Of the Sea

March 25–April 1, 2023

The Bluma Appel Theatre

A **Tapestry Opera** and **Obsidian Theatre** co-production, in partnership with **TO Live**

Composed by **Ian Cusson**
Libretto by **Kanika Ambrose**
Directed by **Philip Akin**
Music Direction by **Jennifer Tung**

ART BY GERDA BOATENG

TAPESTRY OPERA

OBSIDIAN

TO Live

tapestryopera.com
obsidiantheatre.com
tolive.com

Of the Sea
Land (and Water) Acknowledgement

Toronto, Tkaronto (the place where trees are standing in the water) has been a meeting place of nations and peoples–a place where communities have lived and thrived for thousands of years.

As we share an opera that is centered around water, we would like to acknowledge not only the land, but the water itself and those who have stewarded and cared for this place, which are many, including the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Wendat.

But these same waterways are linked to a colonial past; the roadways to the colonization of the land and of peoples. For centuries, and to this day, people depended on the water to survive, but this same water was used as a tool for dominance either by poisoning with pollutants, stifling food supplies or trafficking people, among other ways.

Indigenous people have been on this land long before the idea of "Canada". The colonial enterprise was to "solve the Indian problem", to "kill the Indian in the child." And yet here we are. We are thriving–making art, telling our stories and keeping our cultures alive. Being gathered in this theatre is a resounding statement that the colonial enterprise has failed. And it has failed in its many attempts.

The act of making Of the Sea was itself a kind of meeting place–between creators of different historic backgrounds with similar histories of attempted annihilation by the colonial enterprise, and a coming-together of artists from a variety of artistic disciplines. Tonight we are continuing in the values and hopes and dreams of this area's first peoples and historic and ongoing caretakers: of creating shared experiences–making art rather than dominance.

-KANIKA AMBROSE & IAN CUSSON

Cast

Jorell Williams | Maduka
Chantale Nurse | Serwa
Suzanne Taffot | Dfiza
Justin Welsh | Izunna / Baritone
Paul Williamson | Yaakaar / Tenor
Ruthie Nkut | Binyelum / Soprano
Ineza Mugisha | Soprano
Cheryl-Ann Lilieth | Mezzo-Soprano
Karen Weigold | Mezzo-Soprano
Joema Frith | Tenor
Gavin Hope | Baritone
Brian McQueen | Baritone

* Jennifer Tung is supported by Women In Musical Leadership, a conducting program led by Tapestry Opera in partnership with Pacific Opera Victoria and Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

** KP Dennis assistantship & Janeena Morris' apprenticeship was made possible through Obsidian Theatre's Young, Gifted & Black program funded by Rideau Foundation, Scotiabank, and Metcalf Foundation.

*** Member of the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra; Perryn Leech | General Director Johannes Debus | Music Director

Creative Team

Philip Akin | Director
Jennifer Tung* | Musical Director
Ian Cusson | Composer
Kanika Ambrose | Librettist
Rachel Forbes | Set & Costume Designer
Laura Warren | Projection Designer
Steve Lucas | Lighting Designer
Alex Gilbert | Head of Wardrobe & Soft Props
Hollywood Jade | Movement Director
Ty Wilson | Make-up Designer
Jacqueline Robertson Cull | Wig Maker
Rachael Kerr | Repetiteur
K.P Dennis** | Young, Gifted & Black Assistant Director
Jawon Kang | Assistant Set & Costume Designer
Janeena Morris** | Young, Gifted & Black Costume Design Apprentice
Meghan Wearne | Assistant Lighting Designer
Chris Faris | Wardrobe Assistant
Kathleen Johnston | Cutter
Des'ree Gray | Stitcher
Asli Ozauak | Stitcher
McWood Studios | Floor Treatment
Curtain Call Creative Fabric | Seaweed Creation
Music Preparation | Matthew Karaś

Production

Aidan Cosgrave | Production Manager
Kat Chin | Stage Manager
Loralie Pollard | Assistant Stage Manager
Emmanuelle So | Apprentice Stage Manager
Sodienye Waboso Amajor | Igbo Language Consultant
Ian Cowie | Personnel Manager, Canadian Opera Company Orchestra
Mabel Wonnacott | Surtitlist & Librarian

TOLive Crew

Jay Blencowe | Head Carpenter
Giulia D'Amanzo | Head Electrician
Keijo Makela | Head Sound
Wes Allen | Head of Props
Justin Tucci | Assistant Carpenter (Flyperson)
Mary Eggleston | Wardrobe Head

