

THE
**Nathaniel Dett
Chorale**
Connecting Through Afrocentric Music



Voices of the Diaspora...

WHEN I CROSSED THAT LINE TO FREEDOM



Welcome Note

Several years ago, during the 1967 CBC Massey Lectures “Conscience for Change”, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated,

“Canada is not merely a neighbour to Negroes. Deep in our history of struggle for freedom, Canada was the north star. The enslaved Negro, denied education, de-humanized, imprisoned on cruel plantations, knew that far to the north a land existed where a fugitive slave if he survived the horrors of the journey could find freedom. The legendary underground railroad started in the south and ended in Canada. The freedom road links us together. Our spirituals, now so widely admired around the world, were often codes. We sang of “heaven” that awaited us and the slave masters listened in innocence, not realizing that we were not speaking of the hereafter. Heaven was the word for Canada and the Negro sang of the hope that his escape on the underground railroad would carry him there. . . and the north star. . . gave the celestial map that directed the flight to the Canadian border. So, standing today in Canada I am linked with the history of my people and its unity with your past.”

Tonight, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale presents African American composer Nkeiru Okoye's opera Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom. While it explores mostly aspects of Harriet's story south of the border, it nevertheless recalls the link to which Dr. King referred, and the journeys that we know brought Harriet to Canada on more than one occasion – compelled by the idea of the North Star and freedom.

Speaking of the 'North Star', this quote from the television series *Touch* provides an interesting perspective:

"Polaris, the Northern Star. Viewed from another planet it's just one among many, but on Earth it's uniquely important — fixed in place, an anchor. No matter where you are in the Northern Hemisphere, if you face Polaris you face North. You'll know where you are. But there are other ways to get lost, in the choices we make, in events that overwhelm us, even within our own minds. What could be our anchor then, what beacon could we turn to, to guide us from darkness to light?"

Bondage occurs in many ways, and it is often too easy to become 'lost' or 'enslaved' in the course of the human journey. It is my hope that tonight's performance might inspire us all to reflect on what becomes our "North Star", and where and when we cross our own lines to freedom.

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor

Artistic Director

Voices of the Diaspora...

When I Crossed That Line to Freedom

Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom – Nkeiru Okoye (b. 1972)

Scene: A failing plantation on Maryland's Eastern Shore, and the middle-class community of Free Negroes in Philadelphia

Time: the US antebellum (circa 1829-1859)

Act I: In Slavery

Scene 1 A small, antebellum Maryland Plantation. Outside the Ross family cabin. C. 1829.

Scene 2 Seven years later, en route to a forest clearing, by the Brodess plantation

Scene 3 The same day, a forest clearing

Scene 4 One Sunday afternoon, outside the Ross family cabin

Scene 5 Some years later, early one morning in front of the Ross cabin.

Scene 6 A few evenings later, outside the Ross cabin

INTERMISSION

Act II: In Freedom

Scene 1 In Philadelphia at the Central Presbyterian Church of Color

Scene 2 On the plantation

Scene 3 Some years later, on the plantation

Scene 4 Philadelphia, circa. 1854.

Scene 5 The Cabin.

