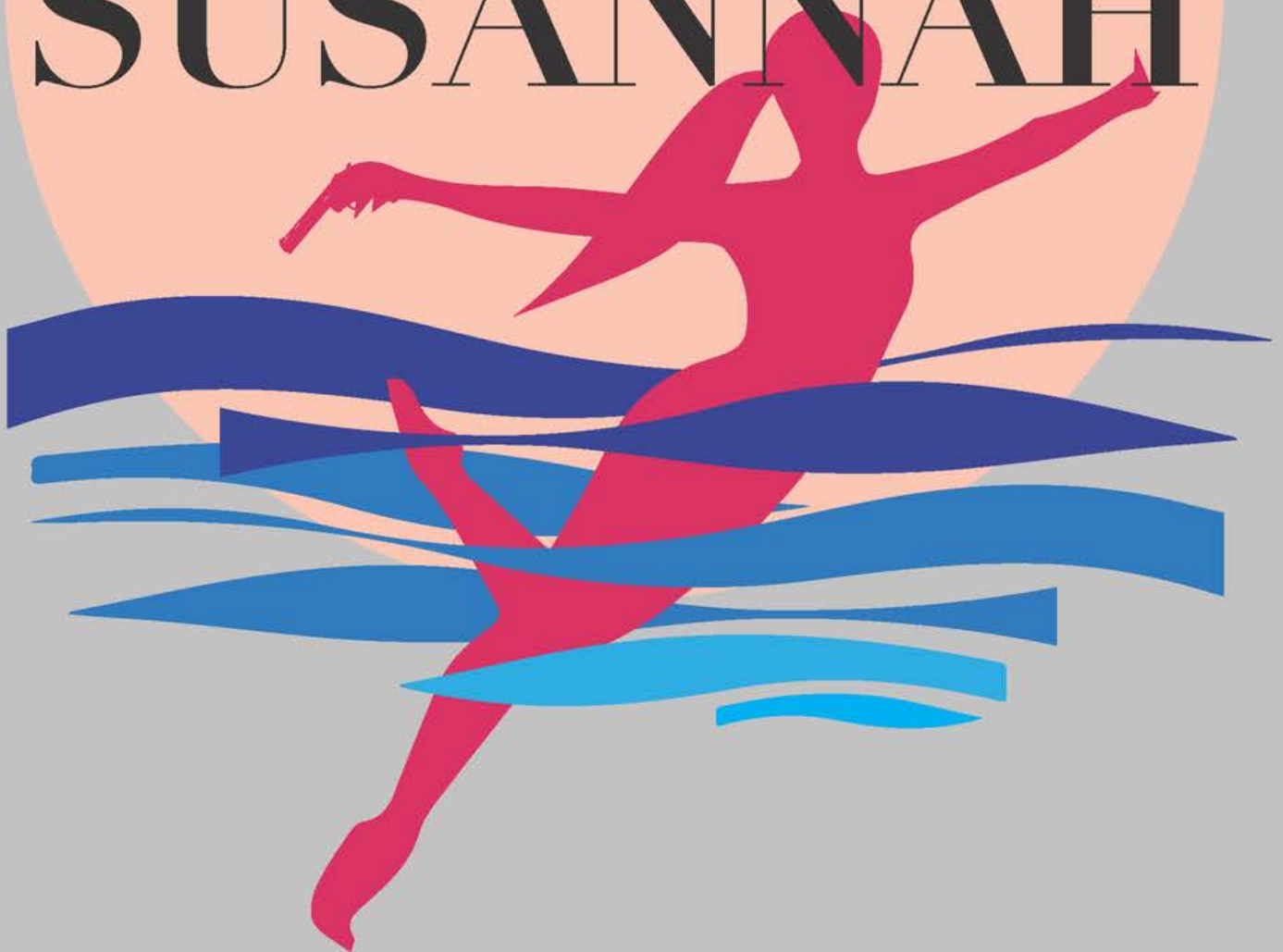
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THE NEW
Classical 96.3 fm



Carlisle Floyd
Fully staged

SUSANNAH





Land Acknowledgement

As artists who work in opera, we are telling stories that reflect and shape our place in the world. In doing so, we have a responsibility to recognize the history of the land on which we create our art.