Orchestra

Clara Lee*** | Concertmaster
Calvin Cheng | First Violin
Yegee Lee | First Violin
Elizabeth Johnston*** | Principal Second Violin
Louise Tardif*** | Assistant Principal Second Violin
Oleksandra Fedyshyn | Second Violin
Yosef Tamir*** | Principal Viola
Brenna McLane | Second Viola
Elaine Thompson*** | Principal Violoncello
Naomi Barron | Second Violoncello
Mac VanDuzer | Contrabass
Douglas Stewart*** | Flute + Piccolo
Caitlin Broms-Jacobs | Oboe + English Horn
Dominic Desautels*** | Clarinet in Bb + Bass Clarinet
Zsofia Stefan | Bassoon + Contrabassoon
Bardhyl Gjevori*** | Horn in F
Roberto Conquer*** | Tenor Trombone
Trevor Tureski*** | Percussion
Sanya Eng*** | Harp

Welcome

On behalf of the leadership and boards of directors of Obsidian Theatre Company and Tapestry Opera we are thrilled to welcome you to the historic world premiere of *Of the Sea*. *Of the Sea* is not only Canada's first large-scale Black opera, but Obsidian Theatre Company's first opera. This run also includes Canada's first opera performance dedicated to Black audiences for our March 28th Black Celebration Night. Opera and theatre are expansive art forms, vast and versatile enough to tell all of our stories, to tell them beautifully and with honour and integrity. At their best, our art forms expand our understanding of the world and lift up voices with truths to share. We are incredibly proud of *Of the Sea* as a testament to how powerful an experience we can create with compelling storytelling, moving music, and expressive performances, and as a step towards the future of our art forms.

Tapestry Opera is an award-winning Toronto-based company that is dedicated to creating, developing and performing original Canadian opera to enrich and resonate with a diverse Canadian public. Tapestry is passionate about uniquely Canadian stories, told in innovative settings, unforgettably interpreted by world class artists. Tapestry supports emerging artists, develops new audiences and brings Canadian opera to the world stage. Founded in 1979, Tapestry is the voice of original contemporary Canadian opera.

Tapestry Opera

Michael Hidetoshi Mori,
General Director

Jaime Martino,
Executive Director

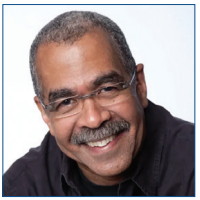
Founded in 2000, **Obsidian** is Canada's leading culturally specific and multi-award winning theatre company with a threefold mission to produce plays, to develop playwrights, and to train emerging theatre professionals. We are passionately dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice. Obsidian produces plays from a world-wide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights. Obsidian provides artistic support, promoting the development of work by Black theatre makers and offering training opportunities through mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging Black artists.

Obsidian Theatre Company was born out of a passionate sense of artistic responsibility – a responsibility to bring the Black voice, in its many artistic dialects, to Canada's cultural forefront. Obsidian encourages Black artists to expand their vision of what they perceive, create and present to a national audience. Obsidian continues to play a prominent role in Canada's theatrical mosaic by showcasing the work of both emerging and established Black artists.

Since its inception, our development programs have led many artists to expand their professional development and create new Canadian works. Through our training programs, we produce plays, develop playwrights and train emerging theatre professionals.

Obsidian Theatre Company

Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu,
Artistic Director



Michael Sinclair,
General Manager

Librettist's Note

In August 2018, I was a participant in Tapestry Opera's LibLab. I was getting married that September and was trying for my first child. Little did I know, it was the beginning of a three year journey to holding my beautiful son in my arms. When I was conceiving the earliest iteration of this opera, that LibLab, I knew that I wanted to write about the African ancestors whose graves became the Atlantic Ocean in the middle passage. The energy of those hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of people have to have changed that water forever.

I also thought about the children; the babies who died there and how much I wanted to scoop one of them into my body and give them life in this world as the child I longed for. I longed for life for my ancestors. I wrote the bulk of the libretto for this opera while my child was in my body; he has been most informative in this work. So I thank him, my Gyasi, for informing a work I hope he'll one day see.

I thank Ian for taking this personal and epic journey with me as the best creative partner I could ever ask for. Philip, Michael, and Jaime for believing in this right from the beginning, and to every single artist and administrator who has worked to make this dream possible. I can't thank you enough.

–KANIKA AMBROSE

Composer's Note

The act of making new opera is both a celebration of its 400 year history and a simultaneous acknowledgement of what those 400 years have largely been missing–the stories of a wide diversity of peoples and human experiences. *Of the Sea* is one piece in a growing body of new operatic work that pushes the borders of storytelling by inviting us to experience the humanity of diverse communities in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world. I hope that sitting in the theatre you will feel a deep connection to all that is wonderful and exciting about historic opera: dramatic musical storytelling with the human voice and all of its power and beauty at the centre. But I also hope you will dive deep with us and journey through waters of imagination and civilization and re-emerge with a renewed wonder at your own life and the incredible, fearsome world in which we all live.

–IAN CUSSON

Director's Note

Any story that has at its heart a challenge to an established system is going to resonate with me.

Be it from pride or hubris or dogged stubbornness I cannot help but respect their strength and determination.

This opera is about people who stand up for themselves against the established order. All for different reasons and all with different results.

How can you not like that?