HARRIET TUBMAN
(Araminta Ross), protagonist

Alison Ryan, soprano

RACHEL ROSS,
her younger sister

Ineza Mugisha, soprano

BEN ROSS, her father

Anika Venkatesh, alto

RITTIA ROSS,
her mother

Ianjai Mounsey-Ndemo,
contralto

JOHN TUBMAN,
her suitor

Andrew Gunpath,
baritone

SAM GREEN,
Preacher and Abolitionist
WILLIAM STILL, Abolitionist

Tyrese Walters, tenor

CAROLINE,
An older woman on the plantation

Karen Weigold, alto
Jenna Cowans, alto

KEZZIAH, A woman on the plantation
FEMALE RUNAWAY

Jewel Scott, soprano
Kaisha Lee, soprano

ROBERT ROSS, Harriet's Brother
MALE RUNAWAY

Dérrell Woods,
bass-baritone

EDWARD BRODESS, Plantation owner
OVERSEER PITTS

Jacob Abrahamse,
tenor

SATB Chorus

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, conductor

Christina Faye, collaborative pianist

Programme Notes

ACT I: In Slavery

1822. The Brodess Plantation, on Maryland's Eastern Shore in the antebellum US.

The Cabin

Early one morning on a Maryland Plantation, Rittia Ross calls for her daughter, Araminta. The two are enslaved, and Araminta is being sent away to work. Unseen by Rittia, the child, called "Minty," muses about life, which includes having had three sisters sold away on a chain gang. Minty sings (My Name is Araminta) about how "very happy," she is that her "family gets to stay together." Upon finding Minty, and reluctantly turning her over, to their master, Edward Brodess, Rittia gives the child last minute advice. Brodess assures Rittia that the child will be fine as she is groomed into being a mammy. After their departure, Rittia erupts into tears and is comforted by Caroline and Kezziah, two women from the plantation.

Approximately eight years later

Ben, Robert and Caroline rush in, carrying Minty, who is unconscious from a head wound. The adults chronicle Araminta's mishaps (I've Heard About Kind Masters, but I Never Did See Not a One): Over the years Minty has been shuttled between various masters and as many maladies, leading up to her present injury. The men leave the womenfolk to look after Minty. Rittia's cries of distress, (Lord, They Took My Child Away), stir the compassion of Kezziah, and Caroline, who lay hands on the comatose girl, in a healing ritual. Convinced their prayer has worked, the plantation women leave Rittia and her younger daughter, Rachel. Rachel models a scarf, hoping that boys will come courting. Rittia says she is too young for courting and to look on her sister. Rachel obeys, then startles as Minty catches her hand with strength. Overjoyed at Minty's recovery, Rachel and Rittia profess this to be a miracle (Her Eyes are Open Wide, Now).

Upon learning of Minty's recovery, Brodess visits Rittia. He complains of being unable to sell the girl who, though healed, suffers from sleeping spells. As the malady renders Minty unsuitable for housework, Brodess mandates that she will learn lumbering from Ben. While exiting, Brodess enquires if Rittia has seen a runaway named Monroe. Rittia claims she has not. Brodess

then sees the Reverend Green, pastor to the enslaved population. Brodess and tells Green that the sheriff has been looking for him. Green claims he already spoke to the sheriff, and came to check on Minty. When Brodess is out of sight, Rittia reveals Monroe hiding in her cabin. Green helps the young man escape.

Near the Cabin

Some weeks later, as Araminta sleeps while standing in the distance, Kezziah, and Caroline gossip about "Poor Rittia and Her Useless Daughters," commenting on Minty's sleeping spells and Rachel's penchant for daydreaming. Encountering Rachel, the women ask if the youth will be taking Minty for her first forestry lesson. Once the women are out of earshot, Rachel muses about her desire for marriage and babies (I Want a Man). Minty, who has awakened, encourages Rachel's aspirations. Though Rachel is fearful of her future as a slave who can be sold, Minty tells her not to worry. The sisters make a blood oath that "Nothing but the Grave" will ever tear them apart.

A Forest Clearing

Later, that same morning, Minty and Rachel travel to a forest clearing. As they find their way, Ben, Robert, and local woodsmen are gathered for lumbering work. Ben is elated at Brodess' inability to sell his daughter. Upon the arrival of Minty and Rachel, Ben, Robert, and the workmen teach the girls a forest map through song. Rachel departs, while Minty remains, learning her new trade. Over five years, Minty grows from sickly teen to strong young woman. She learns from Ben, that the man who transports their lumber North, also uses his barge to run information between runaways, and their remaining family members. Ben leaves to take his wood to the barge. Minty, frustrated that her woodsmen still call her "Little Minty" changes her name proclaiming adamantly "My Name is Harriet, Now."