We wish to acknowledge that the land on which Toronto City Opera operates has over thousands of years been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, Toronto remains a meeting place, and is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Table of Contents

Welcome to Toronto City Opera	4
Director's Note	5
Synopsis	6
Artists	9
Creative Team	13
Chorus	16
Credits and Thanks	17
Donors	17
Sponsors	18
How to Donate	19

WELCOME TO TORONTO CITY OPERA



Les Contes d'Hoffmann 2020, Photo Credit : Cylla von Tiedemann

Our Mission

Toronto City Opera is passionately committed to opera for everyone. We give young professionals an opportunity to perform principal roles with coaching in musicianship and stagecraft. We give our amateur choristers inspiration and skills so that they too can perform in a fully staged opera. And for our community we provide affordable access to this grand synthesis of music, drama, dance, and design to raise up the human spirit of everyone it touches.

Who We Are

We are Toronto's longest running opera company - continuously since 1946. TCO was founded as an Opera Workshop program in collaboration with the Toronto School Board. In 1967 Giuseppe Macina became Artistic Director and transformed the program to perform fully staged productions as Toronto Opera Repertoire. In 1980 Toronto City Opera was incorporated as a registered charity. Giuseppe Macina retired in 2013 and in 2017 we became an independent opera company separate from the school board, fully in control of our destiny.

Our Artistic Vision

We believe the classic opera repertoire continues to inspire and delight audiences and performers from diverse cultures. Our ambition is to engage contemporary audiences through the timeless appeal of these works, not to preserve them as museum pieces. We fulfill their creators' intentions, in collaboration with creative stage directors, by performing the works as written while presenting fresh, original, live productions that enthrall our community with their artistic truth.

Our Program

Each year, Toronto City Opera presents at least two fully staged operas. Our early career professional soloists are selected after open auditions, but our amateur non-auditioned community chorus remains open to all. This unique combination provides both professional development opportunities and community engagement. That community engagement extends beyond our chorus as the audience they bring with them are often having their first opera experience - their excitement is wonderful to feel.

Board of Directors

Our company is operated by an energetic, fully volunteer board, who are committed to our success and excited by our bright future.

Mark Wilson - President
 Sandra Tang - Treasurer
 Onita Dey
 Don Maudsley
 Gianni Minardi
 Heather Pike
 Henry Tang - Ex-officio

Director's Note

As the second-most performed American opera, *Susannah* has been popular with opera companies and audiences for good reason; its contemporary setting, tonal musical language, and English libretto are relatable, accessible and familiar. The titular role is a juicy sing and includes the two gorgeous arias “Ain’t it a Pretty Night”, and “The Trees on the Mountain”. It is also a topical story; *Susannah* experiences a tumultuous journey from a naïve teenager to jaded adult after she is betrayed, enduring social isolation, shock, and post-traumatic stress. We witness the perpetrator Reverend Olin Bitch’s parallel downfall of his own making, and the consequences of Sam, Little Bat, and the elders’ actions. Carlisle Floyd skillfully crafts words and music to bring these characters and the community of New Hope, Tennessee to vibrant life.

Floyd’s inspiration was the Apocryphal bible story *Susannah and the Elders*, the tale of *Susannah* who was innocently bathing when two lecherous voyeurs (elders in the community) demand she has sex with them; when she refuses, they sully her reputation, and she is subsequently arrested and condemned to death. No one believes her testimony but Daniel, who pokes a hole in the elders’ accounts, thus saving her life but taking all the credit. When researching, I was taken aback with how many times this story became the subject of visual artists. From Rembrandt to Rubens, Chagall to Stuck, I found about 50 different paintings of the naked *Susannah* in close proximity to clothed and leering men. I learned the reason for such interest; painters would not face backlash from the church if they were depicting a scene from the bible, even such a salacious one. A biblical tale it may indeed be, but it still objectifies a woman for the gratification of the male gaze. These paintings inspired the design concept for our production.

My decision to set *Susannah* in 2024 was quite deliberate; it may have been written in 1955 (with even older roots), but this story just won’t seem to go away. So many accounts of women gaslighted, shamed and abused crop up in the news, on social media, amongst our circles of friends. The religious fundamentalists portrayed here may seem extreme, but they give us a glimpse into a segment of society that mirrors the self-imposed groups we create within our own communities; are we not guilty of othering people we don’t agree with, of scapegoating when we need someone to blame, of jumping on a bandwagon instead of standing up for the innocent? *Susannah* is a sobering reminder of the tragedies that can occur when we lose vigilance as a community to empower, believe, and speak up for women.