–PHILIP AKIN

Special Thanks

African Textiles Centre
Canadian Stage
Chanti Laliberte
Clyde Wager, Josephine Ridge and the entire TO Live team
Ian Cowie, Personnel Manager, Canadian Opera Company Orchestra
Mary Spirakis
Saikou, African Drums & Art Crafts
Women in Musical Leadership

Synopsis

Act 1

Scene 1

A busy day in the Kingdom of Ireti. Yaakaar alerts queen Dzifa that a man and child have fallen to the bottom of the sea from a slaver ship. The Ireti people gather and perform a ceremony to awaken the man, Maduka, and his baby into their new existence as sea people. After some resistance, Maduka awakens and becomes familiarized with this new world he is expected to inhabit. Maduka asks for some time to rest and process with his baby.

Scene 2

Left alone with his daughter Binyelum, Maduka decides he will not accept this new water life. Since it is so far from his god, Chukwu, god of the sun, nothing good can come of it. Remembering a promise from Chukwu, that any baby brought to him within two days of death will be given life again, he decides he must swim to the surface, bring his daughter to the sun, and beg Chukwu to give her another chance at life.

Izunna overhears Maduka's plan and warns him that it will not work. He will never reach the water's surface because no one here has been given the power to swim. Ignoring this knowledge, Maduka asks Izunna to take him to people who, like him, want to rebel and take back what is theirs.

Dzifa returns to find Maduka gone. Knowing of his power, she knows she must get him back before he ruins the peace that the Ireti people currently have. She and the others set out to bring him back.

Act 2

Scene 1

In another part of the sea, Serwa, Queen of the Enweghi people, is planning her uprising. She is trying, as she has many times before, to capsize a slaver ship. Maduka and Izunna arrive in Enweghi and hear her plan. Together, Maduka and Serwa decide to take over a ship, use it to sail back to their homelands and live as free people on land again. The Enweghi people set off to find more people to help execute their brilliant plan.

With everyone gone, Serwa has a moment to realize what this means; finally, she will have revenge on the men who harmed her in those ships and be redeemed as the good woman she is.

Scene 2

Alone, Maduka revels in the fact that his plan is coming to fruition. He will see his god, and his daughter will have her life back. Dzifa finds Maduka and berates him for leaving her kingdom after it was she who helped him transition. She warns him that his plan won't work and to accept life as they have it now. He refuses, pushing her away, claiming Serwa as his true queen.

Scene 3

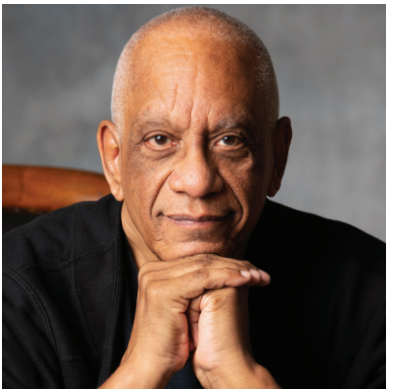
Over one thousand people have assembled to execute Maduka and Serwa's plan. Despite Dzifa's protests, they carry on.

They create a ladder with their bodies and climb to the water's surface. They capsize a ship and, as they are about to emerge from the water, discover the true nature of their power.

Epilogue

Two hundred years later, on the shore of a popular Caribbean vacation destination, slavery has been abolished everywhere in the world. Binyelum, a glint of sun, shines on the calm water as children play.

Creators



Philip Akin
Director

Philip Akin is an award-winning cultural leader and has been acting and directing for 46 years. He is a founding member of Obsidian Theatre, Canada's leading Black theatre company, and has served as its Artistic Director from 2006 to 2020.

Selected Directing Credits include *Trouble in Mind* by Alice Childress, Shaw Festival; *Gatsby Jazz, Sonny's Blues* by Jay Turvey/Paul Sportelli, Shaw Festival; *Million Billion Pieces* by David Brock/Gareth Williams, Young People's Theatre; *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu, Young People's Theatre; *Actually* by Anna Zeigler, Meridian Arts Centre; and *The Humans* by Stephen Karam.

He has been the recipient of the Silver Ticket Award, the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award, the Playwrights Guild of Canada Bra d'Or Award, the William Kilbourn Award, the Herbert Whittaker/CTCA Award for Distinguished Contribution to Canadian Theatre, the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts, and the Life Membership Award from Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

He is currently the vice-president of the board for Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre (2009 to present) and a director on the boards of the Koffler Centre of the Arts, Against the Grain Theatre, and the Shaw Festival. See his legacy awards program at **bsla.ca**

Jennifer Tung
Musical Director

A Dora nominated conductor (*Gould's Wall*), Jennifer Tung is the artistic director of Toronto City Opera and assistant conductor of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. She leads a uniquely versatile career as music director, collaborative pianist and soprano. In 2020/21, she joined Tapestry Opera as a conducting fellow in the inaugural year of the Women in Musical Leadership program in partnership with Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Pacific Opera Victoria.

