

For immediate release: October 10, 2023

## **JUST ANNOUNCED! NATIONAL FINALISTS CHOSEN FOR CENTRE STAGE: ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION**

**Toronto** – Seven of Canada’s most promising new opera singers have been selected to compete in the **Canadian Opera Company’s Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** on **October 26, 2023** at the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**. The annual fundraiser and vocal competition showcases the very best in emerging opera talent, with all proceeds supporting the COC’s prestigious artistic career development program, the **Ensemble Studio**.

**125 candidates** applied to join the **Ensemble Studio** next season, with judges traveling all over Canada to hear **nearly 90 young artists** in-person, with stops in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, and Toronto. This year’s finalists are:

- **Jamal al Titi, baritone** – Minsk, Belarus
- **Matthew Bermudez, tenor** – London, ON
- **Matthew Li, bass** – Ottawa, ON
- **Emily Rocha, soprano** – Courtice, ON
- **Duncan Stenhouse, bass** – Calgary, AB
- **Elisabeth St-Gelais, soprano** – Chicoutimi, QC
- **Gabrielle Turgeon, soprano** – Sault Ste. Marie, ON

“The Ensemble Studio’s national reputation as the premier destination for young opera singers to launch major international careers continues to steadily grow,” says **Dorian Cox, Director of the Ensemble Studio**. “This year we saw a significant increase in the number of applicants and heard an extraordinary level of artistry, expressiveness, and virtuosity across the country. These seven finalists represent the highest level of excellence and I am looking forward to celebrating them at Centre Stage!”

This season, organizers have rolled out the red carpet, with a theme of “Lights. Camera. Opera!” Television’s **Sangita Patel** hosts the fast-paced and fun-filled night featuring some of opera’s most popular selections. On **October 26**, finalists will sing one last aria, accompanied by the acclaimed **COC Orchestra**, for a shot at cash prizes and the chance to be invited to join the **COC Ensemble Studio**. Audience members can also join in the action with a live-vote to decide the night’s **Audience Choice Award** winner.

Following each singer’s performance, they will be evaluated and receive live feedback from this year’s judging panel:

- **Perryn Leech**, COC General Director
- **Roberto Mauro**, COC Director of Artistic Planning
- **Adrienne Pieczonka**, internationally-celebrated soprano
- **Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser**, Canadian conductor and music educator
- **Thom Allison**, actor and director of *Rent* at the Stratford Festival

Immediately following the main event, **Spotlight Premium Experience** ticket-holders enjoy a three-course dinner and live entertainment presented in the stunning Henry N. R. Jackman Lounge which, on this night, will be transformed into glamorous Studio 145 as part of the night’s Hollywood-themed festivities.

For full details on competition timing and tickets, please visit [coc.ca/CentreStage](http://coc.ca/CentreStage).

## **TICKETS**

Tickets for **Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition** range from **\$80-\$150** with **Opera Under 30** tickets priced at **\$35** anywhere in the auditorium. They are available online at [coc.ca](http://coc.ca), by calling **416-363-8231**, or by visiting the **Four Seasons Centre Box Office** in person at 145 Queen St. W.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**BMO Financial Group:** Season Sponsor

### **The COC Ensemble Studio is Underwritten By:**

The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, with major support from Anne & Tony Arrell, Marjorie & Roy Linden, The Estate of Tom C. Logan A.R.C.T., The MacNeill Family Foundation, Wendy J. Thompson, The Azrieli Foundation, RBC Foundation, and Stingray with additional support from ARIAS: Canadian Opera Student Development Fund, Marcia Lewis Brown, Neil & Blanche Carragher, Catherine Fauquier, George & Irene Hamilton, Patrick and Barbara Keenan Foundation, Joy Levine, Patricia & Frank Mills, and Brian Wilks.

## **ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION PARTNERS**

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## **ABOUT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY**

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the largest in North America. General Director Perryn Leech joined the company in 2021, forming a leadership team with Music Director Johannes Debus and Deputy General Director Christie Darville. The COC enjoys a loyal audience, including a dedicated base of subscribers, and has an international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation. Its diverse repertoire includes new commissions and productions, local and international collaborations with leading opera companies and festivals, and attracts the world's foremost Canadian and international artists. The COC Academy is an incubator for the future of the art form, nurturing Canada's new wave of opera creators with customized training and support. The COC performs in its own opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. For more information, visit [coc.ca](http://coc.ca).

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