One Sunday at the Cabin

After church, the Plantation folk are gathered in front of the cabin. The irony of having church imposed on them, while they are considered 'savages' (God Bless the Sabbath) does not escape them. The men leave the women to their gossiping. The women wonder what Harriet will do with her chopping money and discuss the growing number of runaways. They tease Rachel, who leaves for a constitutional with a young man. The women then take notice when John Tubman, a free man, calls for Harriet. Though Harriet resists John's initial advances, she eventually agrees to marry him as he

proclaims that, despite her enslavement, her dark brown skin has won his heart (Brown Skinned Gal). The plantation residents join Harriet and John for an impromptu broom jumping (wedding) ceremony.

Some years later

As John and Harriet discuss plans to save money with the goal of buying Harriet's freedom, Caroline runs in with news. Brodess has died, leaving a bankrupt estate, and the widow will be selling some of them at auction. Panic and rumors spread quickly (Rumor Says We're Next), as slaves are being sold, and Harriet is put up for sale, on account of her strength. Rittia's sobs are comforted by Ben. Harriet wants to run north; however, John argues that she still has sleeping spells, and that if she's caught, she can be sold, and he can be punished for helping her. His in-laws caution John that Harriet is scared, but John storms away angrily. A few nights later, Harriet is outfitted for extended travel. She is approached by Overseer Pitts. After ascertaining why Harriet is out so late, he demands that she sing for him, as his mammy used to do. Harriet complies. Her song, "Farewell Friends," is a hidden message to the plantation folks. The Overseer continues his rounds, while Harriet slips away, ushered away by Rev. Green.

ACT II: In Freedom

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Three years later.

An evening at the Central Presbyterian Church of Color

William Still, Stationmaster of the Philadelphia Underground Railroad network presides over a covert abolitionist gathering. He teaches "The Ways of the Underground Railroad" – coded terminology used for their illicit work, rescuing escaped slaves. Still then introduces the evening's guest speaker, who came to them as a runaway, but has since become a legendary conductor, very active in their movement. The speaker is Harriet. She addresses the gathering, (I am Harriet Tubman, Free Woman), tells of her travels, and proclaims her mission, which is to keep crossing the line to freedom until her entire family is free. The abolitionists welcome Harriet and pledge to help her. Still invites Harriet to return home with him and his wife, but Harriet declines, having work to do. She'll earn money for cleaning the floor. She begins her task, humming the work song taught to her by Ben and the woodsmen. Opposite her, but unseen by Harriet, Rachel, cleans a floor on the home plantation, child strapped to her back, also sings the work song while musing about missing Harriet.

On the Plantation

Kezziah and Caroline visit Rittia, who has been morose since Harriet's departure. Ben hopes a visit from Rev. Green will cheer his wife. Green has a message from Harriet, informing of an impending visit. Caroline suggests hurrying Harriet along with word that John has taken up with another woman. The plantation residents send Harriet a message, using "The Slave Grapevine." In Philadelphia, Harriet responds to the message by preparing to leave. Still cautions her that she must be careful because of the growing bounty on her head. Harriet arrives at the plantation late one evening. Her family is overjoyed to see her, but grows quiet when she asks about John, for whom she has purchased a new suit. Ben takes Robert and the Reverend to see if John will talk to Harriet; however John declines any further contact with his estranged wife. He tells Ben that "I've Moved on and She Should, Too." Though saddened, Harriet is not surprised by the news. As Rev. Green cautions that more bounty hunters are searching for runaways, Harriet springs into action, asking who will come with her. Kezziah volunteers, bringing along her two children. Harriet dresses Kezziah in the suit intended for John. Rachel declines to leave, since her baby is un-weaned. The sisters renew their pledge that "Nothing but the Grave" will part them. Harriet and Green leave with a small party of runaways.

