NATIONAL CAPITAL
Opera Society

President's Message

President's Annual Report

June 28, 2026 - Annual General Meeting

Our major accomplishment in 2025 was to produce the 2025 National Capital Opera Competition. We received excellent feedback from everyone who sang, played the piano, judged, attended and volunteered. Thank you to our generous donors and volunteers.

The Newsletter was published as planned. Thanks to our Editor, Lesley and other contributors.

Our website is up to date. I wish to thank our Webmaster, Jim Burgess for his many contributions behind the scenes.

The 2025 Financial report was presented. We continue to be in good standing.

In 2025, we had one new member making a total of 19 members.

Our next major event is the 2027 National Capital Opera Competition tentatively planned for Saturday the 14 October at 2 PM.

I wish to thank the Board of Directors for their guidance and support throughout the year. Also, I wish to thank everyone who made a donation, providing much needed financial support to Canadian singers.

Lastly, please remember to renew your membership.

Thank you.

Mark

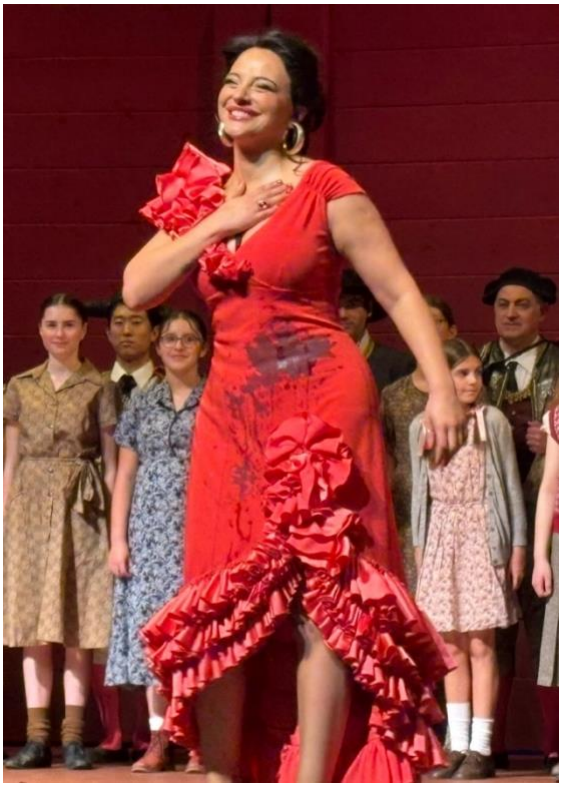
Mark Robinson
President, National Capital Opera Society

Carmen at the Opéra de Montréal

Lesley Robinson

Cast

Carmen	Rihab Chaieb
Don José	Arturo Chacón-Cruz
Escamillo	Ethan Vincent
Micaëla	Magali Simard-Galdès
Zuniga	Stephen Hegedus
Moralès	Dante Mullin Santone
Dancairo	Jamal Al Titi
Mercédès	Tessa Fackelmann
Conductor	Jean-Marie Zeitouni
Orchestre Métropolitain	
Opéra de Montréal Chorus	
Stage Direction	Anna Theodosakis