Jennifer debuted with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival conducting *The Mikado* in 2017, and has returned to conduct *Sweeney Todd* and *Tragedy of Carmen*. In 2019, she debuted with Opera York in *La Traviata*. She assisted Tapestry Opera and Opera on the Avalon's joint production of the Dora Award-winning opera *Shanawdithit* by Dean Burry and Yvette Nolan. Recently, she conducted the world premiere of *Gould's Wall* by Brian Current and Liza Balken, a joint production with the Royal Conservatory of Music and Tapestry Opera.

For the 2022/23 season, she has debuted as guest conductor with Opera McGill's production of *Plaything* (Anna Pigorna/Maria Reva – Canadian premiere), Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic and Kamloops Symphony. In March of 2023, Jennifer will conduct the world premieres of Continuum's production of the opera *Show Room* (Rodney Sharman/Atom Egoyan) and Tapestry Opera/Obsidian Theatre's co-production of *Of the Sea* (Ian Cusson/Kanika Ambrose).

Jennifer is on faculty at Toronto's Glenn Gould School and is a sought-after faculty member for summer programs internationally. She holds degrees in vocal performance and collaborative piano from the Eastman School of Music and has studied conducting with Maestro Denis Mastromonaco.

Kanika Ambrose
Librettist

Kanika Ambrose is a playwright, librettist, and screenwriter. She has been playwright-in-residence at Obsidian Theatre Company and Cahoots Theatre. Her critically acclaimed play *our place*, was first produced by Cahoots Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille in November 2022. Her children's opera *Anansi and the Great Light* with composer Nick diBerardino and the students at Girard College premiered at Curtis Institute of Music (Philadelphia) in 2019. Other short works have premiered across North America including celebrated digital work *Tak-Tak-Shoo* with composer Rene Orth at Opera Philadelphia.

As a screenwriter, Kanika has worked in several development rooms and is in residence at Canadian Film Centre's Bell Media Primetime TV Program (2022–2023).

Kanika is a graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University and is Associate Artistic Director of Necessary Angel Theatre Company. She was featured as one of Cahoots Theatre Company's *30 for 30* theatre makers for their 30th anniversary season.

Ian Cusson
Composer

Ian Cusson is a composer of art song, opera, and orchestral work. Of Métis (Georgian Bay Métis Community) and French Canadian descent, his work explores Canadian Indigenous experience including the history of the Métis people, the hybridity of mixed-racial identity, and the intersection of Western and Indigenous cultures.

He studied composition with Jake Heggie (San Francisco) and Samuel Dolin, and piano with James Anagnoson at the Glenn Gould School. He is

the recipient of the Chalmers Professional Development Grant, and grants through the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.

Ian was an inaugural Carrefour Composer-in-Residence with the National Arts Centre Orchestra for 2017-2019 and was Composer-in-Residence for the Canadian Opera Company for 2019-2021. He was a Co-artistic Director of Opera in the 21st Century at the Banff Centre and the recipient of the 2021 Jan V. Matejcek Classical Music Award from SOCAN and the 2021 Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize. Ian is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre and a member of the Canadian League of Composers.

He lives in Oakville with his wife and four children.

Cast

Jorell Williams
Maduka

Jorell Williams has been hailed by Opera News as having "a solid vocal core and easy, natural production" and the New York Times for being "magnificent" and "rich toned", as well as having "perfect" comedic timing. An American operatic baritone with a wide variety of experience from standard repertoire to premiere pieces, he begins the 2022–2023 Season debuting in Pacific Opera Victoria's production of Bizet's *Carmen*, the Canadian Opera Company's production of *Salome*, and the world premiere of Canadian Composer Ian Cusson's *Of The Sea* (co-produced by Obsidian Theatre and Tapestry Opera). He will also appear in concert with the Amadeus Choir in *Carmina Burana*, Handel's *Messiah* with the National Philharmonic and Elmer Iseler Singers, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the Duluth Superior Symphony, and in concert with Finger Lakes Opera, Lyric Fest, and Brooklyn Art Song Society.

An Alumnus of the Composers and the Voice Program at The American Opera Project, Caramoor International Music Festival's Bel Canto Program, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Westchester Vocal Institute, and Songfest at Colburn

in Los Angeles, Jorell has trained with the Santa Fe Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera North, and holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Music. He is an advocate for artist rights and serves as Chair of the Artistic Arts Council of Finger Lakes Opera, and is a member of the artistic council advisor for the Denyce Graves Foundation, On-Site Opera, and the New Music Board for the Brooklyn Art Song Society, using his experience to consult with arts organizations on their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives.