On the Plantation

The smaller gathering of plantation inhabitants (missing Kezziah) lament that "The Reverend Green was Taken" to jail. Despite a lack of evidence, he was sentenced to ten years, on account of his helping runaways escape. Caroline, Rachel and Rittia discuss heightened security measures taken by slave owners, in an effort to prevent their human property from escaping. Calling it a stampede of slaves, authorities are aware of Harriet's involvement. As Rittia goes to look on Rev. Green's wife, who took ill after his arrest, Caroline urges Rachel to follow her sister's example and escape. Rachel protests that her husband is on another plantation, and their babies are being guarded; but Caroline, has had her say. Rachel rants about Caroline's advice (You Think it Over), angered that people are telling her what to do and gossiping about her without understanding her perspective. Later that evening, Harriet returns, having come specifically to rescue her brothers, who have been put up for sale. She and Rachel clash about Rachel's seeming refusal to join her. The argument is interrupted by Ben's arrival. When the plantation folk inquire as to why Ben is wearing a blindfold. Ben explains that "I Always Tell the Truth." When discovery of his sons' escape is made, authorities will ask if he's seen them or his daughter. As long as he's blindfolded, he truthfully can answer that he has not.

Philadelphia, Some Years Later

Still and the abolitionists are in an uproar about newly passed legislation, The Fugitive Slave Act. The meeting calms as Still introduces would-be speaker, Harriet Tubman; however when she fails to appear, Ben and Rittia take the stage. Introducing themselves as Harriet's parents, they explain that she got them out just in time, and that while not in imminent danger, she is in need of prayers, as bounties on her head have reached \$20,000. The abolitionists gather in a circle and sing, "Lord, You Brought Us Through Six Trials, Now Bring Us Through A Seventh One." During their prayer, the scene changes to a trail between Philadelphia and Maryland, where patterollers are in hot-pursuit of Harriet, who narrowly escapes capture.

The Plantation

While doing chores, Caroline bemoans that her in her old age, long-time friends have gone or been sold. She is surprised to see Harriet, sleeping while standing, in the daytime. When awakened, Harriet asks if Rachel will join the current rescue group, only to discover that her sister is very ill. Caroline takes Harriet to Rachel, who tells Harriet that death finally will part them. As Rachel passes away, she tells Harriet there is no need for her to return to the plantation. Harriet is devastated at the death, but Caroline urges her to complete the rescue mission and not look back. Harriet begins a final northbound journey with a small company of runaways. While on the trail, one runaway, exhausted from the harrowing escape begs to be allowed to return to his master. Harriet tells him that he cannot go back, since he would be tortured into betraying their whereabouts. When he still refuses to move forward, Harriet draws her pistol saying, "I am Moses, the Liberator", You Keep on Going or Die." She ends her final aria with an emphatic plea:

If you're tired keep on going

If you're scared keep on going

If you're hungry keep on going

If you want to taste freedom, keep on going

Set your mind to freedom and the Promised Land.

We shall be free.

THE NATHANIEL DETT CHORALE

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, Conductor

Christina Faye, Collaborative Pianist

SOPRANOS

Anaïs Kelsey-Verdecchia

Kaisha Lee

Ineza Mugisha

Alison Ryan

Jewel Scott

Karen Weigold

ALTOS

Jenna Cowans

Alexandra

Garrison

Sarah Mole

Ianjai

Mounsey-

Ndemo

Anika

Venkatesh

TENORS

Jacob

Abrahamse

Thomas

Burton

Nicholas

Gough

Arieh Sacke

Tyrese

Walters

BASSES

Wade Bray

Martin Gomes

Andrew

Gunpath

Aidan Reimer

Dérrell Woods

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is Canada's first professional choral ensemble dedicated to Afrocentric music. Its vision is to be a premier performer of Afrocentric composers, and a touchstone for the education of audiences regarding the full spectrum of Afrocentric choral music. The Chorale's mission is to build bridges of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance between communities of people through the medium of music.

Founder D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor named The Chorale after internationally renowned African Canadian composer R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) to draw attention to Dett's legacy, to celebrate the wealth of Afrocentric choral music, and to also be a professional choral ensemble where persons of African heritage can be well represented. The multi-faceted vocalists of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, whose talents stretch beyond the traditional expectations of a classical chamber choir, perform all styles and genres of music as appropriate to the traditions of the African Diasporas.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale has recently become Artist in Residence at The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at York University.

D. BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR

Founder and Artistic Director

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor is the Founder, Artistic Director and Conductor of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale. Mr. Blyden-Taylor has conducted several university, youth and concert choirs, and works frequently as a guest conductor. He is in frequent demand as a clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer both nationally and internationally, and an active church musician.

