



NATIONAL CAPITAL *Opera Society*

National Capital Opera Society Newsletter

Winter 2025



President's Message

Dear Fellow NCOS Member:

I wish everyone an excellent New Year and that it may be filled with joy and beautiful singing. With the New Year it is time to renew our membership. (Please see the membership form at the end of this newsletter.) Also, in 2025 we will be holding our 16th Competition. It is through your generous donations that the Competition has been possible over the last 30 years. Please consider donating to support this year's Competition. The Board and I are grateful for all your contributions. The competition will be at 2 PM on Saturday October 18th, 2025, in Ottawa.

As I reflect on opera in 2025, I am excited about its future. In Ottawa, we have seen the emergence of Operatic Revelry, which is reaching out to a broad community of opera lovers. Kudos to the founders: Phil Klaassen and Jonathan MacArthur. In Old Ottawa South, I saw a beautiful chamber performance of Mozart's *Idomeneo*. Congratulations to Maghan MacPhee and Dillon Parmer. We are privileged to have such beautiful music-making on our doorstep. In the last year I have also been privileged to see four operas for the first time, three of which were composed in the last 20 years! I enjoyed all four: Amboise Thomas's *Hamlet*, Kevin Putts's *Elizabeth Cree*, Jeanine Tesori's *Grounded* and Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*. Opera continues to evolve and is alive and well.

Mark

Mark Robinson
President, National Capital Opera Society

Editor's Note



We would love to add new voices to our newsletter. If you have ideas, experiences, reviews, memories or pictures to share, please send them to Lesley@ncos.ca. The deadline for the Spring issue is the end of March. Thank you.

Comedy and Tragedy at Opéra de Montréal
Le Barbier de Séville by Gioachino Rossini
and Hamlet by Ambroise Thomas

Opéra de Montréal began its 2024/25 season with two vastly contrasting productions, one based on Beaumarchais's comedic romp and the other on the most monumental of Shakespearean tragedies. Opéra de Montréal includes young artists from Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal in its productions and this is an exciting aspect of what the audience is able to enjoy this season.

Le Barbier de Séville

Cast

Figaro	Hugo Laporte
Rosina	Pascale Spinney
Bartolo	Omar Montanari
Comte Almaviva	Alasdair Kent
Basilio	Gianluca Margheri
Berta	Bridget Esler
Fiorello	Mikelis Rogers
An officer	Jamal Al Titi

Conducted by Pedro Halffter

The entire opera house was filled with joy for the performance of *Le Barbier de Séville*. The atmosphere of delight was felt from the entire cast, from the pit and throughout the auditorium. It was one of those evenings when you just couldn't stop smiling.



Gianluca Margheri Pascale Spinney Pedro Halffter Hugo Laporte Alasdair Kent Omar Montanari

The brightly coloured costumes enhanced the feeling that this group of characters were larger than life, like cartoon characters clowning around for our amusement. The international cast hammed it up deliciously and included some members of the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, namely Bridget Esler, Mikelis Rogers and Jamal Al Titi. It is exciting that Opéra de Montréal gives these opportunities to

stars of the future, although it was a little sad that one of the cuts made to this lengthy opera was to Berta's aria. Pascale Spinney, singing the role of Rosina, is in fact a former member of the Atelier Lyrique. Thanks, Opéra de Montréal, for a joyful romp of an evening!

Hamlet

Cast

Hamlet	Elliot Madore
Ophelia	Sarah Dufresne
Queen Gertrude	Karine Deshayes
Claudius	Nathan Berg
Laërtes	Antoine Bélanger
Marcellus	Rocco Rupolo
Horatio	Alexandre Sylvestre
Polonius	Matthew Li
Ghost	Alain Coulombe
Conductor	Jacques Lacombe



L-r: Antoine Bélanger, Karine Deshayes, Elliot Madore, Sarah Dufresne, Nathan Berg

If you were expecting a faithful interpretation of Shakespeare's play and a stage littered with bodies for the finale, you were in for a surprise—not even Hamlet dies at the end, although in advance of the denouement, Ophelia does die the tragic death required by the Bard. Hamlet is indeed the tortured soul of Shakespeare's tragedy, although his famous soliloquy is somewhat abridged and even some of the well-known lines which made it into the libretto were translated back to something a little different in the surtitles. Unlike Verdi's Shakespeare adaptations, which are remarkably faithful to the originals, Thomas used plenty of poetic licence. Nevertheless, the result yields some beautiful music and plenty of drama.

