Toront Scity City Opera



JEALOUSY IS NO JOKE
PAGLIACCI
BY LEONCAVALLO

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ARTS_COUNCIL



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 the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the

Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



I PAGLIACCI

Words & Music by Ruggero Leoncavallo

- Runtime: 2 hours including a 20 minute intermission
- Premiered May 21, 1892 in Milan, Italy.



Cast and Creative Team

CONDUCTOR	JENNIFER TUNG	CANIO	ROSS MORTIMER*
PIANIST	IVAN ESTEY JOVANOVIC	NEDDA	CASSANDRA AMORIM
DIRECTOR	SAWYER CRAIG*	TONIO	JOHNATHON KIRBY*
LIGHTING DESIGNER	THEODORE BELC	SILVIO	JAMES COOLE-STEVENSON
COSTUME DESIGNER	AMANDA EASON	ВЕРРЕ	CAMERON MAZZEI
COSTUME ASSISTANT	ALEXANDRA CHRISTOPHIDES		*APPEARING UNDER THE DOT (DANCE. OPERA. THEATRE) AGREEMENT WITH THE CANADIAN ACTOR'S EQUITY ASSOCIATION
STAGE MANAGER	TANVI VYAS		
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	CLAIRE THORNTON		
LIGHTING TECHNICIAN	SANDOR AJZENSTAT		
SET CONSTRUCTION	GABRIEL GRAZIANO		
PROPS & FURNITURE	UofT OPERA		
TECHNICAL SUPPORT	JOSEPH PEPELNAK		
SUPERTITLES OPERATOR	LEANNE KAUFMAN		
LIGHTING EQUIPTMENT AND PI	ANO THE MUSIC GALLERY		

Toronto City Opera Chorus

SOPRANOS	CATHERINE PEPPER CHERYL LAKE EMILY HAMILTON GABRYSIA KOWALIK HEATHER MCGRATH IONA GREENHAM KATHY WERT LINDA GRUSON	MARY-JOYCE DAGULO MEGAN CARNEY NADA SAVICEVIC SANDRA TANG SUZANNE TEVLIN TEODORA BORCEAN VIVIEN MANN	MEZZO- SOPRANOS	BEVERLY GIBSON CAROL CHIN CAROL HOUSTON FAYE KELLERSTEIN GRACE NOSTBAKKEN	MICHAELA FOSCHIA PEIWEN CHEN SUSAN ROSS TANYA SZYDLOWSKI VANESSA QUINN
TENORS	BARRY ST-DENIS CHRIS LEA CHRIS SCHACK	HARSHMAAN SINGH JOHN DARRIGO WILL LIN	BASSES	DEREK GRUNDLE DON MAUDSLEY DOUG HOUSEHOLDER ERLY CONRAD-BALDWIN	GIANNI MINARDI GLENN PETTIFER HENRY TANG PETER PRICE

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MACINA VOICE COMPETITION - FEB 21, 2026 - Church of the Redeemer

ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD - WITH FULL ORCHESTRA - JUNE 27 & 28, 2026 - Trinity St. Paul's

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Synopsis



A traveling commedia dell'arte troupe arrives in a small Italian village to give an evening performance. Canio, the troupe's leader, is married to Nedda, though she secretly loves another man, Silvio. When the jealous Tonio discovers Nedda's secret, he exposes her affair to Canio. Heartbroken but forced to go on with the show, Canio takes the stage as the cuckolded clown Pagliaccio. As the play unfolds, art imitates life and the line between performance and reality dissolves in a moment of raw and unforgettable emotion.

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Director's Notes

The bystander effect is a strange phenomenon. It describes the fact that the greater the number of people who witness an act of violence, the less likely they are to intervene on the victim's behalf.

When Leoncavallo was a child, a murder occurred near his village: a woman was killed onstage during a show by a jealous fellow actor. This real act of violence, with an unnamed victim and so very many witnesses, had such a deep impact on Leoncavallo that, years later, it inspired him to write I Pagliacci (a precursor, perhaps, to our modern fascination with true crime).