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers! Read at your own risk!

At a square dance held at the church in New Hope Valley, Tennessee, the wives of the church elders gossip about the young and beautiful Susannah Polk. They are jealous and distrusting of her, and scornful of her brother Sam. The elders discuss the need to find a creek for a baptism ceremony before the arrival of the new preacher, the Reverend Olin Blicht. Blicht arrives at the dance, meets the elders, and dances with Susannah. After the dance, Susannah and her friend Little Bat talk and laugh about the dance, and Susannah imagines what life would be like outside the valley. Little Bat leaves when Sam returns home from hunting.

The next morning, Susannah is bathing in the creek, espied by the elders who come across her while searching for the creek. Her nakedness fires their lust, which turns to shame, then quickly to haughty indignation. When Susannah arrives for the church dinner later that day, she is turned away by the elders and their wives. Hurt and confused, Susannah returns home, where Little Bat approaches her and timidly explains that she has been shunned because she was seen bathing naked; a wickedness in the eyes of the elders. Further, he confesses that he has been coerced into falsely claiming that she seduced him.



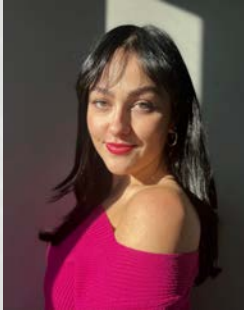
Later that week, Sam tells Susannah that the others expect her to confess and publicly repent; Susannah angrily refuses, knowing she has done nothing wrong. At a revival meeting, Bitch calls for members of the church to step forward in public displays of contrition. Singled out from the congregation, Susannah flees the church, returning home, where she collapses, exhausted. Bitch has followed her to hear her confession and lead her to repent. She again refuses, denying that she has any reason to do so. Bitch, recognizing his own weakness in Susannah's vulnerability, forces himself upon her.

A repentant and conflicted Bitch, having realized that Susannah was an innocent, uselessly tells the elders that they are wrong about her. That evening, as the congregation gathers for the baptism ceremony, Sam finds out that Bitch sexually assaulted Susannah, and sets off to the creek to shoot the preacher. A shot rings out; a mob approaches Susannah's house blaming her for pushing Sam to kill Bitch, and threatening to force her to leave. Susannah stands her ground, holding off the crowd with her rifle. Her accusers disperse, leaving Susannah alone, ostracized from the community, her life shattered.



Artists

+ = Azrieli mentoring program participant



Alannah Beuparlant as Mrs. Hayes

Alannah Beuparlant is a Toronto-based soprano currently pursuing her Bachelor of Music in Performance at the University of Toronto under the tutelage of Jean MacPhail. Alannah is a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music's Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy (2020). She has appeared on stage at Carnegie Hall as a part of the Distinguished Concerts International New York (2019).



Christina Bell+ as Susannah (Feb 24)

A graduate from University of Toronto with a Diploma in Operatic Performance, Christina Bell sang the roles of Mrs. Baggett in *Footsteps* in Campbell House, *Lady with a Cake Box* in Dominick Argentos' *Postcard from Morocco*, *Lady Billows* in Britten's *Albert Herring*, *Donatella* in *Encounters*. She has attended the *Mainstage/Ensemble Programs at Opera on the Avalon*, *The Centre for Opera Studies in Italy*, *Halifax Summer Opera Festival*, and *St. Andrews Summer Opera Workshop*.



Alexander Cappellazzo+ as Little Bat

Singing with "clarity and richness of voice" (Opera Canada), "rich, well-rounded tenor" (Stage Door), and "easy delivery and fearless command of his upper register" (Barcza Blog), Alexander Cappellazzo sang roles including Tamino, Lensky, and Don Ottavio with Canadian companies including: VOICEBOX: Opera In Concert, Toronto City Opera, Toronto Operetta Theatre and the Brott Music Festival. Alexander recently founded the Apocryphonia Concert Series and the Diapente Renaissance Quintet, two groups dedicated to rare, underperformed music.