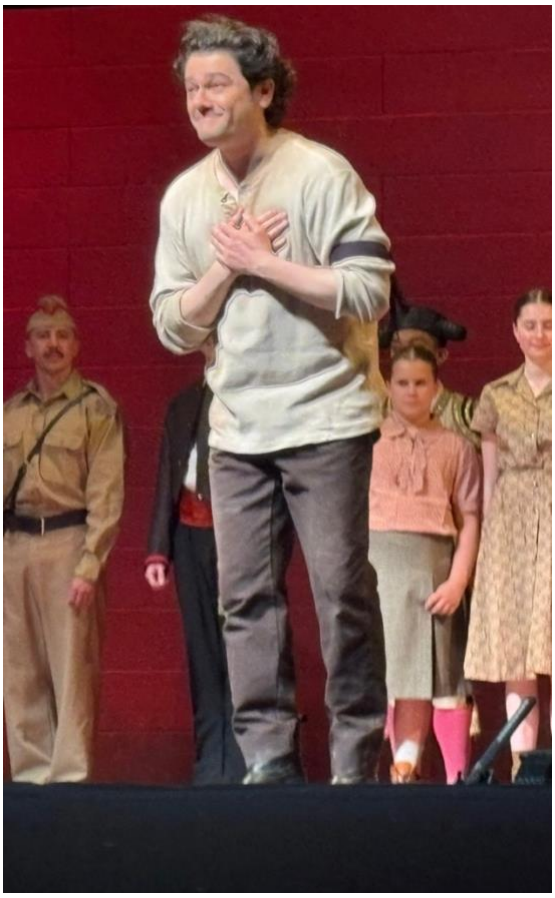
Rihab Chaieb as Carmen

In his pre-curtain remarks, General Director Jean-Pierre Primiani noted that the star of this production, Rihab Chaieb's first experience of opera had been when she attended a performance for students at the Opéra de Montréal. It was on that day that her interest was piqued and she decided that she wanted to embark on a career in opera. The Opéra de Montréal runs a fabulous outreach and educational programme, including workshops and performances for primary school and high school students and online educational resources. Thus, opera is part of Quebec's cultural curriculum and this marks a step towards creating a vibrant future for opera.

It was a privilege and a pleasure to see Rihab Chaieb return home for this production. Her Carmen was spirited and vivacious, with a warmth delivered through the richness of her voice. The chemistry worked well between her and tenor Arturo Chacón-Cruz as Don José, a challenging "hero" to play with all his flaws.

The company engaged some current and former members of the Atelier Lyrique (OdM's young artists' programme) in some smaller roles, most notably Jamal Al Titi, a prizewinner of the 2025 National Capital Opera Competition who took on the role of Dancairo, one of the smugglers.

The chorus made the crowd scenes bright and lively along with the spirited children of Les Petits Chanteurs de Laval.



Arturo Chacón-Cruz as Don José



Jamal Al Titi as Dancairo

Opera Atelier Comes to Ottawa
Dido and Aeneas at the Ottawa Chamberfest

Cast

Dido	Meghan Lindsay
Aeneas	Douglas Williams
Sorceress	Measha Brueggergosman-Lee
Belinda	Mireille Asselin
Sailor	Alexander Cappellazo
Witch	Cynthia Smithers
Witch	Karine White
Dancers	Courtney Lyman, Julia Sedwick, Edward Tracz, Eric César de Mello da Silva
Music Director	Christopher Bagan

The opening night of the 2026 Ottawa Chamberfest was celebrated with Opera Atelier's dazzling presentation of Henry Purcell's moving opera, *Dido and Aeneas.* Although pared down from the version that the company would perform at home in Toronto, this semi-staged production brought us all the baroque glitz and charm that we have come to expect from the direction of Marshall Pynkoski and the choreography of Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg. Beautifully sung and directed, this production was full of

playfulness and pathos. We were delighted to see Brian Law Opera Competition winner Meghan Lindsay in the title role, along with fellow Ottawan Mireille Asselin as Dido's handmaid and confidante, Belinda. As in every Opera Atelier production, the elegant dancing was essential to the story-telling. This was a magnificent 90 minutes of entertainment.



The happy cast enjoying the appreciation of the Dominion Chalmers audience

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Canadians Abroad

A video-illustrated glimpse of some successful current Canadian opera careers

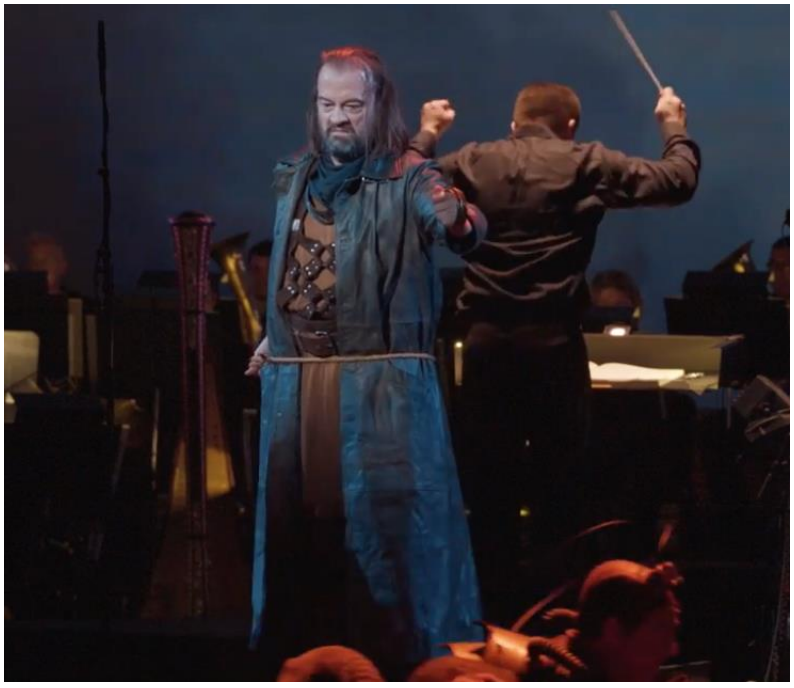
shared at this year's Annual General Meeting by Lesley Robinson



There are many Canadian opera singers enjoying successful international careers, including some from Ottawa and a number of former finalists in our competition. Here are just a few of them.