There are many unspoken agreements made when we go to a performance, whether it's a play, an opera or even a circus. We, the audience, agree to remain in our seats. We know we're watching a play, and we agree to suspend our disbelief, within reason. We trust that the action onstage is fictional; however strange, frightening, or violent it may be. The actors are safe. They play their roles voluntarily. If any of that weren't the case, surely someone would do something.

Working on such a rich text is a privilege. In my work, I had two priorities. The first was centering Nedda in this story. Opera is a deeply traditional medium- and a very patriarchal one at that. I believe it's our responsibility to take special care with every character, to paint a human and honest portrait of them. It's true that these texts often serve their heroes better than their heroines in that regard. Nedda is an imperfect victim (most are), but her search for agency, for freedom, is at the core of this piece.



My second priority was to investigate the intersection of the bystander effect and those aforementioned unspoken rules of theatre. I am struck by the questions posed by I Pagliacci: if we accept (as we are asked to in the prologue) that these are people, not performers, how do we determine what's real and what's false? If we witness a tragedy and do nothing to stop it, are we culpable? Perhaps even more uncomfortably: why do we fail to act?

I'm deeply grateful to this beautiful group of artists, both onstage and off, for their commitment, imagination, and sensitivity as we explore these questions. Welcome to our circus. Enjoy the show.

SAWYER CRAIG

Cast

Ross Mortimer as Canio



Ross Mortimer is a tenor based in Toronto. He has been a member of the Canadian Opera Company Chorus since 2019, performing in over fourteen productions to date. That same year, he completed an Artist Diploma at the Glenn Gould School of Music, having previously earned his Bachelor of Music at Western University under the tutelage of Christiane Riel and Torin Chiles. He continues his vocal studies with baritone Jason Howard. Ross has appeared across Canada in leading roles and workshops, as well as internationally in Italy, where he performed as Count Belfiore in Mozart's La Finta Giardiniera in Lucca. In 2023, he was welcomed back to the Royal Conservatory as their Vocal Scholar, performing the role of Bill in Jonathan Dove's Flight, participating in masterclasses, and receiving scholarship support for his continued studies. As a soloist, Ross has performed with the Toronto Classical Singers in Handel's Messiah, Mozart's Requiem and Vespers, and Beethoven's Mass in C. He is also a regular soloist with the Canadian Opera Company's Community Partnerships & Programs, appearing in their Union Station concerts, Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre Recital Series, and Opera Labs. Upcoming engagements include performing in a new adaptation of Ezra Jack Keats' The Snowy Day in Toronto's Distillery District this December, as well as a Christmas recital at Union Station. In March, he will appear in the 25th anniversary production of Dean Burry's The Brothers Grimm. A passionate interpreter of art song, Ross will also be presenting recitals this season in Toronto and his hometown of London. In 2015, he founded Carols By Candlelight, an annual concert that has raised thousands of dollars in support of London's Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness. He has also appeared as a soloist with the London Youth Orchestra and London Community Orchestra in performances featuring Britten's Folk Songs and Berlioz's Les nuits ďété.

Cassandra Amorim as Nedda



Cassandra Amorim, soprano, is a Canadian artist of Portuguese and Romanian heritage, praised for her voice of "power and precision." This fall, she makes her debut with Toronto City Opera as Nedda in Pagliacci. In 2025, Cassandra was a Resident Artist at the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance - Bel Canto Academy, she premiered The Gatherers, a new oratorio by Canadian composer Justin Lapierre, and participated in Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. Most recently, she appeared as Magda in Puccini's La Rondine with Good Mess Opera Theatre, reprising her earlier role debut this year with Voicebox: Opera in Concert. A lifelong musician, Cassandra grew up in the orchestra pit as a violinist, falling in love with opera one overture at a time—until she stepped onto the stage herself. She has been grateful for every moment since.