Suzanne Taffot
Dfiza

Described by critics as "a voice to follow," soprano Suzanne Taffot is distinguished by her rich and colourful tone, her ease on stage and her moving interpretations. After making her debut with the Orchestre Métropolitain in Fauré's *Requiem*, under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Suzanne took part in the recording of the melodies and arias of the famous composer Gershwin, with the Orchestre La Sinfonia de Lanaudière under the direction of its conductor Stéphane Laforest. She has also been a soloist at the Opéra de Québec, the Opéra de Limoges, the Shenzhen Opera in China, the Košice Symphony House in Slovakia, and at the Gärtenerplatz Theatre in Munich, where she was a great success as Mimì in *La bohème* (Puccini). Last summer, Suzanne was a soloist in Brahms' *Requiem* with the Orchestre Métropolitain under the direction of Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin (a concert that was nominated in the Romantic Music category of the Prix Opus awarded by the CQM - Conseil québécois de la musique). She brilliantly interpreted the role of the Cantatrice in the world premiere of the opera *Yourcenar-une île de passions*, composed by Eric Champagne and co-produced by the Opéra de Montréal and the Opéra de Québec. Her future engagements include the *Stabat Mater* and *Salve Regina in A minor* with the Galileo Orchestra conducted by Daniel Constantineau. In May, Suzanne will participate in a concert tour with the Opera of Rouen, Opera de Montpellier, and the Opera of Tours in France. Suzanne holds a Master's degree in Opera from the University of Montreal and studies under the direction of Adrienne Savoie.

Chantale Nurse
Serwa

Soprano Chantale Nurse, a Canadian of Guyanese origin, has always loved bringing her passion for music to all sorts of audiences. She has been a featured soloist at Opéra de Montréal on numerous occasions, most notably Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking*, Clara in *Porgy & Bess*, and the roles of Sadie/Cousin Blanche in the Canadian premiere of Terence Blanchard's *Champion*. Role highlights include Fiordiligi in *Cosi fan tutte*, Countess Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and the title role in *Tosca*. Chantale has performed internationally in concerts in Europe and Asia, as well as roles such as Maria in Grange Park Opera's production of *Porgy & Bess* in London and Mary in Sir Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio* at the Kunst am Kai festival in Lübeck, Germany. Chantale is an avid recitalist and has collaborated with pianist Jérémie Pelletier, as well as concert pianist Janelle Fung. Chantale is passionate about performing in styles ranging from burlesque, musical theatre, to funk and pop, and to crossover genres such as techno-opera.

Paul Williamson
Yaakaar / Tenor

Jamaican-born Canadian spinto tenor Paul Williamson has appeared with Opera York (Toronto), singing Manrico in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in November 2013 and Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in November 2014. He made his debut at Carnegie Hall as tenor soloist in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the New York Festival Orchestra in December 2013 and again appeared at Carnegie Hall in March 2014 as tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*, and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*. In March 2017, he appeared as Beppe in an independently staged production of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. In May 2017, he appeared as the Scrivener in *Khovanshchina* by Mussorsky with Opera In Concert, and in March 2018, he debuted at the Southern Ontario Lyric Opera (SOLO) as Rinuccio in

their production of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Paul recently performed the role of Aegisthe in the Strauß opera *Elektra* with Powerhouse Opera, a small independent opera company in Toronto, in March 2022.

Justin Welsh
Izunna / Baritone

British Columbia baritone Justin Welsh's career highlights include Crown in *Porgy and Bess* with Kent Nagano conducting l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and Queequeg in the Canadian premiere of *Moby Dick* for Calgary Opera. His 22/23 season includes Weidhoff in Braunfels' *Die Vögel* for Pacific Opera Victoria (POV), Schaunard in *La bohème* for Orchestre Philharmonique et Choeur des Mélomanes and Tim Brady's *Backstage* at Carnegie Hall for the Centaur Theatre. Welsh's 21/22 season included *Gianni Schicchi* for the Canadian Opera Company, *Gould's Wall* with Tapestry Opera, *Bound* for Against the Grain Theatre, and Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with POV. An alumnus of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio, Welsh has also sung Marcello in *La bohème* for l'Opéra de Montréal, Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* for POV, Baron Duphol in *La traviata* for Edmonton Opera and Verdi's *Requiem* for the Okanagan Symphony.

Ruthie Nkut
Binyelum / Soprano

Ruthie is a proud Northern-Ontarian artist. She is the Associate Artistic Director of YES Theatre and Sudbury Theatre Centre. Favourite theatre credits include: *April Fools*, Segal Centre; *Into the Woods*, YES/STC; *The Colour Purple*, Neptune. Favourite Film/TV credits include: *Barbie*, Mattel; *Purgatory Jack*, Butler Brothers. Ruthie is so excited to be making her Tapestry debut this Season!

Ineza Mugisha
Soprano

Ineza Mugisha is a multi-genre musician and actor from Toronto, Ontario. She is a 2022 graduate of the University of Toronto Voice Performance Program, receiving prizes such as the University of Toronto Kinghorn Award and Arnold Walter Memorial Award. She has been able to share her voice in different venues, and concert halls across North America. Since graduating she has debuted at Roy Thompson Hall at the 2022 Future Stops Festival as well as being the Soprano Soloist in Nathaniel Dett Chorale's 2022 production of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale's oratorio *The Ordering of Moses*. Ineza is excited to see where her career takes her and is honoured to be in the cast!