Nathan Berg is a bass-baritone from Saskatchewan. Most of his training was at the Guildhall School in London (UK). In June 2026 he performed in Basel, Switzerland in a 2018 opera *Fin de partie (Endgame)*, by György Kurtág (a Romanian composer, now 100 years old.) *Fin de partie* is based on the play of the same name by Samuel Beckett. Next on his schedule will be runs of *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Oedipus*

Rex at the Welsh National Opera in Cardiff. Click here for an extract of Berg as Alberich in a Minnesota Opera production of Wagner's *Das Rheingold.*



Soprano **Ambur Braid** comes from BC. Her professional Debut was in in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* in 2009 at Opera Atelier in Toronto. She now performs across North America and Europe. In the 26/27 season she'll be performing in *Der fliegende Holländer* in Vienna, *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* with the Cleveland Orchestra in the US and Brett Dean's *Of One Blood* in Santa Fe. Click here to see her as Stephana in Giordano's rarely performed *Siberia* from the Bregenz Festival in 2022.



Mezzo-soprano **Rihab Chaieb** moved from Tunisia to Montreal when she was two years old. After attending a performance for CEGEP students at Opéra de Montréal she decided to pursue a career in opera. She started her international career in the Lindemann Young Artist Program at the Met in New York, where she performed in several productions including *Luisa Miller,* singing with Placido Domingo. In the 26/27 season, she'll be singing the title role in *Carmen* in LA and Atlanta. Then she'll be off to Lisbon for a programme of Berlioz and Liszt. Here she is as Carmen singing the Habanera at Glyndebourne in 2024.



Etienne Dupuis

Born in Montréal, Etienne Dupuis completed his vocal studies at McGill University and became a member of l'Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. He is now based in Paris, where he lives with his wife, Australian soprano Nicole Car. His stellar international career has included performances in Paris, Vienna, ROH in London, Washington National Opera, Berlin and Madrid (and he created the role of Count Karl Gustav in the world premiere of Bilodeau's *La Reine-garçon* in Montréal.)

This summer he performed the title role in *Macbeth* at the Festival de Lanaudière which is held at an open-air venue near Montréal and as Marcello in *La Bohème* at the Copenhagen Opera Festival. The upcoming season includes the role of Rodrigo in both the Italian and French versions of *Don Carlo/s*, as well as *Macbeth* at the Wiener Staatsoper, Puccini's *Il trittico* at the ROH in London and Britten's *Death in Venice* at the Bavarian State Opera. Here he is in the title role of Don Giovanni (alongside BLOC winner, Philippe Sly) at the Paris Opera.



Gerald Finley



Our honorary patron, bass-baritone Gerald Finley grew up in Ottawa, but now lives in the UK. He created the role of Helge in the new, award winning opera *Festen* by British composer Mark-Anthony Turnage. The world premiere took place at the Royal Opera House in London on 11 February 2025 and won the Olivier award for Best New Opera Production. (The Oliviers are annual London theatre awards covering theatre, musicals, dance and opera.)

During the summer 2026 and in the upcoming season Finley performs the title role in Verdi's *Macbeth* at the Bavarian State Opera, in Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Festival d'Aix en Provence and the role of Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* in Vienna, as well as a busy concert schedule at venues in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Norway, the US and of course the UK.



Gerald Finley is a regular at both Covent Garden and Glyndebourne. Click here to see an extract from a Glyndebourne performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Soprano **Karoline Podolak** has recently embarked on her international career. Shortly after winning the 2025 National Capital Opera Competition, Karoline was excited for her debut as Norina in *Don Pasquale* in Sofia, Bulgaria in October 2025. She returned there in December for the role of Violetta in *La Traviata.* Click here to see her performance as Violetta at the National Opera and Ballet of Bulgaria.



Countertenor **Daniel Taylor**, now living back in Ottawa has been enjoying an impressive international career.



He debuted at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera in the 1997 Peter Sellars production of Handel's dramatic oratorio *Theodora.* This was followed by his operatic debut in *Rodelinda*, directed by Jonathan Miller. His roles have included Nerone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Hamor in *Jephtha*, Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Tolomeo in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*. His repertoire spans sacred works, lute songs, and contemporary compositions.