Mr. Blyden-Taylor has served as a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto; the Faculty of Music, Queen's University; and Master Teacher with the Toronto Board of Education. He was awarded the Doctor of Laws degree (*honoris causa*) from York University in Toronto for his contribution to education. He launched The North Star Festival in August 2017, in partnership with the Yale Alumni Chorus and the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University.

CHRISTINA FAYE

Collaborative Pianist

Christina Faye is an accomplished pianist making her home in Toronto. Originally from Thunder Bay,

Ontario, Christina truly discovered her love for music at the age of nine when she began playing for a local children's chorus. In 2007 she earned a Bachelor of Music from Brandon University, and graduated from the Eastman School of Music with a Master of Music in 2009. Christina has held collaborative pianist positions at several major summer music programs, including Opera Nuova, the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory in Colorado, Canadian Operatic Arts Academy and the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy.

One of Christina's exciting projects is a collaboration with coloratura soprano, Kyra Millan. Their two-woman opera comedy show 'Millan & Faye Present: The Opera!' has been touring across Ontario for the past season with much acclaim. Christina also works with a number of choirs and opera/theatre organisations currently, including the Pax Christie Chorale, Canadian Children's Opera Company, Nathaniel Dett Chorale, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir's 'Singsation' series; and is Organist/Music Facilitator at Donway Covenant United Church. Christina performs frequently with instrumentalists, small ensembles and as a soloist, and she has toured across North America and Great Britain.

Education is also a vital part of Christina's life, and she maintains

a small studio of private students, coaches professional and amateur singers and has adjudicated for ORMTA. For several years, Christina has been on staff for the Canadian Opera Company's summer youth programming, and for TDSB music events. When not at the piano, Christina is most likely to be found riding her horse, Rain, or experimenting with vegan baking!

ALISON RYAN

Soprano

Alison Ryan is an accomplished musician, classically trained in voice and piano. Currently, Alison is an alto section lead and soloist at Kingsway Lambton United Church. With a passion for music and education, Alison is also a voice teacher with Carswell Music Studios, teaching young musicians the fundamentals of voice performance and basic piano and theory skills.

Apart from her studies at U of T, Alison is a soprano with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, an ensemble that educates the public through the use of Afrocentric music using genres such as gospel, jazz, and classical. She has toured to Washington, Little Rock, Des Moines, and Seattle singing in all the divisions of the American Choral Directors Association, singing various solos and

participated in several workshops. With this group, she has performed at Roy Thomson Hall, Massey Hall, Koerner Hall, the ROM, The Sony Centre, to name a few. She has also toured to Paris and Vienna with York University's Chamber choir, under the direction of Dr. Lisette Canton. There she performed in some of the most world-renowned cathedrals, such as Ursulinenkirche, Vienna; Melk Abbey, Austria; Peterskirche, Vienna; La Madeleine, Paris; Leglise de Saint-Eustache, Paris; and L'eglise de Sacré Couer, Paris.

Alison recently took part in the Choral Conducting Symposium at U of T, under the direction of Dr. Tim Sharp, Executive Director of the ACDA. Alison sings with a couple small, energetic opera companies, Opera5 and Opera by Request. Her most recent roles were Pierrotto from the opera Linda di Chamounix, under the direction of William Shookoff, as well as The Mistress of the Novices from the opera Suor Angelica, directed by U of T Alumni. In April 2016, she completed the Artist Diploma Program in Voice Performance at the University of Toronto.

INEZA MUGISHA

Soprano

Ineza Mugisha is a multi-genre musician and actor from Toronto, Ontario. She is a 2022 graduate

from the University of Toronto Voice Performance Program, under the tutelage of Monica Whicher. 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 Nathaniel Dett's oratorio "The Ordering of Moses". She is very excited to take on this new role and looks forward to expanding her character repertoire!

