



NATIONAL CAPITAL
Opera Society

National Capital Opera Society Newsletter

Fall 2025

NATIONAL CAPITAL
OPERA COMPETITION
\$21,000 PRIZES
FINALISTS



Saturday, 18th October 2025 at 2 pm

Rideau Park United Church

2203 Alta Vista Drive

Ottawa, ON K1H 7L9

Tickets: \$45, \$30, \$10

New Opera Lyra

NATIONAL CAPITAL

Opera Society

Eventbrite

NEW
OPERA
LYRA
OTTAWA

For more information go to www.ncos.ca

You Are Invited to Attend the Finals of The National Capital Opera Competition 2025

We are delighted to announce that the finals of the 2025 National Capital Opera Competition will take place at 2pm on Saturday, 18th October at the Rideau Park United Church, 2203 Alta Vista Drive. The National Capital Opera Competition is the National Capital Opera Society's principal event, in partnership with New Opera Lyra. Each of the six finalists will perform three operatic arias in three different languages with piano accompaniment.

Our panel of three expert judges, [Joel Harder](#), [Joanne Kolomyjec](#) and lead adjudicator, [Maghan McPhee](#) will then make their decisions. The prizes are as follows:

First prize, \$10,000 in memory of Tom McCool
Second prize, \$5,000 in honour of Murray Kitts
Third prize, \$3,000, donated by Carole Stelmack

The other three finalists will each receive \$1,000.

We invite you to join us at a reception following the event to meet the competitors, pianists and the distinguished judges.

With two sopranos, two mezzo-sopranos, a countertenor and a baritone, we are in for a varied and interesting program. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce the finalists to you:

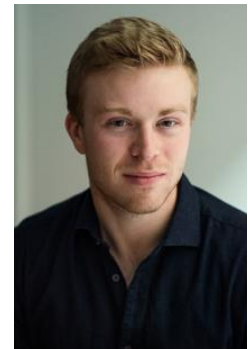


Jamal Al Titi

Belarusian-born Canadian baritone Jamal Al Titi is a graduate of the University of Toronto and a resident artist of the Atelier lyrique at the Opéra de Montréal. The Atelier lyrique offers personalized training for artistic, personal and professional development and prepares artists for roles as soloists. Jamal has performed both in Canada and in Europe. In Canada he has appeared at Banff, the Brott Music Festival and the Highlands Opera Studio. He sang with the Meistersinger Academy in Germany and performed the title role in *Gianni Schicci* at the Netherlands Lyric Opera Festival. He has understudied roles for the Opéra de Montréal where this season he will be singing the role of Dancairo in *Carmen*. Jamal's passion is for opera and early music.

Nicholas Burns

Nicholas Burns is a countertenor from Vancouver. He has performed in North America and Europe with Les Arts Florissants, L'Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Tafelmusik, Bulgarian National Opera, Early Music Vancouver, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Nicholas has won awards, including at Carnegie Hall's New York Oratorio Society Competition, Les Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques and Edmonton Opera's Rumbold Vocal Prize. In opera he has performed a number of Handel roles, including Cesare in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, Bertarido in *Rodelinda*, Polinesso in *Ariodante* and Lichas in *Hercules*.



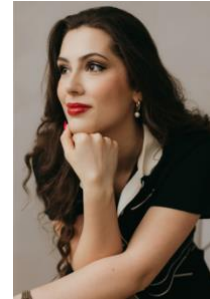


Hannah Crawford

Hannah Crawford is a Toronto-based Soprano. She is a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University and the Rebanks Family Fellowship Program at The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School. Hannah has won awards, including at the Wagner Society of New York Competition, the Macina Competition at Toronto City Opera, the Laffont Competition and the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Competition. She recently made her role debut as Helmwig in *Die Walküre* at the Edmonton Opera.

Kcenia Koutorjevski

Kcenia Koutorjevski is a Russian-Canadian mezzo-soprano. She has a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Western University and a Master of Music in Opera Performance from the University of Toronto. She has performed a variety of roles including Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Meg Page in *Falstaff* and Julius Caesar in *Giulio Cesare*. Her scholarships and awards include an Adrienne Pieczonka Award for Vocal Excellence, a London Opera Guild Scholarship and a Larry and Susan Agranove Award. Kcenia is passionate about accessible, community driven opera.

