

Toronto City Opera Announces Finalists for the Third Annual Macina Voice Competition

Live Concert to Showcase Canada's Emerging Vocal Talent

Toronto, ON – Toronto City Opera (TCO) is thrilled to announce the eight finalists selected for the third annual Macina Voice Competition. The highly anticipated event, set for **February 21, 2026**, will feature some of Canada's most promising young opera singers as they compete in front of a live audience for cash prizes and future performance opportunities.

This year's competition saw a record-breaking **150 video submissions** from talented vocalists across the country. After careful deliberation, the TCO artistic staff has chosen the following finalists to perform in the live competition:

- **Camila Montefusco** – Mezzo-Soprano
- **George Theodorakopoulos** – Baritone
- **Hillary Tufford** – Mezzo-Soprano
- **Jaclyn Grossman** – Soprano
- **Jamal Al Titi** - Baritone
- **Marion Germain** – Soprano
- **Nicholas Kluftinger** – Tenor
- **Olivia LaPointe** – Soprano

Each artist will showcase their talents by performing two arias, demonstrating their vocal artistry, technical skill, dramatic interpretation, and stage presence. The singers will be judged by an esteemed panel of industry professionals, with a total of **\$5,000** in prizes at stake.

The competition will be judged by:

- **Wendy Nielsen**, Soprano & Head Vocal Consultant Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, Associate Professor in Voice, University of Toronto,
- **Tom Diamond**, Stage Director & Senior Acting Coach, Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio
- **Morgan Reid**, Artist Manager, Dean Artists Management
- **Guillermo Silva-Marin**, General Manager, Toronto Operetta Theatre & Voicebox: Opera in Concert
- **Jennifer Tung**, Conductor, Artistic Director, Toronto City Opera

Additionally, the live audience will have the opportunity to vote for the **Audience Prize**, which will be awarded to one of the finalists based on their performance.

Established in honor of TCO's longtime Artistic Director, **Giuseppe Macina**, the Macina Voice Competition celebrates his commitment to providing emerging artists with valuable performance opportunities. "Giuseppe Macina inspired and mentored many young talents, helping them hone their craft and find their voices on stage," says **John Minardi**, Board President and long-time TCO Chorus member. "This competition continues his legacy by offering a platform for the next generation of opera stars."

Join us for this exciting evening of exceptional music and passionate performances. February 21st at 2pm, Church of the Redeemer (162 Bloor St W, Toronto). Tickets are **\$20** and can be purchased online at www.torontocityopera.com/macina2026.

About Toronto City Opera:

Toronto City Opera is passionately committed to opera for everyone. TCO is a community driven opera company that gives emerging professionals an opportunity to perform principal roles with coaching in musicianship and stagecraft and we give our community choristers inspiration and skills to perform in fully staged operas. TCO is committed to providing affordable access to opera to raise up the human spirit of everyone it touches.

Meet the Finalists:

Brazilian-born mezzo-soprano **Camila Montefusco** is a storyteller at heart. Described as possessing "an instrument of remarkable power and endurance" (Revue L'Opéra Québec), she is currently in her second year with l'Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. Recent seasons have seen her as Rychtarka in Jenůfa, Offred in The Handmaid's Tale, Annio in La clemenza di Tito, Maman in L'Enfant et les sortilèges, and Madame Flora in The Medium, alongside her debut in Handel's Messiah with the Orchestre classique de Montréal. Her trajectory has been affirmed by recent distinctions, among them Second Prize at the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Competition and Third Prize at the Marmande International Singing Competition. Originally a professional violinist, she began her career performing with symphony orchestras in Brazil. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from the University of São Paulo and a Master of Music in Voice from Western University.

George Theodorakopoulos is a Greek-Canadian baritone from Toronto, Ontario. He received a BMus in Voice Performance and a MMus in Opera from the University of Toronto. During the 2025-'26 season, George will be joining Calgary Opera for his 1st year in the McPhee Artist Development Program, as well as Edmonton Opera as part of their Emerging Artist Program. Upcoming performances include Morales & Le Dancaire in Carmen as part of the Brott Music Festival, Danilo in The Merry Widow as part of the Highlands Opera Studio, Sacristan in Tosca with Edmonton Opera (in collaboration with

the National Arts Center Orchestra, the Yukon Arts Centre, and the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra), as well as Officer in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Yakusidé* in *Madama Butterfly*, both with Calgary Opera. Recent operatic highlights include *Guglielmo* (*Così fan tutte*), *Pandolfe* (*Cendrillon*), *Marullo* (*Rigoletto*), *Emilio* (*Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*), *Dr. Pangloss* (*Candide*).

Canadian mezzo soprano, **Hillary Tufford** is a versatile and engaging performer, noted for her “rich and velvety sound,” (Dawn Martens, Opera Canada). A 2017 Graduate of Western University, (Masters in Literature and Performance), Hillary was invited to join the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program at Vancouver Opera where she “almost stole the show” in her debut as Lola in their performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Last season, Hillary made her debut with The Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra in *Messiah*, as well as her Soundstreams debut in *The Garden of Vanished Pleasures*. Hillary also jumped-in for the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra, singing Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. This season Hillary returns to sing *Messiah* with Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and makes her international debut as Cherubino at Daegu Opera, South Korea. In past seasons, Hillary performed with the Elmer Eisler Singers, Victoria Philharmonic Choir, Vancouver Bach Choir, Tapestry Opera, and the Kingston Symphony.

