



NATIONAL CAPITAL
Opera Society

National Capital Opera Competition

October 2023



Winners of the 2023 National Capital Opera Competition

First prize, \$10,000, in memory of Tom McCool: Soprano **Ariane Cossette**

Second prize, \$5,000, donated by Murray Kitts: Tenor **Angelo Moretti**

Third prize, \$3,000, donated by Carole Stelmack: Countertenor **Jordan Baldwin**

Three other Finalists were awarded \$1,000 each:

Soprano **Daniela Agostino**
Soprano **Angela Gjurichanin**
Soprano **Kathryn Rose Johnston**

The Finalists



L-r Jordan Baldwin, Angelo Moretti, Ariane Cossette, Angela Gjurichanin, Kathryn Rose Johnston and Daniela Agostino

A Message to the Finalists from our Honourary Patron **Gerald Finley, OC, CBE**

14th October 2023

Congratulations on your appearance at this wonderful competition, celebrating Canadian singing talent. You are the energy and life force of the future of opera, in its myriad forms. You have chosen a most arduous journey as a singer, at a time when technology, including AI, electronics and production processes, challenges the musicians of tomorrow. I admire and salute you for all the efforts you, your teachers and mentors have made in these recent years. You will spend many hours alone, questioning the effort, and those who gain recognition today will have a sense of accomplishment. However, the experience you ALL have had in learning, preparing, refining performances and overcoming nerves will serve you well in the years ahead. Thanks again to the National Capital Opera Society for their part in providing a prominent platform for these talented performers. Audience and performers together is the most powerful union of all! In bocca al lupo, toi-toi-toi, merde and sweet sailing!

The 2023 National Capital Opera Competition Finals

This was our 15th competition and we were glad to be back following our pandemic hiatus. This year the competition was open to all young Canadian singers and the standard was tremendously high. The programme was varied and engaging—each finalist sang three arias in three different languages. We heard Italian, French, English and German in arias by 15 composers from works spanning four centuries. NCOS President Mark Robinson set the proceedings in motion, handing over to our esteemed MC Sandra Graham who introduced the finalists and pianists along with a brief description of each aria.

Ariane Cossette, Soprano Maxime Dubé-Malenfant, Pianist

Ariane arrived at the competition directly from the airport, having been cover for Musetta in *La bohème* at the COC the night before. She began the afternoon's competition, filling the space with her powerful voice in "O amore, vieni a me" from *Medea* by Luigi Cherubini. With her compelling, confident high notes, she conveyed both hope and trepidation. In "I want magic" from *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Andre Previn, Ariane communicated a change of mood to the somewhat weary cynicism of the character. Her final offering was "Je veux vivre" from *Roméo et Juliette* by Charles Gounod. In another change of mood, she used the rhythm of the waltz along with those powerful, secure high notes to express a feeling of breathless joy.



Kathryn Rose Johnston, Soprano Maxime Dubé-Malenfant, Pianist

Kathryn Rose began by singing "Prendi per me sei libero" from *L'Elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Donizetti. It was beautifully acted and sung with a gentle eloquence. This continued with her performance of "Ach, ich fühl's" from *Die Zauberflöte* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. There was sadness in her clarity of expression, with wistful moments of tender softness. In "Frère voyez le beau bouquet", from *Werther* by Jules Massenet Sophie's youthful honesty was expressed with Kathryn Rose's energetic verve.



Jordan Baldwin, Countertenor
Thomas Annand, Pianist

Jordan began his presentation with “Vedrò con mio diletto” from *Il Giustino* by Antonio Vivaldi. His pure, understated sound and pensive tone expressed a sense of beauty and elegance, with his gorgeous tone and confident volume maintained through lengthily held notes. Jordan’s second selection was from a lesser-known contemporary work—“Third Miniature” from *Written on Skin* by George Benjamin. With some spoken words amongst the singing, this bold choice was an excellent vehicle for Jordan’s acting skills, expressing at moments an almost leering condescension. Jordan was faced with a challenge for his final selection. The repertoire for countertenors is almost exclusively in Italian and English, so finding an aria in a third language presents a significant difficulty. In another bold move, Jordan selected “Chacun à son goût” from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II. Prince Orlofsky is usually performed by a woman as a trouser role. In a complete change of mood, this merry, effervescent aria provided an expression of joyful humour in its delivery. One couldn’t help smiling and tapping one’s foot.



Daniela Agostino
Maxime Dubé-Malenfant, Pianist

There was a theme running through the selections of Daniela Agostino—that of women’s liberation. In the first aria, “Non si dà follia Maggiore” from *Il turco in Italia* by Gioachino Rossini, Daniela performed with much expression, in her pauses as well as in her singing. She conveyed an aura of confidence and more than a little chutzpah. Daniela’s second aria was the “Storm Aria” from *Filumena* by John Estacio. The enunciation in this English aria was very clear and we could hear the power, the beauty and strength of the storm in her singing. In her final selection, “Non monsieur, mon mari” from *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* by Francis Poulenc, we were once again treated to Daniela’s show of spirit and audacity. She portrayed a woman who knows her own mind, laughing and mocking the notion of being told what to do by her husband.



Angelo Moretti, Tenor
Jennifer Szeto, Pianist

Angelo began with “Ecco, ridente in cielo” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* by Gioachino Rossini. He was acting throughout, expressing a yearning, hopeful earnestness. The smooth coloratura and effortless long high notes made it hard to resist applauding. In “En fermant les yeux” from *Manon* by Jules Massenet, Angelo expressed a different kind of yearning, combined with the confidence that his love is reciprocated. His final aria was “Ach, so fromm” from *Martha* by Friedrich von Flotow. This was a surprisingly familiar aria, considering the fact that the opera is rarely performed. We were treated once again to Angelo’s warm tone and effortless high notes.



Angela Gjurichanin
Maxime Dubé-Malenfant, Pianist

Angela’s first selection, “Eccomi in lieta vesta... Oh! quante volte” from *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* by Vincenzo Bellini began with some recitative. Angela sang with a gentle, pure tone, conveyed with steady, delicate volume, expressing Giulietta’s troubled yearning. In a change of mood, Angela’s rendition of “Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen” from *Die Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber had a lively airiness about it. At moments she was dancing with both her voice and her body. Her playful tone continued into her last aria, “Je veux vivre” from *Roméo et Juliette* by Charles Gounod. The two Juliets that Angela portrayed were very different. In this we felt the halting eagerness of youthful exuberance.



The Pianists



Maxime Dubé-Malenfant



Thomas Annand



Jennifer Szeto

The judges, Andrew Ager, Laurence Ewashko and Maghan McPhee, deliberated after the performances and finally the results were announced by Maghan McPhee who shared some thoughts on the happy return of the competition. She was glad to see such a healthy crowd celebrating young singers in the nation's capital. She talked of the need for opera in our city and how lucky we are to be able to bring such wonderful talent to Ottawa. All six finalists were winners.



Our six finalists together with (left) MC Sandra Graham and (right) Judge Maghan McPhee

Thank you to all who made this year's competition a success. Thank you to the finalists who worked hard to achieve such high standards, to the teachers who have helped and inspired the singers and to the excellent pianists. Thank you to all those who made donations whose generosity made this competition possible.

Photos by Alex Robinson

NCOS Board of Directors

President/Treasurer Mark Robinson
Board members: Francesca Fiasche
Helen Glover
Diana Gnarowski
Vera-Lee Nelson
Lesley Robinson
Carole Stelmack
Mary Frances Taylor

Newsletter: David Williams

Webmaster: Jim Burgess