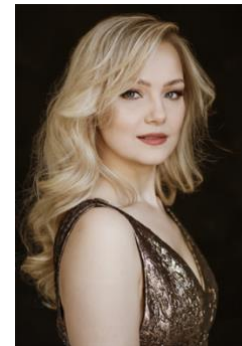


Rachael McAuley

Born in Ottawa and now living on the west coast, mezzo-soprano Rachael McAuley has a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Education from Queen's University and a Masters in Voice Literature and Performance from Western University. Rachael was a district winner in the 2024 MET Competition and has performed with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the Banff Centre. She recently made her main stage debut with Edmonton Opera as Rosswisse in *Die Walküre*.

Karoline Podolak

Born in Toronto, Polish-Canadian soprano Karoline Podolak completed her undergraduate studies at Ryerson University and studied for her Masters in Opera in Poland. She completed young artist programs both at the Canadian Opera Company and at the Opéra de Montréal. Karoline is a grand prize winner of competitions in New York, France, and Canada and has been awarded Poland's Bronze Cross of Merit for her international impact on opera. Karoline participated in young artist programs at the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto and the Opéra de Montréal. She has performed with the Canadian Opera Company, the Opéra de Montréal, Edmonton Opera in Canada and in opera houses and concert halls in Poland, South Korea, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Italy, France and Germany.



Please join us to support these outstanding Canadian singers of the future. Tickets will be available at the door or from Eventbrite.

The competition is funded by generous donations to the National Capital Opera Society. We invite you to join us in supporting these young singers by making a tax-deductible donation to the Society. Prize money will go towards establishing these budding careers.



President's Message

Dear Fellow National Capital Opera Member:

We are in the final stages of preparing for the 2025 National Capital Opera Competition. We received 32 applications. On July 23rd the first-round judges selected the six 2025 Finalists. The judges commented that this was a challenging task as the standard was the highest ever. I am grateful to the first-round judges John Avey, Cara Gilbertson and Sandra Graham who donated their time.

The final-round of the Competition is an Opera Gala where we celebrate Canadian talent. We are in for a real treat with the 2025 Finalists on Saturday 18 October at 2 PM at Rideau Park United Church. Our host is the wonderful Sandra Graham.

We also have another treat – a pre-competition concert. Two of the final-round judges, Maghan McPhee and Joel Harder, will be giving a recital on Friday 17 October. It will be an evening of beautiful music making. More details of the recital are in this newsletter.

The success and continuation of this Competition is dependent on your charitable donations. Please consider donating either thru e-transfer to President@NCOS.CA or mailing a cheque to NCOS President, 101-1035 Bank St., Ottawa, ON, K1S 5K3. With your donation we assist Canadian singers who are in the early stages of a performance career. Thank you.

Mark

Mark Robinson
President, National Capital Opera Society

Tosca at the NAC **Semi-staged Opera in Concert** **Lesley Robinson**

CAST

Floria Tosca	Ailyn Pérez
Mario Cavaradossi	Matthew Cairns
Baron Scarpia	Nathan Berg
Cesare Angelotti, Jailer	Danlie Rae Acebuque
Sacristain	George Theodorakopoulos
Spoletta	Elias Theocharidis
Sciarrone	Layne Spencer

National Arts Centre Orchestra	
Conductor	Alexander Shelley
Director	Joel Ivany
Chorus	Ewashko Singers

Tosca has all the elements that make for an archetypal opera. It is a gut-wrenching tale of love and death, of sex and violence. There is jealousy, lust, passion and the essential evil-hearted and unscrupulous villain. Throw all this in with the magnificent NAC Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Alexander Shelley, some extraordinary voices and the masterful direction of Joel Ivany, and you come up with something magical to tantalise the senses.

We were treated to first class soloists and it was thrilling to see thoughtful and dynamic acting on the concert stage, taking full advantage of the large space in front of the orchestra. Each of the three principals gave us earnest and reflective insights into their characters. Nathan Berg's Scarpia was far more nuanced than the average cartoon villain. His "Va, Tosca!" was menacing, yet subtle and we saw some moments of muted vulnerability. Cavaradossi's "E lucevan le stelle" never fails to bring a tear to the eye and Matthew Cairns' powerful voice and emotional tone hit the mark. Ailyn Pérez makes the perfect diva. Her *Tosca* was oozing a flawless blend of sensibility and passion. Nowhere was this more apparent than in her "Vissi d'arte" which was gentle, yet fervent.

We may not currently have an opera company operating at the NAC, but the full houses and the enthusiastic appreciation of audiences show that opera is alive and well in the capital. I look forward to what comes next.



Ailyn Pérez with co-stars Nathan Berg and Matthew Cairns

The Lion Heart **An Interview with Composer Corey Arnold**

The Lion Heart, a new opera by Ottawa composer Corey Arnold, with libretto by Kyle Derek McDonald, will premiere in concert in Ottawa on Saturday, November 15 and Sunday, November 16 at St. Joseph's Church.