Hailed as an “exciting dramatic soprano” (Opera Canada) with “command over a powerful range of expressive emotion” (The Whole Note), **Jaclyn Grossman**'s recent highlights include *Brünnhilde* in *Die Walküre* and *Freia* in *Das Rheingold* with Edmonton Opera, *Nedda* in *Pagliacci* and *Nella* in *Gianni Schicchi* with Opera Kelowna, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the Buffalo Philharmonic under JoAnn Falletta. She returns to Edmonton Opera this season as *Brünnhilde* in *Siegfried* and joins City Opera Vancouver for *Salam-Shalom: Echoes of Home*. As co-founder of the Likht Ensemble, Jaclyn has championed Jewish Holocaust music in performances at the Canadian Opera Company, the Schulich School of Music, the Harold Green Jewish Theatre, and with the Chattanooga Symphony. Upcoming Likht recitals include the Leah Posluns Chamber Series and debuts at Salle Bourgie, Ehrbar Saal (Vienna), and *ausArten* (Munich). Jaclyn is a recipient of the Wagner Society of New York Bayreuth Stipendium, the Olga Forrai Singers Grant, the Sylva Gelber Foundation Award, and the Ben Steinberg Musical Legacy Award. She is an alumna of the Opera America Leadership Intensive, Opera Europa Management Course, and the Rebanks Family Fellowship at the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Belarusian-born Canadian baritone **Jamal Al Titi** is an emerging artist recognized for his warm, resonant timbre and compelling stage presence. He joined the International Meistersinger Academy in Germany in 2025 and sang the title role in Gianni Schicchi at the Netherlands Lyric Opera Festival. A district winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, he recently appeared at Carnegie Hall for the Premier Opera Foundation International Vocal Competition, where he received the Athena Music Foundation Prize. Concert highlights include Handel's Messiah with the Orchestre Classique de Montréal and Bach's St. Matthew Passion with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Operatic credits include the title role in the world premiere of Le Phare, performances in L'Enfant et les sortilèges and La serva padrona. At the Opéra de Montréal, he has covered Figaro and Marcello and appears as Dancairo in Carmen.

Marion Germain obtained her master's degree in Classical Singing Interpretation (2024) from the University of Montreal (UdeM) under the tutelage of Richard Margison. She has also been taking private lessons with soprano Lyne Fortin since 2017. She performed as Gilda in Rigoletto and Mimì in La Bohème at the Mediterranean Opera Studio and Festival (MOSF) 2022. In 2023, she portrayed Rosalinde in Die Fledermaus at UdeM, Violetta in La Traviata (MOSF) and Lucia (cover) in Lucia di Lammermoor (MOSF). In 2024, she sang Die Königin der Nacht in Die Zauberflöte at UdeM and made her debut at Staatsoper Stuttgart as Contessa di Ceprano in Rigoletto. She also performed as Sechs Mädchen in the premiere of Kurt Weill's Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny at Staatsoper Stuttgart. In 2025, she sang Gertrude in Hänsel und Gretel at UdeM and returned to Stuttgart for Mahagonny's revival. She participated in public masterclasses and had private lessons with renowned artists such as Julius Drake, Ian Bostridge, Dorothea Röschmann, James Vaughan, Wolfram Rieger, John Churchwell, Nelly Miricioiu, Jack Li Vigni, Kamal Kahn, Gabriele Rossmanith, Felice Venanzoni, Warren Jones, Marek Ruszczyński and Elizabeth Rowe.

Praised for his warm tone and versatility, **Nicholas Kluffinger** is a young Canadian tenor to watch for. Recent credits include: participation in the 2025 Franz-Schubert-Institut (Austria), participation in the 2024 Ukrainian Art Song Project Summer Institute (Canada), and multiple operatic and recital appearances at the Glenn Gould School. These include Le Petit Vieillard in "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges", Erster Geharnischtermann in "Die Zauberflöte", and Gehrardo in "Gianni Schicchi". Recipient of the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation and Thomas Logan Vocal Scholarships.

Canadian soprano **Olivia LaPointe** has extensive experience spanning opera, musical theatre, jazz, and pop. She is a 2025 Laureate of the JAL of Théâtre Lyricorégra 20, Met Laffont District Winner, Lotte Lenya Competition finalist, and Third Prize winner in the 2024 COC Centre Stage Competition. Recent roles include: Valencienne (The Merry Widow, Highlands Opera), Donna Anna (Don Giovanni, VIMA Italy), Angelica (Orlando) and Giulietta (Un giorno di regno, Opera McGill), Lily (The Secret Garden, Opera NUOVA), and Antonia (Les contes d'Hoffmann, HSOF), for which Opera Canada praised her as “breathtakingly perfect.” In 2023, she made her European debut as a Voice Fellow with Opernfest Prague. Olivia also performs with her family’s vocal group, The LaPointes, and is passionate about teaching voice. She holds a Master of Music in Opera and Voice from McGill University and a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance (Honours) from the University of Toronto.

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For additional information, to arrange an interview, or to review the concert contact Nicholas Borg at administrativedirector@torontocityopera.com