Joshua Clemenger as Sam Polk

Joshua Clemenger earned a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance at Western University and an Opera master's degree at the UofT. Credits include Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* (TCO), Jupiter in *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Luiz in *Gondoliers* (Toronto Operetta Theatre), Jo in *Mother of Us All* and L'abete in *Adriana* (Opera in Concert), Camille in *The Merry Widow* (Opera York), Alfredo in SOLT's *La Traviata*, Count Belfiore in *La Finta Giardiniera* (UofT Opera) and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* (La Musica Lirica).



Alexandra Delle Donne+ as Mrs. Gleaton

This season, Canadian-Italian soprano Alexandra Delle Donne performs with the Edison Singers as a soloist in their upcoming season: Royal Splendours, Handel's Messiah, Christmas Carols, and Folk and Spiritual concert series. She was a soloist with them for their 2022/2023 season, which included Handel's Messiah, Faure's/Durufle's Requiem, and Rachmaninoff's Vespers.



Lauren Estey Jovanovic as Susannah (Feb 22, 25)

Lauren Estey Jovanovic obtained her BMus at Dalhousie and MMus of Vocal Performance and Literature at Western University. At Halifax Summer Opera Festival she performed the title role in Floyd's Susannah and the lead role in Puccini's Suor Angelica. For TCO she performed as Donna Anna in Don Giovanni. Lauren is presently completing her doctoral studies in Historical Voice Performance at the University of Toronto.



Mike Fan | 范祖铭+ as Elder Gleaton

Remarkably multi-faceted Chinese-Canadian tenor Mike Fan | 范祖铭 (they/them) has performed in 11 languages across North America, Australia, and Europe. Recent highlights include engagements with the Canadian Opera Company, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Pacific Opera Victoria, Théâtre Alphonse-Desjardins, and Tapestry Opera. In addition to wide-ranging work as an actor, drag performer, advocate, and educator, Mike is Founding Artistic Director of Opéra Queens, spotlighting QTBIPOC+ artists. Discover more at www.MikeZFan.com and on socials @MikeZFan.



Maria Milenic+ as Mrs. Mclean

Maria Milenic has "a uniquely beautiful voice and a lovely dark rich sound" (McHardy, 2022). Most recently she performed Minskwoman in Jonathan Dove's Flight. Maria made her international debut at the Berlin Opera Academy as Hänsel in Hänsel und Gretel. Other highlights include Cherubino in Le Nozze di Figaro, Ljubica in Ana Sokolovic's Svadba, Ada in Ivan Caryl's The Shop Girl, Mrs. Hildebrand in Kurt Weil's Street Scene, and Javotte in Massenet's Manon.



Austin Larusson+ as Elder McLean

Praised for his "fine baritone voice" (The Brooklyn Eagle), "Austin Larusson sang beautifully", "offering us luxury vocals" (barczablog.com), "Austin Larusson's Crespel was a very effective and even touching foil" (John Gilks operarambling.blog), Austin most recently appeared in Tales of the Grotesque as Hugo with White Mills Theatre, Die Fledermaus as Frank, Don Giovanni as Masetto and Tosca as the Sacristan and covering Scarpia with Toronto City Opera.



Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega+ as Elder Ott

Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega has been praised for his “booming bass sound,” and his “surprising low and rich voice” (Schmopera). He holds a performance diploma in voice from The Glenn Gould School where he was the recipient of the Ilnatowycz Emerging Artist Scholarship. Gabriel has performed for the Glenn Gould School, the Aspen Opera Centre, the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra, Opera York. Gabriel made his TCO debut as Il Commendatore in Don Giovanni.



Alvaro Vasquez as Elder Hayes

Mexican Tenor Alvaro Vasquez graduated from the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto obtaining a Voice performance diploma. He performed the role of Ajax II from the opera La Belle Helene for the school’s annual spring opera conducted by Uri Mayer at Koerner Hall. He was cast as the Miller, the lead role in the opera El Gato con Botas by Xavier Monsalvatge for the Glenn Gould School Fall Opera conducted by Peter Tifenbach.