Here is NCOS's interview with the composer:

NCOS: What was the inspiration behind *The Lion Heart*?

CA: There are many: Kyle's passion for medieval history, the popularity of gritty medieval fantasy in media, the extraordinary source material from both sides of the crusades, describing the enigma that was Richard the Lion Heart.



Arnold

NCOS: How did you collaborate with the librettist?

CA: The work actually began over a decade ago, as an inspiration of Kyle's. Interestingly, it came to me when Kyle and I first met backstage during Pellegrini Opera's *Tosca* in 2017. Kyle was singing Angelotti, and I was singing Spoletta, though a last-minute change had me replacing the rehearsal pianist for the production. Kyle thought this was impressive and asked me if I'd ever considered writing an opera. Of course I had, but in spite of three musicals, many jazz arrangements, and many, many choral arrangements, I felt insufficient to the task. It would take a couple of years before I would really get going on the composition.

A lot of what goes into it happens before we even discuss the opera specifically. Kyle and I share many beliefs about what is possible for the future of opera. First, we have no interest in writing an opera that is only performed for a cause or a world premiere. We wanted to write something that our audiences would walk out of humming tunes, breathing fuller, and feeling invigorated. We wanted people to come back and enjoy themselves again and again. Second, we know that opera is a multi-media experience, and if we focus too much on one aspect to the detriment of the others, we will lose some of our audience. They needed to enjoy the music, but they need to be able to follow and understand the story as well. Finally, we wanted something uplifting, something to bring out the joy in the singers, instrumentalists, and audience members.

Once we completed the first draft (and did a few revisions) we prepared for a workshop in Toronto with a 16-piece orchestra. This went fairly well, with great feedback coming in, but it was too close to the end of the pandemic. The big lesson for me was how careful one has to be in balancing the orchestra and the singers, and how the venue makes a significant difference. I knew that the next version would require some work to address this.

In the summer of 2024, Maestro John Kraus of the Parkdale Orchestra asked if I would sing some opera arias in an opera concert. I asked if we could add some scenes from *The Lion Heart* and he agreed to it. For this performance, I re-scored four pieces including the overture, as Parkdale was significantly larger than our initial workshop orchestra. This was the first time that our work had seen a large audience, and the response was wonderful. We had young people coming up to us to talk about the work afterwards (who weren't opera professionals!) One young woman said to us that the bard's song reminded her of Dungeons & Dragons, a popular fantasy game. Several members of the orchestra echoed what was said to me by the players in the first performance: that it was the most fun they'd had playing contemporary music.

Maestro Kraus approached us after the performance saying many of his orchestra members expressed an interest in playing the full work, and he thought we could put something together. We applied for some grants, expecting that we wouldn't get something on short notice, but miraculously, we did! So we quickly

put together a production team, with almost everyone being an Ottawa native (except for Kyle and the Maestro) and started planning. At the same time, I reached out to Montreal-native, Samuel Andreyev, a world class composer and teacher of composition, and quickly worked on the new version of the score.

The music is inspired by many great composers, some living, and many past. I wanted a musical language that would speak to a wide audience, but which was clearly an orchestral language. I recall an early "focus group" meeting, where I played excerpts for some friends of friends who said "this sounds like a Spiderman or Batman film!" I drew inspiration from John Williams and Hans Zimmer, for a modern harmonic and rhythmic language. I also spent a lot of time studying Mahler, to ensure that my work had a broad range of colours and could approach chamber music when the voices were not singing loudly. And of course, none of this would have happened without the inspiration of Verdi and Puccini. Re-working this score brought me into a far more intimate and reverent appreciation for their work.

NCOS: Tell us about the orchestration - how many musicians will be performing? Who will be conducting?

CA: The orchestration is 35-40 players. Maestro John Kraus will be leading them with Adam Nelson in the concertmaster chair. We're drawing on many groups to get some of the best players in Ottawa.

NCOS: How did you go about casting? Who will be singing?

CA: My wife and I spend time working and performing with some of the best upcoming and regional talents through regional productions, or competitions such as the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques. We picked a cast of primarily Ottawa natives, or Ottawa-based artists, from among the many voices we've encountered.

The cast includes:

Mirella: Natacha Demers (Gatineau)
Blondel: Phil Klassen (Ottawa)
Leopold: Corey Arnold (Ottawa)
Captain: Mark Wilkinson (Ottawa)

with our star, Matthew Li (Ottawa), as Richard, The Lion Heart

NCOS: What are your composing/singing plans for the future?