Cheryl-Ann Lilieth
Mezzo-Soprano

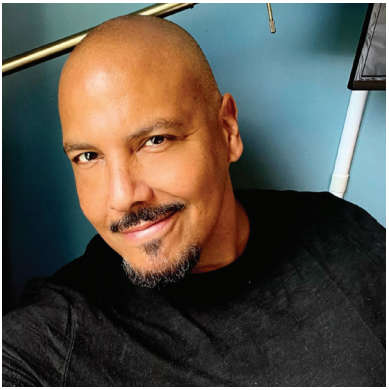
Mezzo-soprano Cheryl-Ann Lilieth is a Canadian of Jamaican descent. A native Montrealer, Cheryl-Ann majored in voice performance at McGill University and is a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in Manhattan. She performs in both classical and musical theatre works. Past roles include Tituba in Robert Ward's *The Crucible* (Opera McGill), Sheba in *Slow Dance with a Hot Pick-up* and Heidi in *[title of show]* (Next Wave Festival), Blind Guitarist/Preacher in *Soul Doctor* and Annie in *It Shoulda Been You* (Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre) and Neves in *Rio* (Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival). Cheryl-Ann has also performed in the chorus in *Champion* and *Porgy and Bess* (Opéra de Montréal), and with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

Karen Weigold
Mezzo-Soprano

Karen Weigold is an established and versatile singer from the Greater Toronto Area. After studying at Cambrian College in Sudbury, with a major in Vocal Performance and a minor in Piano Studies, Karen moved back to the GTA to begin her music career. With a background in dramatic arts and dance, Karen has had many opportunities to perform with ensembles and organizations throughout the city, including Soundstreams, Elmer Iseler Singers, Univox Choir of Toronto, and Countermeasure. Karen has shared the stage with artists like Jackie Richardson, Jully Black, Joe Sealy, Molly Johnson, Nikki Yanovsky, and opera star Kathleen Battle; she is a founding member of the a cappella group Catch-Phrase Quartet, and has lent her voice to many EP and LP recordings and live performances for local Toronto artists such as Jeremy Dutcher, Julian Taylor, and Secret Broadcast. Karen is a section lead and a featured soloist at Church of the Redeemer Anglican Church in Toronto, and has been a featured soloist at Grace Church-on-the-Hill. In addition to her busy performance schedule, Karen gives private vocal lessons and is working on various composition and arranging projects.

Joema Frith
Tenor

Joema Frith is a dramatic tenor, whose previous credits include, *Ghost* (Orlando, U/S Subway Ghost), *Cinderella* (Prince Topher), *Little Shop Of Horrors* (Voice of Audrey II). He is honored to be making his Tapestry Opera and Obsidian Theatre debut in such a beautiful and driven story! He has so much love and gratitude for his family, friends, and the amazing team at Talent House.



Gavin Hope
Baritone

Gavin Hope is a three-time Juno Nominee, both as a solo vocalist and also as the long-time Baritone member of the iconic Canadian A Cappella group, The Nylons. He has recorded six studio albums with the group, as well as two successful solo albums which had several nationally charting singles on the radio. Gavin is currently a core headlining vocalist with Jeans n Classics, performing Pops concerts with Symphony Orchestras across North America Theatre Highlights include: Zaki in *Dixon Road*, Canstage/Obsidian; *Freedom Cabaret*, Stratford; Simba in *The Lion King*, Mirvish; and Collins in *RENT*, Mirvish. Gavin was also the youngest member of the Calgary Opera Chorus, performing in *Falstaff*, *Manson Lescaut*, *Carousel*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Gavin is thrilled to make his Tapestry Opera debut with this groundbreaking production of *Of the Sea*!

Brian McQueen
Baritone

Brian McQueen is an operatic bass and voice instructor residing in New York City. They have appeared with the Lyric Opera Theatre of Arizona State University, Janiec Opera, Trilogy Opera, and recently made their New York operatic debut as both Spinelloccio & Amantio in On Site Opera's production of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. As a recitalist, Brian toured as Artist in Residence with the Tohno International Arts Association (Tokyo), Manchester Literary Festival, Poetry International (London), ChaShaMa (NYC), The Metropolitan Opera Guild, and recently in the A Train Festival (NYC). They were recently seen in the new opera *Exagoge* (Avner Finberg) presented at the New York Opera Festival. As a voice instructor, Brian maintains a vibrant private voice studio. They are also a Teaching Artist with The Bronx Arts Ensemble and The Harlem School of the Arts. Brian is a 2017 fellow with Emerging Leaders in New York

Arts, a finalist in Opera Ebony's 2021 Benjamin Matthews Voice Competition, and an alumnus of the University of South Carolina, Miami University of Ohio, and Indiana University. Brian will cover the role of Talpo in Puccini's *Il Tabarro* with On Site Opera in May 2023. This is Brian's first production with Tapestry Opera.