Amanda Weatherall as Mrs. Ott

Amanda Weatherall’s operatic credits include the Yulanda M Faris Young Artist Program with Vancouver Opera, the title role in Bizet’s Carmen (Western), Romeo in Bellini’s *i Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Opera NUOVA), Fox in Janáček’s *Cunning Little Vixen* (NUOVA), Olga in Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* (NUOVA), Meg Page in Verdi’s *Falstaff* (Western), and Third Lady in Mozart’s *Magic Flute* (Western). Most recently she sang Filippjevna in Highlands Opera Studio’s production of *Eugene Onegin*.



Dylan Wright as Olin Blich

Dylan Wright has been praised for “seducing the audience with his rich, sonorous voice” (Beat Magazine). He recently created the titular role in Andrew Ager’s *The Mummy* with New Opera Lyra, covered König Marke in Powerhouse Opera’s *Tristan und Isolde*, sang Sarastro in Opera York’s *Die Zauberflöte*, Basilio in Mississauga Symphony Orchestra’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Elmiro in Opera By Request’s performance of Rossini’s *Otello*, Scarpia in TCO’s *Tosca*, and Ferrando in Opera Sustenida’s *Il Trovatore*.





In rehearsal:
Dylan Wright (Olin Blich), Alexander Cappellazzo
(Little Bat), and Susannah 2024 Company.
Photo Credit: Erin Woodward

Creative Team

+ = Azrieli mentoring program participant



Alexandra Christofides - Costume Designer

Alexandra Christofides has been doing Fashion & Costume Design, for over 30 years with a diverse portfolio in Fashion Designs, Musicals, Plays, Ballets, Theatre & Opera. Alexandra owned "Studio 7" on Avenue Road, Toronto, for 8 years. Her most recent & current works include costume design & wardrobe for Mother of the Maid Theatre Aurora, Surrender Dorothy Curtain Club Theatre Richmond Hill, Magic Flute, Rigoletto, Opera York, Die Fledermaus TCO and Opera York.



Margaret Cormier - Pre-Opera Chat

Margaret Cormier is a musicologist and dramaturg based in Toronto. She has lectured and narrated for the COC, Mississauga Symphony, Toronto City Opera and Opera by Request. Her scholarly work focuses on twenty-first-century opera performance practice as it relates to contemporary politics and social justice activism. The opera performance canon is filled with outdated and deeply problematic political ideas that increasingly clash with modern sensibilities when performed uncritically. She argues that production and performance are vital elements of opera, and that contemporary opera practitioners not only interpret but create operatic works when they put them onstage.



Logan Cracknell - Lighting Designer

Logan Raju Cracknell is a Toronto based theatre artist specializing in theatrical design and live stream creation. Their work has taken them across the country and they are excited to see what journeys lie ahead. Select works include: Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill (Theatre Calgary), Fairview (Canadian Stage/Obsidian Theatre Company), Prodigal (Howland Company), The Extinction Therapist (Theatre Aquarius), Jesus Christ Superstar (Theatre Sheridan), Alice in Wonderland (Bad Hats Theatre), Dixon Road (The Musical Stage Company/Obsidian Theatre Company), As You Like It/Dream In High Park (Canadian Stage Company), William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Radical Retelling by Cliff Cardinal and Orphans for the Czar (Crow's Theatre).



Ella Farlinger+ - Assistant Director. Choreographer & Fight Captain

A film and television actress, Ella's projects have aired on CBC, Netflix, Family Channel and Disney Channel. Film projects have premiered at TIFF, Cannes, and Sundance. Ella sang in two European tours, and with the COC. She trained at the Phil and Eli Taylor Academy for Young Artists and completed her Bachelor of Music at the Glenn Gould School. Ella debuted as an Assistant Director in Glenn Gould School's 2022 production of 'Flight'.



Ivan Estey Jovanovic - Music Director

Ivan Estey Jovanovic is the accompanist / Music Director at TCO. He completed his BMus and MMus in piano performance at the Belgrade University of Arts. In 2004, he joined Belgrade Opera Orchestra as répétiteur and concert pianist and in 2005 joined their staff as a principal vocal coach. In 2013 he completed his MMus. in Collaborative Piano at the UofT, won the Gwendolyn Williams Koldofsky Prize in Accompanying, then joined UofT's Opera Division as a vocal coach and pianist. He is a vocal coach and harpsichordist in UofT's Early Music Department and Schola Cantorum and the vocal coach/harpsichordist with Toronto Lyric Opera.