CA: I recently performed Don Jose in a production of Carmen at the Festival St Eustache across from Rose Naggar-Tremblay. I'm singing a concert in October at DOMS in Ottawa and then singing again for the Arts & Letters Club in Toronto in November. I'm also reprising my role of Don Jose in the Summer again, full details to come.

For composing, I want to keep writing operas that are fun and feel great! We've already completed two operas and are seeking sponsors for the third. We're talking with some groups in Toronto and even in Mexico for possible productions of our second opera, *The Bat & the Bells*, which is a short and light family opera. We've been working on a concept for our third opera, *Possession*, which is a seductive tale of horror and exorcism that follows the Nagy family who gets possessed by the demonic spirit of the infamous Countess Bathory. We premiered the first aria from this work at Ottawa's Operatic Revelry and were very excited by the positive feedback. It's a work that will push us further dramatically and show things on stage that have not been seen before on the operatic stage.





For Your Calendar



BENEATH THE SAME MOON

Songs of Then and Now, Under an Unchanging Sky

Maghan McPhee Soprano in recital with
Dr. Joel Harder Pianist

With special guests Shauna Barker clarinet and
Lara Deutsch flute



Maghan McPhee
Soprano



Dr. Joel Harder
Pianist



Shauna Barker
Clarinet



Lara Deutsch
Flute

Trinity Anglican Church
1230 Bank St, Ottawa, ON
October 17, 2025
7:30 PM

Tickets:
\$25 per person
(\$15 for students,
kids under 12 free)



NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA COMPETITION \$21,000 PRIZES

FINALISTS



Saturday, 18th October 2025 at 2 pm

Rideau Park United Church

2203 Alta Vista Drive
Ottawa, ON K1H 7L9

Tickets: \$45, \$30, \$10

New Opera Lyra

NATIONAL CAPITAL
Opera Society

Eventbrite

NEW
OPERA
LYRA
THE NEW STATE

For more information go to www.ncos.ca



**IN CONCERT
WITH FULL ORCHESTRA**

Saturday, November 15 at 8pm

Sunday, November 16 at 3 pm

St. Joseph's Church
174 Wilbrod Street, Ottawa

OPÉRA
DE MONTRÉAL

Don Giovanni

Jenůfa

Clown(s)

Carmen

[Click here for details](#)



Toronto

Roméo et Juliette

Orfeo ed Euridice

Rigoletto

The Barber of Seville

Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung

Werther

[Click here for details](#)

OPERA
ATELIER

Toronto

The Magic Flute

Pelléas et Mélisande

[Click here for details](#)



2025-2026

First Baptist Church

Sunday September 21, 2025 at 2:30 pm

GALA CONCERT

MORGAN STRICKLAND, KATHLEEN RADKE,
ERINNE-COLLEEN LAURIN, BEVERLY
MCARTHUR, PAULINE VAN DER ROEST,
DANNY LECLERC, GRAYSON NESBITT,
ALASDAIR CAMPBELL

JUDITH GINSBURG, pianist

With the OperOttawa Chorus

Sunday November 23, 2025 at 2:30 pm

GIULIO CESARE

George Frederic Handel

Libretto Nicola Francesco Haym

Conductor: Norman E. Brown

IAN SABOURIN, ANIA HEJNAR,
CAROLE PORTELANCE, BEVERLY
MCARTHUR, ALASDAIR CAMPBELL

With the OperOttawa Orchestra and Chorus

Sunday March 8, 2026 at 2:30 pm

DON GIOVANNI

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto Lorenzo da Ponte

Conductor: Norman E. Brown

DYLAN WRIGHT, JOHN HOLLAND,
ERINNE-COLLEEN LAURIN, KATHLEEN
RADKE, DANNY LECLERC, GRACE
QUINSEY, MADOX TERRELL, STEVEN
HENRIKSON

With the OperOttawa Orchestra and Chorus

Sunday May 10, 2026 at 2:30 pm

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS TRIBUTE

MARC DJOKIC, violin
MATTHEW LARKIN, organ
FRÉDÉRIC LACROIX, pianist

With cameo by ANIA HEJNAR
as Ursula Vaughan Williams

Tickets: Eventbrite, Cast, At the door Info: OperOttawa222@gmail.com

NCOS Board of Directors

President/Treasurer Mark Robinson

Board members: Colleen Arseneau
Helen Glover
Vera-Lee Nelson
Lesley Robinson
Carole Stelmack

Newsletter: Lesley Robinson

Webmaster: Jim Burgess