VANCOUVER OPERA ANNOUNCES SIX EMERGING TALENTS FOR THE 2026–2027 YULANDA M. FARIS YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 15, 2026, VANCOUVER, B.C./ / Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations – Vancouver Opera is thrilled to welcome new and returning participants of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program for 2026–2027. Callum Alden, Michal Aloni, and Cecilia NguyenTran will join returning artists Marianne Bertrand, Julia LoRusso, and Mihnea Nitu for a year of mentorship and training with leading Vancouver Opera artists and facilitators.

“Our annual Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program is an incredible part of what our artistic team does at Vancouver Opera,” says Tom Wright, Vancouver Opera General Director. “During this mentorship program, we provide emerging artists with exciting live performance opportunities throughout, whether it’s performing in our community events or our large-scale productions. Our 2026–2027 participants are dedicated artists who have already demonstrated their talents.”

Launched in 2012—and made possible through a generous donation by the family of Yulanda M. Faris—this residency functions as a bridge between formal education and the professional opera world. Emerging singers, pianists, and stage directors receive one-on-one coaching, attend masterclasses, and are offered performance opportunities.

Adds Program Director Leslie Dala, “this program prepares artists for a successful professional career in opera while providing opportunities to showcase their talents to our audiences, something many programs may not offer. We believe that artists excel when they experience what it truly means to become professional performers.”

This year, two young artists will be performing in Vancouver Opera’s season-opening blockbuster production of Puccini’s *Tosca*. Mihnea Nitu (Sciarrone) and Callum Alden (Spoletta) will join principal artists under the direction of Brenna Corner, who is herself an alum of the Young Artist Program. This winter, Marianne Bertrand will join principal artists in *The Barber of Seville* as Berta. In the spring, young artists Callum Alden (Gastone de Letorières), Marianne Bertrand (Flora Bervoix), Julia LoRusso (Annina), and Mihnea Nitu (Baron Douphol) join the cast of *La Traviata* on the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage.

Annually, Vancouver Opera selects program participants who are poised to take their opera career to the next level. Those interested in the program are encouraged to visit Vancouver Opera’s website, where tickets for *Tosca* and the entire 2026–2027 season are also available now.

Participants in the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program for 2026–2027 are:

Marianne Bertrand, Mezzo-Soprano (returning)



Quebec mezzo-soprano Marianne Bertrand is praised for her “very pretty mezzo voice” and dramatic talent (*Revue l’Opéra*). She joined Vancouver Opera’s Young Artist Program in 2025–2026. She has performed roles such as Hänsel, Dido, Laetitia, Croûte-au-pot, Orlofsky, and Prince Charmant in Canada and Germany, and was a national laureate of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations competition.

Julia LoRusso, Soprano (returning)



Julia LoRusso is a rising Canadian soprano recognized for her vocal agility and expressive performance. In 2025, she made her house debut with Vancouver Opera as Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto* and will return in 2027 as Annina in *La traviata*. She made her New York debut at the Winners’ Concert at Merkin Hall as a first-place winner of the International Music Grand Prix. In 2024, she won the Toronto Mozart Competition and in 2025 received the Encouragement Award at the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (Indiana District). She holds a Master of Music degree from Western University in London, Ontario.

Mihnea Nitu, Bass-Baritone (returning)



Romanian-Canadian baritone Mihnea Nitu has been praised for his “booming and robust vocals” (*Opera Canada*) and his “charismatic presence marked him as a name to watch” (*Bachtrack*). Recent performance highlights include Marullo in Verdi’s *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera, the title role in Judith Weir’s *Blond Eckbert*, and the Father in Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* with Manitoba Underground Opera. Mihnea received his Masters of Music from McGill University.

Callum Alden, Tenor (new)



Callum Alden is a Vancouver-based tenor. Recent appearances include Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Pacific Northwest Opera, Mozart’s *Coronation Mass* with Prince George Symphony Orchestra, and in Seattle Opera’s School Tour. Callum has performed regularly with Vancouver Opera for several years, and with San Francisco Opera and Seattle Opera. He was previously a Young Artist with the Opera Company of Middlebury.

Cecilia NguyenTran, Pianist (new)
Cecilia NguyenTran is a Vietnamese-Canadian pianist born and raised in Toronto. She began piano lessons at age five at a community music school. Cecilia went on to earn her Bachelor of Music and Opera Diploma at Wilfrid Laurier University, where she gained her first operatic experience as a répétiteur. This led her to continue exploring vocal collaboration both in and outside of Canada. Most recently, Cecilia earned her Master of Music in Collaborative Piano from McGill University.



Michal Aloni, Stage Director (new)
Michal Aloni is a singer and stage director noted for her dramatic sensitivity and interdisciplinary approach. Recent engagements include Chants Libres, People Watching, the Canadian Opera Company, and Opéra de Montréal. In 2026 Michal earned a Diploma in Stage Directing at McGill University, participated in an Observership at the Royal Opera House (UK), and joined Opera 5 as a Portfolio Artist. Michal holds voice performance degrees from Western University and the Jerusalem Academy of Music.



ABOUT THE YULANDA M. FARIS YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

In 2012, Vancouver Opera launched the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program. Made possible through a gift from the family of Yulanda M. Faris, the program engages, enriches, mentors, and trains rising young Canadian opera artists, and offers a bridge between formal academic educational programs and the professional world in a supportive and encouraging environment. It is led by Program Director Leslie Dala and Principal Coach Tina Chang, with invited guest opera professionals like Judith Forst OC OBC, Carol Isaac, and Daniel Okulitch providing exceptional mentorship to participants. The Young Artists Program provides singers, pianists, and stage directors the opportunity to train with industry leaders through master classes, one-on-one coaching, and performance opportunities as part of a residency program.

ABOUT VANCOUVER OPERA

Vancouver Opera creates extraordinary experiences that engage, inspire, and entertain through voice, music, and theatre. Vancouver Opera is the largest professional opera company in Western Canada and is regarded worldwide for its fine mainstage productions, country-leading education programs, and innovative community programs. Learn more at www.vancouveropera.ca.

Vancouver Opera has the continuing support of The Canada Council for the Arts, Government of Canada, the BC Arts Council and BC Provincial Government, the City of Vancouver Cultural Services and Vancouver Civic Theatres. Vancouver Opera's season sponsor is MONTECRISTO.

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