Creative Team

Rachel Forbes
Set & Costume Designer

Rachel Forbes is an award-winning set and costume designer creating for theatre, dance, and film. Her work has been seen across the country on stages including at the Shaw Festival, Buddies in Bad Times, Obsidian Theatre, Neptune Theatre, Young People's Theatre, Centaur Theatre and many more. She has designed, mentored and taught at Toronto Metropolitan University. Rachel is currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Associated Designers of Canada. Rachel received a Dora Mavor Moore Award for her costume design for *The Brothers Size* (Soulpepper Theatre, 2019) and a Robert Merritt Award for her set design for *The Bridge* (2B/Neptune Theatre, 2019).

Rachel is particularly interested in the development of new works and interdisciplinary explorations. She has been experimenting with designer-led theatre projects and is keen to integrate design into the text creation process. Rachel is invested in exploring the artistic expressions of the African diaspora in North America and beyond. Much of her work has focused on creating worlds for these stories on stage.

Laura Warren
Projection Designer

Laura Warren is a Saskatchewan-raised, Toronto-based, designer for theatre, dance, live music, and opera. Projection design credits include *#34*, Globe Theatre; *The Queen in Me,* COC, Nightwood Theatre, Amplified Opera, Theatre Gargantua; *Is God Is,* Canadian Stage, Obsidian Theatre, Necessary Angel; *21 Black Futures*, Obsidian Theatre/CBC Arts; *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, Tarragon Theatre; *In Absentia*, JDdance; *Pomegranate* Pomegranate Opera; *The Black Drum*, Deaf Culture Centre/Soulpepper; *Grace* NightwoodTheatre/Crow's Theatre; *Unholy*, Nightwood Theatre; *Oraltorio: A Theatrical Mixtape,* Obsidian Theatre/Soulpepper; *Bearing,* Signal Theatre/Luminato; *Frescobaldi and the Glories of Rome, Illuminations, A Medieval Christmas*, Toronto Consort; *Le Nozze di Figaro,* Toronto City Opera; *No Strings (Attached)*, PinkPluto/Eventual Ashes/Buddies in Bad Times.

Hollywood Jade
Movement Director

A visionary with a passion for excellence, Hollywood Jade wears multiple hats as a choreographer, artistic director, performance coach and media personality, among others. Selected Credits: Associate Choreographer, *Fall On Your Knees Tour* (National Theatre Centre); Choreographer, *Sleeping Beauty* (Capitol Theatre); Choreographer *The Soul of Motown* (Stage West); Resident Choreographer/Guest Judge *Canada's Drag Race* (Crave/World of Wonder); Assistant Choreographer, *The United Stages vs Billie Holiday* (Hulu); Choreographer, *Queen Tut* (Fae); Choreographer, *Accused* (Fox).

Steve Lucas
Lighting Designer

Since 1987 Steve has designed award winning sets and lighting for more than 500 productions of Opera, Theatre, Dance and Performance Art. His work has toured extensively and has been seen all across Canada, the United States, the UK, Europe, Scandinavia, Estonia, Russia, Australia, and Asia. In all, 27 countries around the world.

Steve's work in theatre has been focused on new and original plays; he has designed the world premieres of literally hundreds of shows, many of which have gone on to further acclaim. These include: 2 Pianos 4 Hands, Never Swim Alone, The Drowsy Chaperone, Innocence Lost: The Steven Trusscott Project; The Ballad of Stompin' Tom, Stag and Doe, The New Canadian Curling Club, 7 Important Things, and The Drawer Boy.

Steve has received several awards including four Dora Awards for his set and lighting designs. He has also been nominated for several of Canada's most prestigious awards including the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, the Pauline Mc Gibbon Award, and thirty three Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations.

Production

Kat Chin
Stage Manager

Kat is a Toronto-based stage manager and has worked across Canada, Off-Broadway, and at the Palace of Versailles in France. She has worked extensively with Opera Atelier and Soulpepper Theatre Company, and was the stage manager for *Kim's Convenience* for six years – from the 2011 Fringe Festival to NYC in 2017.

During the pandemic, she was fortunate to have worked on various projects that involved film and digital components, most notably Myseum of Toronto's *1851*, and *21 Black Futures*
from Obsidian Theatre & CBC.

Recent credits include: *Dido & Aeneas* (Opera Atelier); *Three Sisters* (Howland Co & Hart House); *Dixon Road* (Musical Stage); *Queen Goneril* and *King Lear* (Soulpepper), *Tiny Tenement of Terrors* (Theatre Sheridan); *TOKA* (TPM/lemonTree); *I Am William* (Stratford). She has been an active member of the CAEA SM Committee since 2013, the International Cohort of the US Stage Managers Association since 2019, and has taught at TMU and the SMArts Conference.