He has appeared with major opera houses and ensembles, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opera North, Welsh National Opera, Rome Opera, and Munich Opera. His collaborations include performances with the Gabrieli Consort, Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Les Arts Florissants, Academy of Ancient Music, the King's Consort, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Bach Collegium Japan, and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin. It is clear from this that Daniel specializes in early music!

This video is of Ombra mai fu from Serse by Handel, performed at the Ottawa Music and Beyond festival.

Barbara Hannigan is a soprano from Halifax. She is known for her performances of contemporary music and sang her first world premiere at the age of 17. As of 2023, she has premiered approximately 85 contemporary compositions, most notably *Written on Skin* by George Benjamin . Ms. Hannigan performs regularly in concert and also conducts. In July 2026 she performed in *L'histoire du Soldat* by Stravinsky at the Royal Opera of Wallonia in Belgium. Upcoming for this season are mainly concert performances in Europe: Germany, Switzerland Scandinavia.



Click here for an extract from *Written on Skin* with Barbara Hannigan and countertenor Bejun Mehta at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence in 2012.

Countertenor **Cameron Shahbazi** is an exciting young Canadian from Hamilton who has performed leading roles at opera houses and festivals in Europe, performing both Baroque and contemporary opera.

We saw him at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in Handel's *Jephtha* with Allan Clayton and Alice Coote.

In the upcoming season he will be performing the role of Tolomeo in Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin. Here he is in that role in a concert performance with Amanda Forsythe at the iTchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow.



Emily D'Angelo is a sensational young Canadian mezzo-soprano. In August 2026 she performed at Tanglewood in Massachusetts as Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze Di Figaro, Mozart* with Joshua Hopkins as the Count.

Highlights of the 2026-27 season include the role of Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina* at Covent Garden, Mozart's *La Clemenza Di Tito* at the Opéra National de Paris, Gounod's *Faust* in Munich and Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at the Wiener Staatsoper.

She premiered the role of Jess in *Grounded* by JeanineTesori at the Washington National Opera in 2023. Here is an extract from the same production the following season at the Met (conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin).



The wonderfully successful international career of Ottawa's BLOC winner **Joyce El-Khoury** is in full swing. She has performed all over Canada, the US, Europe and Asia. She spent the summer singing *Tosca* at a festival in Austria. Highlights from the upcoming season include *Jenufa* at La Fenice and *Manon Lescaut* in Bilbao. Here she is in an extraordinary outdoor live performance at the Acropolis.



Another BLOC winner basking in a dazzling international career is baritone **Joshua Hopkins**. This season he will be performing the role of Silvio in *Pagliacci* at the Teatro Regio di Torino. Next May/June he'll be singing the role of Albert in *Werther* by Massenet at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich.

Here he is as the Count in an extract from *Le Nozze Di Figaro* at the Washington National Opera.



Yet another BLOC winning powerhouse is renowned bass-baritone **Philippe Sly.** This past summer he performed the title role in ***Saint François d'Assise*** by the 20th century French composer, Olivier Messiaen at the Salzburg Festival.

This October he sings the role of Escamillo in *Carmen* at the Wienerstaatsoper.

This extract is from the aforementioned production of *Don Giovanni* in Paris. Here, Leporello is singing the catalog song to Nicole Car - Etienne Dupuis's real-life wife, Australian soprano Nicole Car.



Born and bred in Ottawa, mezzo-soprano **Wallis Giunta** was a BLOC prizewinner the same year as Philippe Sly. Currently based in Europe where she lives with her husband and two children, she is very busy in London, Paris, Germany and Austria. She has also performed in the US (at the Met) and in Sydney. Wallis is a regular at the Volksoper in Vienna where this season she features in a double bill of *Gianni Schicchi* and Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins.* Click here to see an unusual rendition of "Una volta c'era un re" from *La Cenerentola* by Rossini, recorded at Oxford University.



For Your Calendar

2026-2027 Season



Click here for details

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

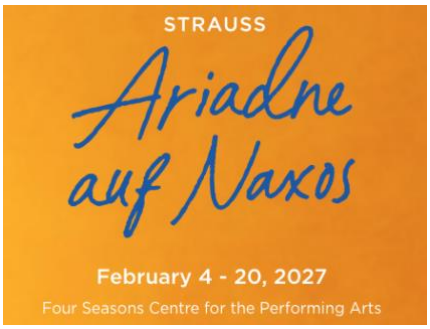
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OPERA ATELIER

Toronto

A Season of Heroes



Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *The Descent of Orpheus*

Handel's *The Resurrection*

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