The set was made up of large moving blocks around a central platformed area where some of the action was focused. Once again the Atelier Lyrique provided much of the talent for this production. Sarah Dufresne, Antoine Bélanger, Rocco Rupolo, Alexandre Sylvestre and Matthew Li are all former members of the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. Sarah Dufresne, in the role of Ophelia, was undoubtedly the star of the show. Her mad scene was stupendous and left the audience roaring with appreciation. She has recently been taking European and Canadian audiences by storm and it was easy to see why.

“All’alba vincerò” **A Celebration of Puccini’s Music**

The Embassy of Italy in Canada recently hosted a special night of entertainment: “All’alba vincerò. A musical journey through Puccini’s masterpieces”. The free event took place at Carleton University’s Dominion-Chalmers Centre, with a programme of well-loved arias from *La Boheme*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* and *Turandot*, performed by soprano Claudia Pavone, tenor Valerio Borgioni and pianist Chiara Mariani. This was a magnificent celebration of Italian culture.

Opening remarks were delivered by Rebecca Scano, Head of Cultural Affairs, Press and Communications at the Italian Embassy. She spoke of the importance of opera and of the tremendous contribution of Maestro Puccini to the cultural heritage of Italy. As a universal language, music has the power to unite people from all over the world.



Chiara Mariani

Valerio Borgioni

Claudia Pavone

Two New Productions at the Met

***Ainadamar* by Osvaldo Golijov with a libretto by David Henry Hwang**

Cast

Margarita Xirgu
Federico García Lorca
Nuria

Angel Blue
Daniela Mack
Elena Villalón

Ramón Ruiz Alonso

Alfredo Tejada

Conducted by

Miguel Harth-Bedoya

Ainadamar, by an Argentinian composer, with a libretto written in English by an American librettist and performed in Spanish in a translation by the composer, is a stunning international collaboration. The title is from an Arabic word referring to the Fountain of Tears in Granada, Spain, the site of the execution of poet and playwright Federico García Lorca. The story is narrated by the actress Margarita Xirgu, played by soprano Angel Blue and is presented as a series of three images or tableaux, telling about the life and tragic death of the Spanish playwright, persecuted for his political views and his homosexuality during the Spanish Civil War. Xirgu, a close friend of Lorca, had tried in vain to persuade him to escape with her to safety in Cuba. She had played the role of Mariana Pineda in Lorca's play about the nineteenth century freedom fighter whose execution in Granada had made her into a legend and whose fate parallels that of Lorca.



Angel Blue
David Henry Hwang (l) and Osvaldo Golijov (r)

The set is symbolic, with extensive use of projections and dramatic lighting and with much of the action taking place within a circle of beaded curtains, evoking the fountain itself. The entire production is infused with the involvement of an all-female chorus and flamenco dance troupe, enhancing the Andalusian atmosphere and furthering the drama. The choreography, by Deborah Colker, is energetic and evocative of the setting.

Ms. Blue's performance was intense and emotional. This piece was both linguistically and musically divergent for her. It is a new work and a stunning production which moves in an innovative direction and challenges audiences to accompany the performers down that path. The inclusion of prize-winning Flamenco singer Alfredo Tejada in the role of Ramón Ruiz Alonso (the bad guy) is a case in point. Tejada grew up in Granada, so he is right at home in this setting and his performance wowed the audience. The trouser role of Federico García Lorca was sung by mezzo soprano Daniela Mack who is physically as well as vocally perfect for this part. Everything came together perfectly for a triumphant first night.

Grounded by Jeanine Tesori with a libretto by George Brant

Cast

Jess	Emily D'Angelo
Eric	Ben Bliss
Sensor	Kyle Miller
Commander	Greer Grimsley
Also Jess	Ellie Dehn
Sam	Lucy LoBue

Conducted by

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

The Met has been commissioning and staging new operas, as it navigates the genre through the twenty-first century. It first contacted Jeanine Tesori in 2014 about composing a new work for the Met. At that time *Grounded* was a new stage play by American playwright George Brant, which had premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It was Brant who ended up writing the libretto as his first foray into the world of opera. The resulting work premiered at the Washington National Opera in 2023 as a co-production with

the Met. It was Canadian mezzo-soprano Emily D'Angelo who created the role of Jess to great acclaim, with only Kyle Miller in the role of Sensor, joining her at the Met from the original Washington cast.