ANIKA VENKATESH

Alto

Anika Venkatesh is a queer South-Asian vocalist, originally hailing from "Vancouver, BC" in Coast Salish territories. They are a genre-defying musician whose multifaceted voice leads them to sing in jazz, pop, and R&B styles alongside their classical music studies. They recently made their opera debut at Opera NUOVA as Drusilla in Monteverdi's "The Coronation of Poppea" this past summer. Anika also performed with Couch Jams, a local Vancouver-based R&B collective founded by good friend Matt Yang, as part of the in-house band and as a featured soloist. They are currently based in Tkarón:to while pursuing their fourth year of a Bachelor of Music

in Classical Voice Performance at the University of Toronto. Anika believes in making music that crosses boundaries both musically and socially, and they are currently working towards their graduating recital at the University of Toronto under the tutelage of Laura Tucker and alongside collaborative pianist Joel Goodfellow.

IANJAI MOUNSEY-NDEMO

Contralto

Ianjai Mounsey-Ndemo holds a Bachelor of Music (Piano) and a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Toronto. She has sung with a variety of choirs in the city including the University of Toronto Gospel Choir and has done background vocals for a number of local Gospel recording artists. Ianjai has served as Choir Director for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Scarborough and Music Director at Agape Temple Seventh Day Adventist church where she currently serves as a Worship Leader and the Children's Choir director. When she is not singing, accompanying, or conducting, she can be found sharing her love of music and language with her students in the Durham District School Board.

ANDREW GUNPATH

Baritone

A graduate of St. Michael Choir School in Toronto, and continuing his music education at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Andrew began his career as a performing artist in 1994, providing vocals for Bell Canada and Eaton's Christmas campaigns. After performances for Pope John Paul II during World Youth Day 2002, and the retinue of Queen Elizabeth II for the Festival of Ontario in 1997 and Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2002, Andrew would extensively tour North America for the following two decades as a chorister, soloist, and vocal coach.

Recognising community demand, in 2008 Andrew began training as a graphic designer and commercial artist at Seneca College, contributing to album art and ad copy for local artists and arts start-ups, and he now divides his time between design and performance, seeking to return to his roots in narrative presentation and voiceover.

TYRESE WALTERS

Tenor

Tyrese Walters (he/him) is a graduate of Western University with a Bachelor of Music with

Honours in Voice Performance, where he studied Voice with Prof. Torin Chiles and Conducting with Prof. Kathleen Allan and Dr. Mark Ramsay. Tyrese is an experienced choral singer and conductor. He is the Assistant Conductor of the Soprano/Alto Chorus at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. He is also the conductor of the low-voice ensemble, "Rocambolesco," the associate conductor of the 60-voice youth choir "Frisson" in the MSC Choirs organization, and the Assistant Conductor of "Encore" in the Young Voices Toronto organization. As a singer, Tyrese sings with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Concreamus Chamber Choir, and MacMillan Singers. He is passionate about social justice and exploring new, innovative ways to interact with and perform choral music.

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 organisations 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.

JENNA COWANS

Alto

Jenna Cowans is an award-winning songwriter, vocalist, and arts administrator based in Brampton, Ontario. Jenna is a graduate of both Humber College and York University's esteemed music programs, and has performed in the genres of Jazz, Gospel, and R&B across the Greater Toronto Area.

JEWEL SCOTT

Soprano

Jewel Scott is a soprano who got her start singing solos in several vocal ensembles and church choirs. She pursued formal studies at Oakwood University, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy and later at Andrews University with a Master of Arts in Teaching, with a teaching speciality in Secondary Music Education. Jewel has studied voice with Michelle Cleveland, Ginger Beasley, Julia Lindsay, Àlvaro Gutiérrez, and Cheryll Chung. She has spent eighteen years as a music teacher, teaching music to students from JK-G12 in voice, choir, band, recorder, and bells. Jewel continues to sing at church and in community events. She is currently the Music Coordinator at Ruth SDA Church and sings with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

KAISHA LEE

Soprano

Kaisha Lee is music personified. The back and forth between Jamaica and Toronto throughout her life cultivated an eclectic musician heavily influenced by roots reggae, jazz, pop, gospel sounds and classical artistry. In her beginnings, she toured the world with professional gospel & classical

ensembles, Faith Chorale & The Nathaniel Dett Chorale. Kaisha has been a regular lounge vocalist/pianist in Montreal and a soloist and dancer with legendary corporate bandleader Paul Chacra & the 1945 Orchestra.