Gabriel Graziano - Production Manager

Gabriel Graziano is pleased to return as Production Manager for Toronto City Opera. This year marks the 40th year Gabriel has been associated with Toronto Opera Repertoire / Toronto City Opera. He has been involved in many different areas, including lighting designer, stage manager and was the first stage director, other than his mentor Giuseppe Macina, for Toronto Opera Repertoire.



Lin-Mei Lay - Stage Manager

This is Lin-Mei Lay's 4th production with TCO. She won the inaugural MyTheatre Award for Outstanding Stage Management (2015). Select Credits: The Chasse-Galerie, 2015, 2016 Dora Winner (Red One: Kabin / Storefront / Soulepper); Die Fledermaus, Don Giovanni, Cavalleria Rusticana (TCO); Eugene Onegin (HOS); La Traviata (Opera York; MSO); The Merry Widow (Opera York); Retreat (Hart House); The Chance (Leroy Street); Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Red One); Divine (Red One / Summerworks 2017); Othello (Ale House).



Bethany McLarty+ - Assistant Stage Manager

Bethany McLarty is a student at Sheridan College with a background in theatre and film. She was Amy in Storybook Theatre's *The Theory of Relativity*, Peter Quince in Croxford High School's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Though she is primarily an actress, she is elated to be helping out backstage and learning all that she can about the behind-the-scenes aspects of performing.



Melissa Morris - Director & Choreographer

Melissa Morris is a director, actor, singer, musician, musical director, playwright, composer, and educator. She is a faculty member at Queen's University and Sheridan College. Melissa has performed at Chemainus Theatre, Drayton Festival, Theatre Orangeville, Port Hope Festival, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Stirling Theatre, Upper Canada Playhouse, Orillia Opera House, Gravenhurst Opera House, Theatre Collingwood, Theatre Kingston and was Resident Musical Director/Composer at St Lawrence Shakespeare Festival for ten seasons. Melissa composed music for the Off-Broadway hit *Evil Dead the Musical*. She debuted as a Director with TCO in *Don Giovanni*.



Jennifer Tung - Artistic Director

A Dora nominated conductor (*Gould's Wall*), Jennifer Tung is the Artistic Director of Toronto City Opera and assistant conductor of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. In 2020/21, she was selected as a conducting fellow in the inaugural year of the Women in Musical Leadership program. Jennifer has conducted with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, Opera McGill, Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic and Kamloops Symphony. In 2023, Jennifer conducted the world premieres of *Show Room* (Rodney Sharman/Atom Egoyan) and *Of the Sea* (Ian Cusson/Kanika Ambrose). Jennifer is on faculty at Toronto's Glenn Gould School.



Vojin Vasovic - Projection Designer

Vojin Vasovic is a film director and producer. He finished Master of Arts studies at Centre of Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto and bachelor studies in Film Directing at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade. He is the recipient of many awards for directing, writing and animation. His films "Twice Upon a Time", "Just For The Record", etc. were selected at more than 150 film festivals winning more than eighty international awards and distribution by HBO channel. He is a producer and director at To Blink Animation studio, and creative director of Animond - private investment fund for animation. He is teaching film directing and animation at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade.



Erin Woodward+ - Assistant Stage Manager

Erin Woodward is currently a student at Sheridan College. She has worked on small-scale productions in the past such as Charlie Brown in A Charlie Brown Christmas, and school productions but she is super excited to be a part of Susannah as the Assistant Stage Manager.



Suzanne Yeo+ - Assistant Conductor

Suzanne Yeo is a Toronto-based conductor, pianist and vocal coach. Having graduated from the University of Toronto with an M.Mus. in piano performance she gravitated towards collaborative piano and conducting. She is a co-founder and music director of Opera Sustenida and has been assistant conductor at Toronto City Opera since 2021, conducting a performance each of Nabucco, Cavalleria Rusticana, Don Giovanni and Die Fledermaus. She also conducts the Rosedale Symphony Orchestra.