Johnathon Kirby as Tonio



Johnathon Kirby has built a reputation for having a "virility in his sound, and exhaustive energy in his movements" (Schmopera). Kirby hails from Newmarket Ontario and is an alumnus of Dalhousie University and completed two years in the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist Program. For the last decade Kirby has made a name for himself performing with opera companies and symphonies across Canada. In 2018 Kirby received critical acclaim and a Dora Nomination for best performance of an individual, for his performance as Figaro in Opera Five's production of The Barber of Seville. He has had the privilege of performing with TCO several times as Belcore in their production of The Elixir of Love and as Ben Upthegrove in their production of The Telephone. When he isn't performing, Johnathon can be found at Elementary Public School as a music teacher, at the karate dojo showing a lot of spirit if not much talent, or with his family going for a walk with his dog.

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James Coole-Stevenson as Silvio



James Coole-Stevenson, baritone, has impressed audiences in a number of operatic roles thanks to his "sensitivity and nuance". Currently living and working as a musician in Toronto, he strives for authenticity in each performance.

In 2024, James had his professional debut as Ping and the Mandarin in Puccini's Turandot, through the Gate City Bank Fargo-Moorhead Young Artist Program. There he fostered a love for Puccini, and developed serious interest in the role of outreach as a tool to educate and introduce people to opera. With his newfound desire to broaden Opera's reach, James had the honor of participating in Manitoba Opera's Digital Emerging Artist's Program, where he worked with several industry talents to create a video project tracing his Newfoundland heritage through the lens of traditional folk songs collected by Maud Carpeles and Ralph Vaughan-Williams. Now a member of the Rebanks Family Fellowship, James hopes to hone his skills even further.

Cameron Mazzei as Beppe



Cameron Mazzei is an Italian-Canadian tenor from Toronto, Ontario. He a recent graduate of the University of Toronto's esteemed Opera School, receiving his Diploma in Operatic Performance. He studied under the tutelage of tenor Dr. Darryl Edwards. Cameron holds both a Masters in Music Literature & Performance and Bachelors of Music Performance degree from Western University, studying with Dr. Sophie Roland and Theodore Baerg respectively. In addition, Cameron has worked with several notable artists across Canada and the United States, including Allan Glassman, Russell Braun, Tracy Dhal, Colin Ainsworth, and Judith Forst. Other performance highlights include Ferrando in Così fan tutte (Opera York, UofT Opera), Nemorino in L'elisir d'Amore (North York Concert Orchestra), Le Remendado in Carmen (Chicago Summer Opera), the Narrator in Bach's Coffee Cantata (Opera by Request), The Magician in The Consul and Lucano/Primi Soldati in L'incoronazione di Poppea, (NUOVA Vocal Arts). With UofT Opera, Cameron's role highlights include Fadinard in Il cappello di paglia di Firenze, Demodocus in Castaway, and premiering the role of Alexander in Lysistrata: Reimagined as part of their Student Composers Collective.







IT'S A HELL OF A GOOD TIME

ORPHEUS

IN THE UNDERWORLD

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Creative Team

Jennifer Tung - Conductor



A Dora nominated conductor (Gould's Wall), Chinese-Canadian Jennifer Tung is the artistic director of Toronto City Opera and assistant conductor of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. In 2020/21, she joined Tapestry Opera as a conducting fellow in the inaugural year of the Women in Musical Leadership program, in partnership with Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Pacific Opera Victoria. Jennifer debuted with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival conducting The Mikado in 2017 and has returned to conduct Sweeney Todd and Tragedy of Carmen. In 2019, she debuted with Opera York in La Traviata and assisted Tapestry Opera and Opera on the Avalon's joint production of "Shanawdithit" by Dean Burry and Yvette Nolan. In August of 2022, she conducted the world premiere of "Gould's Wall" by Brian Current and Liza Balken, a joint production with the Royal Conservatory of Music and Tapestry Opera. For the 2022/23 season, she debuted as guest conductor with Opera McGill's production of "Plaything" (Anna Pigorna/Maria Reva - Canadian premiere), Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic and Kamloops Symphony. In March of 2023, Jennifer conducted the world premieres of Continuum's production of the opera "Show Room" (Rodney Sharman/Atom Egoyan) as well as Tapestry Opera/Obsidian Theatre's co-production of "Of the Sea" (lan Cusson/Kanika Ambrose) and was assistant conductor for COC's production of "Pomegranate". Recent engagements include concerts with Kamloops symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia and Vancouver Opera. In March of 2025, Jennifer made her debut with the Glenn Gould School Opera in their production of Mozart's Magic Flute in Koerner Hall. Jennifer is on faculty at Toronto's Glenn Gould School, and is a sought-after faculty member for summer programs internationally. She studied conducting with Maestro Denis Mastromonaco.