In 2019, Kaisha ventured into theatre with her debut in "The Ward Cabaret" at the Harbourfront Centre. Growing through physical struggle has led Ms. Lee down the path to becoming the holistic vocal coach she is today. She is now one of the youngest professors at Sheridan College giving vocal instruction to theatre students.

In aggressive pursuit of being herself, 2021 & 2022 brought attention from Ms. Lee's beloved Jamaican music industry & the American pop world for her gifts and songs. A difficult arena to navigate, the lesson in self-love has inspired her to keep going. Kaisha perseveres with faith that her mission is one of purpose. As a vessel for the Holy Spirit, she is committed to being an encourager in her village of never giving up.

DÉRRELL WOODS

Bass

Dérrell Woods comes to solo singing from his tremendous choral experiences in Canada and the USA. From his formative training at

Cawthra Park Secondary School, he has further distinguished himself in such ensembles as the National Youth Choir, the Ellison Canadian Honour Ensemble, and Scott Leithead's Kokopelli Ensemble, in performances in South Africa, and throughout Canada. Dérrell recently made his operetta debut as 'Captain Corcoran' in a concert performance of HMS Pinafore and was featured in a masterclass with Canadian operatic bass, Alain Coulombe. This season, Mr. Woods also performs 'The Voice of God' in the oratorio The Ordering of Moses by R. Nathaniel Dett.

JACOB ABRAHAMSE

Tenor

Jacob Abrahamse, B.Mus. Hons., M.A., made his Roy Thomson Hall debut as tenor soloist in the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir's 2022/2023 Season presentation of Felix Mendelssohn's Elijah with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. This season, Mr. Abrahamse also performed the role of Frederic in COSA Canada and the Northumberland Orchestra's presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan's The Pirates of Penzance; and premiered new music by Laura Gow, Tristan Zaba, and Bekah Simms in Slow Rise Music's presentation of Fair Use in concert. Other solo performances this season include

J. S. Bach's Mass in B minor with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and Baroque Orchestra, and G. F. Handel's Messiah with the Georgian Bay Concert Choir and the Peterborough Singers.

award-winning Estonian men's chorus, RAM KOOR, and in the Confluence Concerts' presentation of "The John Beckwith Songbook." alongside Russell Braun, Colin Ainsworth, and Barbara Hannigan.

Mr. Abrahamse has also performed the role of Tintin/Sergio in the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra presentation of Lloyd Burritt's *Miracle Flight 571*; and Fenian in the premiere performance of Abigail Richardson-Schulte and Anna Chatterton's opera, *Shot: The Story of D'Arcy McGee*. Other roles performed with COSA Canada, include Ralph Rackstraw in Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*, Richard in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore*, Oebalus in W. A. Mozart's *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, and Orfeo in the workshop performance of Dean Burry's opera, *Il Giudizzone di Pigmalione*. Jacob made his operatic debut, creating the starring role of the Holy Child in the Dora Mavor Moore award-winning premiere of R. Murray Schafer's opera, *The Children's Crusade*.

As an oratorio soloist, Mr. Abrahamse has also performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Theatre of Early Music, and Schola Cantorum, as well as Saint-Saëns' *Oratorio de Noël* and W. A. Mozart's *Krönungsmesse* with the Northumberland Orchestra and Chorus. As a recitalist, Jacob has been featured with the Grammy-

The City of Kingston acknowledges that we are on the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat, and thanks these nations for their care and stewardship over this shared land.

**Presented by
Grand OnStage and
the City of Kingston,
Arts & Culture Services
Department.**

Learn more about Grand OnStage at
[KingstonGrand.ca.](https://KingstonGrand.ca)

This project has been made possible thanks to funding from the
Government of Canada.