Die Fledermaus 2023 Company and TCO Chorus, Photo Credit : Dahlia Katz

Toronto City Opera Chorus



Cavalleria Rusticana 2022, Photo Credit : Dahlia Katz

Soprano 1

Teodora Borcean
 Jessenia Bourne
 Alexandra Delle Donne+
 Sherily De Silva
 Vivien Mann
 Marisa Oliveira
 Heather Pike
 Nada Savicevic
 Sandra Tang
 Hallie Wells
 Kathy Wert

Soprano 2

Morgan Alper-Wilson
 Jemma Pascal van Alphen
 Heather McGrath
 Sindy Mitchell
 Catherine Pepper
 Vanessa Quinn
 Tanya Szydlowski

Alto

Beverly Gibson
 Maria Milenic+
 Anna Miransky
 Grace Nostbakken
 Isabel Ramchandani
 Vera Schtern

Tenor

Alexander Cappellazzo+
 Barry St Denis
 Jan Vincent Doroteo
 Nathaniel Lapp
 Mike Fan | 范祖铭+
 Chris Schack

Baritone

Everly Conrad-Baldwin
 Derek Grundle
 Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega+
 Glenn Pettifer
 Michael Shulman

Bass

Tom Roedding
 Henry Tang
 Lynn Wells

*=Denotes section lead

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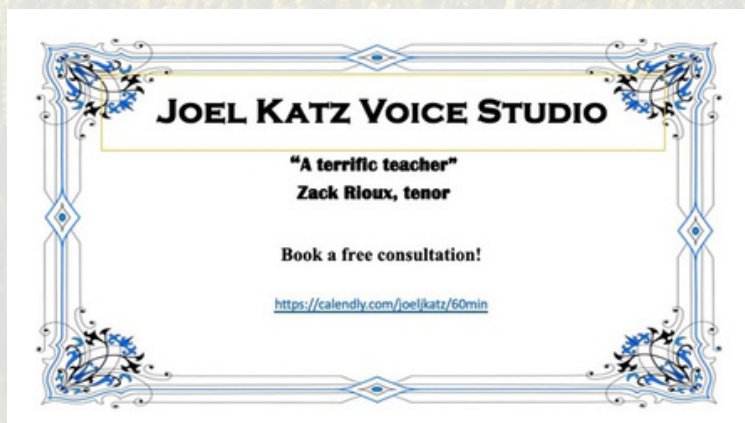
Our artists and TCO thank you for your support

This season, TCO deepens its commitment to championing the next generation. Thanks to the generosity of the Azrieli Foundation, we will welcome ten Emerging Opera Artists to each opera in our season as participants in our Opera Mentoring Program. Our artistic team will mentor singers, conductors, directors & stage managers at a career stage where we can achieve maximum impact on future success.



Credits & Thanks

- Blessed Trinity Parish & Reverend Edward Murphy - Pews
- Michael Chadwick, Ella Farlinger, Melissa Morris - surtitles
- Miles Nadal JCC - Al Green Theatre & Front of House Staff
- James Schneider - Firearms licensee
- Sheridan College - Props rental
- Southern Ontario Lyric Opera - Set pieces
- Mike Fan | 范祖铭 - Buster the dog
- Mark Wilson - Producer
- Marlene Wilson - Lobby Cast Pictures
- Rapier Wit - Weapons Rental
- York University Department of Music - Students in our chorus



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July 2022 - January 2024

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Don Giovanni 2023: Austin Larusson (Masetto), Thera Barclay (Zerlina), TCO Chorus
Photo Credit : Elena Emer

YOUR DONATION MATTERS

Help ensure our future



Don Giovanni 2023 Company and Jennifer Tung
Photo Credit : Elena Emer

Our prices are affordable because we want opera to be accessible to everyone! Your essential gift, whatever the amount, will mean that everyone will continue to have access to live opera. You will also be supporting a program that has helped young Canadians leap into international careers.

We are a charitable, non-profit organization run by a volunteer board of directors. As with all performing arts organizations, box office revenue is not enough. Our fundraisers and private donations contribute more than 1/3 of the revenues we need to mount our productions. Our administration costs are only 3% of our expenses. You can be sure your donation goes directly to supporting the artists and productions.

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torontocityopera.com/donations or scan our QR code!



Other ways to donate:

1. E-transfer to treasurer@torontocityopera.com
2. Cheque payable to Toronto City Opera mailed to 27 Everingham Ct, North York, ON M2M 2J6

Please include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address so we can issue a tax receipt for all donations over \$20.