When *Grounded* opened the Met's 2024/25 season, the running time was cut by 45 minutes from its original two hours and 25 minutes. This new version of the production was exceptionally well cast. Of course, Emily D'Angelo reprised the role of Jess and the part seemed to be tailor made for her. Ben Bliss was a kind, gentle, moustachioed Eric, Jess's casual one night stand who becomes her husband and the father of her child. Kyle Miller was the cool and relaxed young Sensor, whose skill at video games translates readily to drone warfare, a chilling commentary on the detached nature of this modern form of "combat". Greer Grimsley played the role of Jess's curmudgeonly commanding officer who callously suggests that she rid herself of the child she is inconveniently carrying. The title *Grounded* has a number of connotations. Firstly, Jess is grounded from flying when she becomes a mother and it is for her daughter Sam that Jess keeps her feet on the ground, with new priorities and new wisdom as a mother, during the time that she is away from the military. Later, when she feels an intense need to get back into the sky, she instead is ordered to fly drones from the safety of a distant control room and in the end, deliberately grounds the drone against orders.

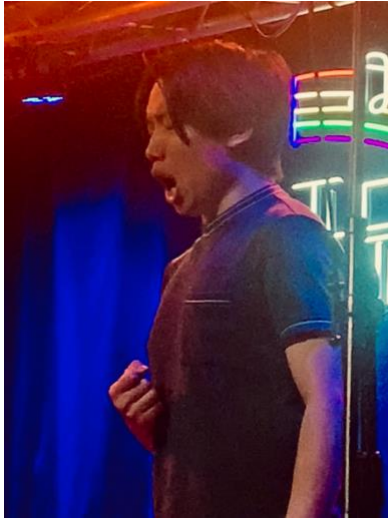
The set has two distinct areas, dividing the stage into an upper and lower zone, reminiscent of a split screen. The upper zone is the "war zone" and the lower zone represents "home". Early on, it is the bar where Jess and Eric meet when she is on leave. Later it stands for the home that they make together for Sam. Jess and her comrades are able to justify their actions in hunting down and killing their targets by thinking of them as guilty, but as Jess begins to think of her target as a father with an innocent child, the distinctions become blurred and she suffers incredible stress. She drives in the desert to get to work, just as her target is driving through the desert in a distant part of the world. She awaits confirmation of her target's identity which she can't get until he gets out of his car. Fatefully he gets out of the car to greet his innocent daughter, who is just like Sam and Jess cannot kill him. In the end, Jess is punished by court martial, not so much for acting through moral considerations, but for the destruction of valuable government property. This is a thought-provoking and challenging conclusion. Ironically her judgements based on loving a child are what take her away from her own beloved and innocent child.



Lucy LoBue Kyle Miller Emily D'Angelo Yannick Nézet-Séguin Ben Bliss Greer Grimsley Ellie Dehn

Operatic Revelry: “Tricksters and Tomfoolery” and “Midnight and Mistletoe” at the Rainbow Bistro in Ottawa

Young Ottawa artists delighted us once again on October 23rd and December 18th with entertaining programmes of operatic fun and virtuosity. What I love most about this endeavour is the infectious joy that the artists share. Don't miss the next one!



Matthew Li



Adam Sperry



NCOS members enjoying some social time before the show



Emili Losier "Could Have Danced All Night!"



Ania Hejnar as Queen of the Night

Handel's *Acis and Galatea* at Opera Atelier, Toronto

Cast

Acis	Antonin Rondepierre
Galatea	Meghan Lindsay
Damon	Blaise Rantoanina
Polyphemus	Douglas Williams

With the artists of Atelier Ballet and the musicians of Tafelmusik, conducted by Christopher Bagan



Former BLOC winner, soprano Meghan Lindsay takes her bow on the stage of Opera Atelier

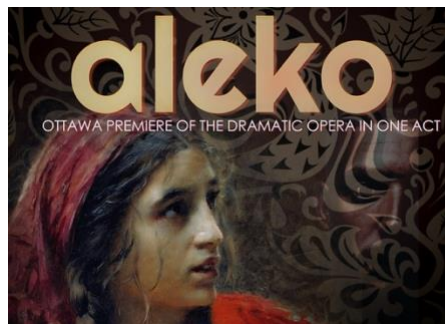
Opera Atelier's recent production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* was every bit as sparkling and sumptuous as we have come to expect from the company. Gerard Gauci, resident set and costume designer created a delightful pastoral backdrop for the action and Co-Artistic Directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg provided their signature stage direction and choreography.