Ivan Estey Jovanovic - Pianist



Ivan Estey Jovanovic is a sought-after collaborative pianist and vocal coach recognized for his rich understanding of the classical canon and Slavic opera repertoire. Jovanovic's music education began in Serbia at the Belgrade University of Arts, Faculty of Music where he completed his BMus and MMus in piano performance. During his studies in Belgrade, Jovanovic was recognized for his solo piano performances, claiming prestigious awards at state competitions. In 2004, he joined Belgrade Opera Orchestra as a répétiteur and concert pianist, firstly at the Young Artist Program (Operatic Studio). In 2005 he joined the staff as a principal vocal coach, mastering an enormous opera repertoire under the baton of the chief conductor Dejan Savic. While working with Maestro Savic, Jovanovic honed his skills both at the piano and harpsichord for productions of Orfeo ed Euridice (Gluck), Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart), Don Giovanni (Mozart), Il matrimonio segreto (Cimarosa), L'italiana in Algeri (Rossini), Hassan-Aga's Wife (Kambasković), and L'amour des trois oranges (Prokofiev). In the Belarade National Theatre, Jovanovic had the extraordinary opportunity to work closely with internationally celebrated conductors, such as Dorian Wilson, Mladen Jagust, Jon Janku, Ilmar Lapins, Simone Fermani, Srboljub Dinic, Marco Berdondini and David Porcelijn. During composer/conductor Johannes Harneit's residency in Belgrade, Jovanovic was the main répétiteur for the productions of Salome (Strauss) and Carmen (Bizet). After a recital series in Toronto, Jovanovic fell in love with Canada. He returned to Toronto to complete his MMus. in Collaborative Piano from the University of Toronto under the professorship of Steven Philcox, to further his knowledge of opera, art song, and oratorio. After winning the 2013 prestigious Gwendolyn Williams Koldofsky Prize in Accompanying, he joined the UofT Opera Division as a vocal coach and pianist until 2017. In 2023, Jovanovic began his collaboration with classical saxophone students at UofT. Presently, he is a regular vocal coach and harpsichordist in UofT's Early Music Department and Schola Cantorum. From 2014 to present, Jovanovic has been the accompanist at Toronto City Opera and in 2017 extended his role to Music Director. Jovanovic loves how his work with TCO brings him even closer to the Toronto music community and audience.

Sawyer Craig - Stage Director



Sawyer Craig's artistry is defined by her passion for vibrant, collaborative storytelling, as well as her unique spark of madness. In demand as both a singing actor and stage director, she has been praised for her "particularly radiant coloratura" as well as her "keenly smart, insightful and sensitive direction" (Opera Canada). Sawyer studied Voice Performance at UBC and the University of Manitoba. She then completed an Artist Diploma in Stage Direction at McGill University, where she was the first student to direct a mainstage production: Poulenc's Les Mamelles de Tirésias. She is an alumna of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist program, where she was the resident Stage Director for the 2022–23 and 2023–24 seasons. Other notable training includes Banff's Opera in the 20th Century Program, Highlands Opera Studio, and Music Academy of the West. Highlights include performing as Adina in L'elisir d'amore with Highlands Opera, and her hometown Edmonton Opera debuts: as Frasquita in Carmen, and as a director with Aquarius.





Theo Belc (they/them) is a Toronto-based lighting designer and creative problem solver working at the intersection of colour, space, and story. With a foundation in dance and theatre, they bring rhythm, curiosity, and care to each project. They graduated from the Performance Production Program at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson), where they focused their studies in lighting design and scenic arts. Theo's multidisciplinary practice is rooted in illuminating stories that reflect and resonate with the Toronto arts community.