Loralie Pollard
Assistant Stage Manager

Loralie Pollard is a Toronto-based stage manager who has worked at many theatres across the province on a variety of genres, including plays, musicals, operettas, concerts, immersive pieces, and devised projects. She is very excited to add opera to her repertoire with *Of The Sea*. Select experience includes *Mary Stuart* (Theatre Erindale), *Back in '59* (Thousand Islands Playhouse), *A Northern Lights Dream* (Toronto Operetta Theatre), *The Events* (Necessary Angel), *Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto* (Drayton Entertainment), *Freaky Friday* (Theatre Aquarius), *The Penelopiad* (Grand Theatre), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Drayton Entertainment), *The Birds and the Bees* (Theatre Orangeville), and *Baskerville* (Lighthouse Festival Theatre).

Emmanuelle So
Apprentice Stage Manager

Emmanuelle So is a Chinese-Canadian artist based in Toronto and a graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University, specializing in stage management. Upon graduating, she worked as an Artistic Producer at Crane Creations Theatre Company (Summer Ensemble, 2021). She was the Apprentice Stage Manager on *Boy Falls From The Sky* (Past Future Productions & Mirvish Productions, 2022), *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale* (Never Mind the Noise, presented by Soulpepper Theatre Company, Outside the March Theatre Company & The Red Light District, 2022), and most recently The *Marriage of Figaro* (Canadian Opera Company, 2023).

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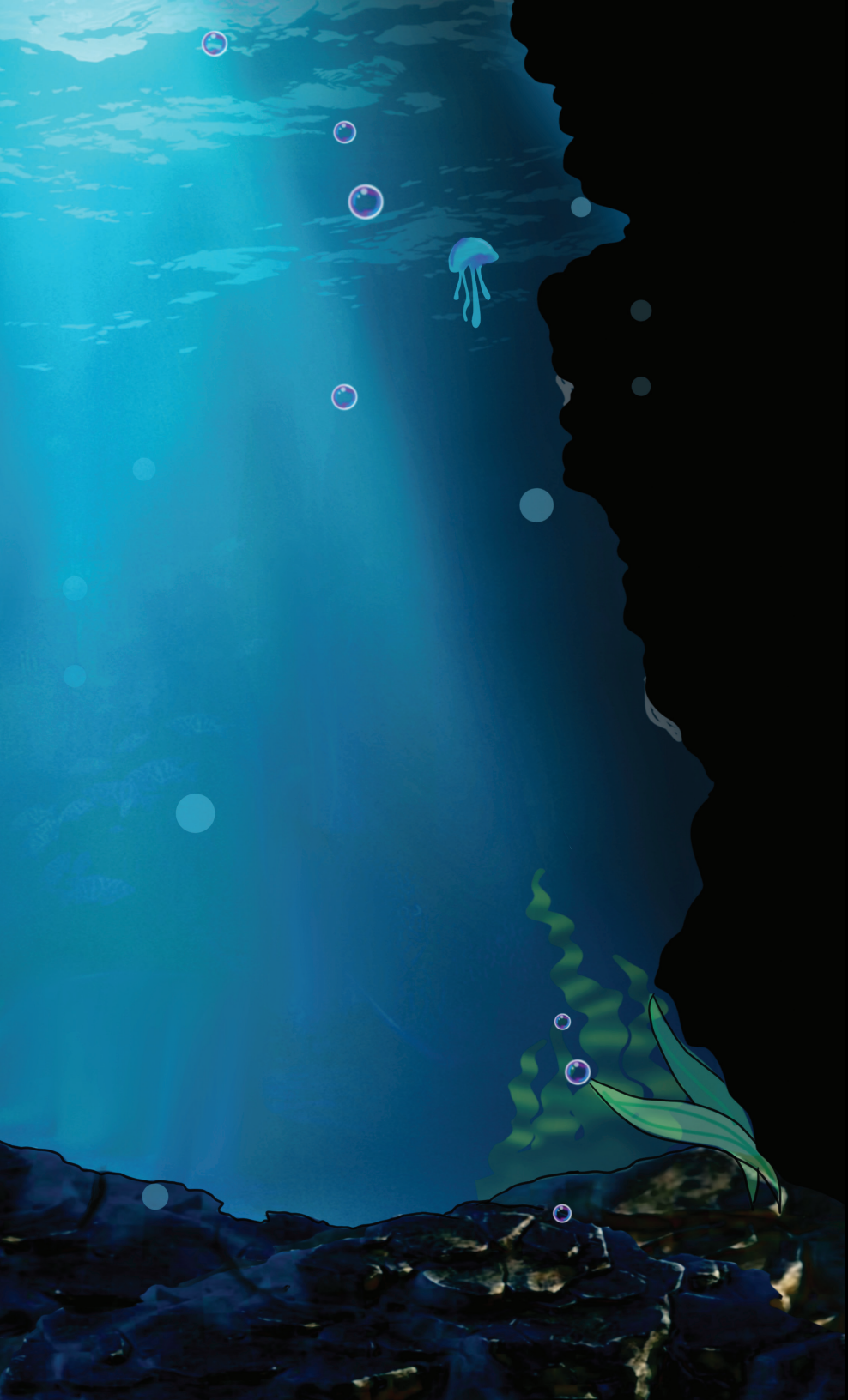
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