This is one of Handel's best loved pieces. It was first performed in 1718 at Cannons (London), the seat of Handel's patron, the first Duke of Chandos. The original version of the work was presented in a single act and featured only five singers—a soprano, three tenors and a bass, who sang the principal roles and doubled up as the chorus. It was revised in three acts in 1732, when the role of Acis was sung by Francesco Bernardi, an Italian contralto castrato known as Senesino, who was famous for his extensive collaboration with Handel. Handel hired him as his "primo uomo" (leading man) and he created 17 leading roles in Handel's operas, including Giulio Cesare, Orlando and Bertarido in *Rodelinda*.

The two-act version of the opera is the one that is commonly performed today and that is what we saw at Opera Atelier. In this incarnation Acis is interpreted by French tenor Antonin Rondepierre with Ottawa soprano Meghan Lindsay as his beloved Galatea. The pastoral setting with its nymphs and shepherds is the perfect vehicle for Atelier's special blend of ballet and vocals. The production is full of joy and exuberance, right down to the festive curtain call, in celebration of love.



NEW
OPERA
LYRA
LIFE ON STAGE



Aleko by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Friday, March 14 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, March 15 at 3:00 pm

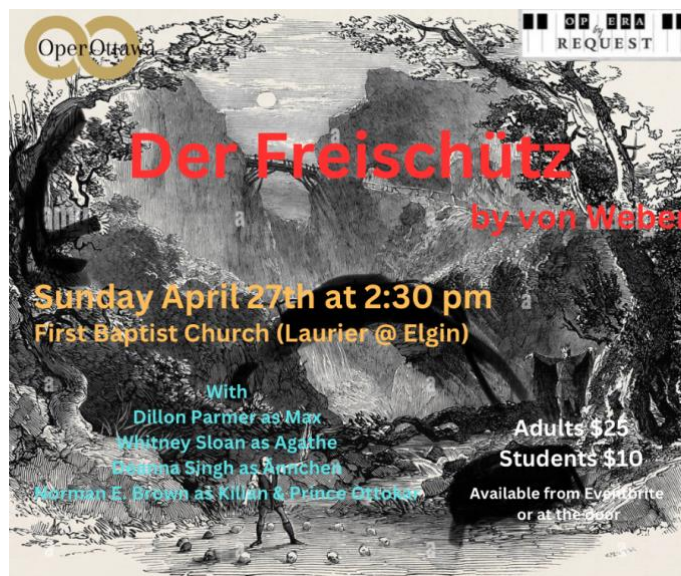
[Find out more](#)

OPERA ²⁴ ATELIER ²⁵

Toronto

[Charpentier's *David and Jonathan*](#)

April 9–13, 2025



Live in cinemas worldwide. [Click here](#) for more information

2024-25 Season

Aida

12:30 pm, 25 January 2025

Fidelio

1 pm, 15 March 2025

Le Nozze di Figaro

1 pm, 26 April 2025

Salome

1 pm, 17 May 2025

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

1pm, 31 May 2025

NCOS Board of Directors

President/Treasurer Mark Robinson

Board members: Colleen Arseneau
Francesca Fiasche
Helen Glover
Diana Gnarowski
Vera-Lee Nelson
Lesley Robinson
Carole Stelmack

Newsletter: Lesley Robinson

Webmaster: Jim Burgess

NATIONAL CAPITAL

Opera Society

Membership Form

	Amount
Annual Membership - \$20	\$ _____
Donation	\$ _____
(A receipt for income tax purposes will be provided for donations of \$50 or more.)	
Total	\$ _____

Member Name _____

Payment options:

1. E-transfer to President@ncos.ca
2. Cheque payable to National Capital Opera Society
3. Credit card, using the "Donate Now" button on the membership page of the ncos.ca website

Member contact details:

(For renewing members, only changes to contact details required)

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

Return form to the President, NCOS

Email: president@ncos.ca

Address: Mark Robinson, 101-1035 Bank Street, Ottawa, ON K1S 5K3

Cell: 613-852-3524

Charitable Organization BN 12589 8304 RR 0001