Amanda Eason - Costume Designer



Amanda has been designing & sewing Opera costumes for about 20 seasons. She enjoys the backstage activity, the artistic team and the final look of each production. Her background includes a Music Degree (MusBac UTor) and many years of teaching high school Music in York Region. Now retired, she also volunteers as Wardrobe Coordinator at the Curtain Club in Richmond Hill.

The cast of "Pagliacci" have been great to work with. As always, our singers are first class. Enjoy!

Alexandra Christofides - Assistant Costume Designer



Alexandra has been doing Fashion &Costume Design, for over 30 years & loves this Creative outlet with a diverse portfolio in Fashion Designs, Opera, Musical Theatre, Community Theatre, Ballets, and School Productions.

Alexandra's most recent & Damp; current works include working on costume design & wardrobe for "Mother of the Maid" Theatre Aurora, "Surrender Dorothy" Curtain Club Theatre Richmond Hill and "Magic Flute" Opera York, "Die Fledermaus" and "The Tender Land" Toronto City Opera, "Die Fledermaus" Opera York, "Rigoletto", Opera York, "Susannah" Toronto City Opera, "Angel's Bone" Canadian Collaboration, "Halfway There" Curtain Club, "The Night Before Christmas" Smile Theatre, "Opera Queens", Opera Queens, "James & Diant Peach" Branksome Hall, "Silver Dagger" Curtain Club. Alexandra has designed and created speciality "set dressings" for productions with the most recent being "La Traviata" Opera York.



Gabriel Graziano - Set Construction

Gabriel Graziano is pleased to return to Toronto City Opera. Gabriel has been associated with Toronto Opera Repertoire / Toronto City Opera for over 40 years. He has been involved in many different areas, including lighting design, stage management and was the first person to direct a Toronto City Opera production other than his mentor, Giuseppe Macina.



Tanvi Vyas - Stage Manager

Tanvi is a stage and production manager based in Toronto, Ontario. A graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University's Performance: Production program, Tanvi has a passion for live performance in all its forms. She is dedicated to supporting artists in creating the best possible version of their work. Past credits include: La reine-garcon (2025), The Monkiest King (2025), The Greatest Love of Dance (2024), and Pirates of Penzance (2023).



Claire Thornton - Assistant Stage Manager

Claire Thornton (She/Her) is a Stage Manager from Oakville, Ontario. Starting as a performer on stage, Claire earned her Master of Music Performance in Opera and Voice from McGill University following a Bachelor of Music Education from Western University. Claire is currently a 2025-2026 Edmonton Opera Emerging Artist, with whom she travelled the country stage managing Tosca at the National Arts Centre, Yukon Arts Center, and with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra. Other select management and production assistant credits include: The Monkiest King (Canadian Children's Opera Company), Nabucco, The Cunning Little Vixen, Fidelio (Canadian Opera Company), The Handmaid's Tale, Indians on Vacation (Banff Centre for the Performing Arts & Creativity), The Light in the Piazza, Blond Eckbert, Semele (Opera McGill), and Così fan tutte (Good Mess Opera Theatre). As a singer, Claire has performed as a soloist with the Oakville Symphony Orchestra and in productions of A World Goes Round, All Things Lovely, Don Giovanni (Opera McGill), Catch Me If You Can (King's Players), and If/Then (Theatre Western). This is Claire's second production with Toronto City Opera after previously Assistant Stage Managing The Tender Land.

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The Tender Land 2025, Photo Credit : Dahlia Katz

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.

Our History

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.

Board of Directors

Gianni Minardi, President Onita Dey, Vice President Sandra Tang, Treasurer Linda Gruson, Secretary Chris Lea Karlijn Smit Peter Price Steve Guard Susy Cimicata Ex-officio: Henry Tang

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.

Staff

Jennifer Tung, Artistic Director Ivan Jovanovic, Music Director Nicholas Borg, Administrative Director Alexander Cappellazzo, Development and Client Relations Manager

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