VANCOUVER OPERA ANNOUNCES SIX EMERGING TALENTS FOR THE 2025–2026 YULANDA M. FARIS YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

OCTOBER 3, 2025, 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 2025–2026. Marianne Bertrand, Julia LoRusso, and Mihnea Nitu will join returning artists Lyndon Ladeur, Tayte Mitchell and Derek Stanyer for a year of mentorship and training with leading Vancouver Opera artists and facilitators.

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.

“An exciting aspect of our Young Artists Program is that we provide emerging artists with exciting live performance opportunities throughout our season, whether its performing in community events like our VOICES series, or in our large-scale, mainstage theatrical productions,” says Tom Wright, Vancouver Opera General Director. “During the program, members of our company provide these artists with advantageous insights into a career in opera. Our 2025–2026 participants are dedicated artists who have already demonstrated their talents and are poised to become world-class opera professionals in the coming years.”

Adds Program Director Leslie Dala, “each year we are encouraged and inspired by the commitment of these artists to refining their operatic craft. Our goal has been to provide high-calibre training and mentorship in addition to performance experience. Through the experience participants receive in our residency program, we are preparing them for a successful professional career in opera while providing opportunities to showcase their talents to our audiences.”

This year, the young artists will be performing Vancouver Opera’s season-opening production of *Rigoletto*. Mihnea Nitu (Marullo), Lyndon Ladeur (Matteo Borsa), Julia LoRusso (Countess Ceprano), and Marianne Bertrand (Giovanna) will join principal artists on the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage, with pianist Derek Stanyer joining the production in the rehearsal hall as Répétiteur.

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 *Rigoletto* and the entire 2025-2026 season are also available now.

Participants in the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program for 2025–2026 are:

Marianne Bertrand, Mezzo-Soprano (new)
Quebec mezzo-soprano Marianne Bertrand is praised for her “very pretty mezzo voice” and dramatic talent (Revue l’Opéra). She has performed and will perform roles such as Hänsel, Dido, Laetitia, Croûte-au-pot, Orlofsky, and Prince Charmant in Canada and Germany, and was a national laureate of the CFMTA (Canadian Federation of Music Teachers’ Associations) competition.



Julia LoRusso, Soprano (new)
Julia LoRusso is a Canadian soprano known for her vocal agility and sweet tone. Recently performed roles include Despina (*Così fan tutte*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), Morgana (*Alcina*) and Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*). She won the Encouragement Award in the 2025 Met Opera Laffont Competition and third place in the 2024 Toronto Mozart Vocal Competition. Julia holds a Master of Music degree from Western University in her hometown of London, Ontario.



Mihnea Nitu, Bass-Baritone (new)
Praised for his “booming and robust vocals” (Opera Canada), Romanian-Canadian bass-baritone Mihnea Nitu is a rising operatic talent. Recent roles include Blond Eckbert with Opera McGill, and the Father in *Hansel and Gretel* with Manitoba Underground Opera. In the 2025/26 season, he takes part in Interplay at the Banff Centre, workshopping new operas.



Lyndon Ladeur, Tenor (returning)
Lyndon Ladeur’s favourite performances include Fedinard in *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*, and Nemorino in *L’elisir d’amore*. Internationally, Lyndon debuted at the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival in the UK, playing Marco in *The Gondoliers*, winning Best Male Vocalist. Lyndon completed his Masters of Opera at the University of Toronto in 2024. He studies with famed soprano Wendy Nielsen.



Tayte Mitchell, Stage Director (returning)
Hailing from Vulcan, AB, stage director and tenor Tayte Mitchell most recently launched Ammolite Opera as its founding Artistic Director. He is an alumnus of the McPhee Artist Program with Calgary Opera, the Music Academy of the West, and the Wolf Trap Opera Studio. Tayte holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music.



Derek Stanyer, Pianist (returning)
Dr. Stanyer has worked as a pianist/coach with UBC opera since 2019, and as an Adjunct Professor in 2023. He has recently performed both opera and art song with the Vancouver Fringe Festival, VO, Opera Unbound, Canadian Opera Company, York Place Concerts, and many others. His doctoral research (and passion!) relates to the art songs of Nikolai Medtner, which are a largely ignored part of the art song repertoire.



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 second-largest professional opera company in 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.

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