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## **COC ENSEMBLE STUDIO TO WELCOME FIVE NEW SINGERS**

**Toronto** – The **Canadian Opera Company**’s prestigious **Ensemble Studio** for artistic career development has invited five of the country’s most talented artists to join next season, marking the 45th anniversary of the COC’s innovative program for singers and pianists. Soprano **Emma Pennell**, mezzo-soprano **Ariana Maubach**, tenor **Angelo Moretti**, baritone **Ben Wallace**, and bass-baritone **Nicholas Murphy** will join the company’s highly specialized program for Canadian opera professionals in 2025/2026, alongside two returning **Ensemble Studio** members entering their second year of the program, soprano **Emily Rocha** and bass **Duncan Stenhouse**.

Last fall, following a national audition tour, **Maubach**, **Pennell**, and **Murphy** all placed as finalists at the COC’s **11th annual Centre Stage: Ensemble Studio Competition**, with **Pennell** securing Second Prize and **Maubach** clinching both First Prize and Audience Choice Award. **Moretti** has regularly been appearing on stage at Opéra de Montréal since his company debut in 2022, and **Wallace** was recently featured in productions staged at Highlands Opera Studio, UofT Opera, and Opera Laurier.

“We are thrilled to welcome these five incredibly talented singers into our longstanding professional development program for emerging opera artists,” says **Dorian Cox, Director of the Ensemble Studio**. “This new cohort will bring a fresh energy to the program with each singer bringing their unique voice and passion for opera. I look forward to seeing how they grow over the course of this new journey and contribute to the future of this art form!”

**Ensemble Studio** artists receive a blend of intensive coaching and practical experience through a highly tailored multi-year program that includes performing and understudying mainstage roles, while being provided with individualized career mentorship and guidance. In addition to rigorous training from some of the industry’s best vocal, language, movement, and acting coaches, and one-on-one time with acclaimed visiting artists, **Ensemble** members work directly with the COC’s executive and artistic leadership through every stage of their creative development.

At the close of the 2024/2025 season, four accomplished singers will move on from the **Ensemble Studio**: soprano **Karoline Podolak**, who will perform in the COC’s production of *Madama Butterfly* this winter; mezzo-soprano **Queen Hezumuryango**, who will be featured in the COC’s upcoming productions of *La Reine-garçon* and *Cavalleria rusticana*; tenor **Wesley Harrison**, who was featured in COC productions of *Fidelio*, *La Bohème*, and *Nabucco*; and baritone **Korin Thomas-Smith**, who performed in COC productions of *La Bohème* and *Faust* and will also join the cast of *Wozzeck* at the COC this spring. In addition, both of the program’s current pianist/coaches, **Brian Cho** and **Mattia Senesi**, will complete their tenure with the **Ensemble Studio**, having evenly divided their time working alongside the casts of all the COC’s 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 season operas. The company is currently completing piano auditions this winter and will announce the program’s incoming pianists later this season.

All six graduating **Ensemble Studio** members will perform in farewell concerts on **May 20 and 29, 2025** as part of the **Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Presented by TD Bank Group**.

National auditions for the **2026/2027 Ensemble Studio** will be announced in the spring, with the next **COC Ensemble Studio Competition** scheduled for **October 23, 2025**.

For more information on the **Ensemble Studio** and its artists, please visit [coc.ca/Ensemble](https://coc.ca/Ensemble)

## **ABOUT THE INCOMING ENSEMBLE STUDIO ARTISTS**

### **Ariana Maubach – mezzo-soprano**

Ariana Maubach is a second year Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) in Philadelphia, PA. This season she will portray Marthe in *Faust* and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*. Previous roles include Smeton in *Anna Bolena*, Bianca in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Berta in *The Barber of Seville* (AVA), and Linette in *The Love for Three Oranges* (Des Moines Metro Opera). This past fall, she won both First Prize and Audience Choice Award at the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio Competition. Maubach is an alumna of the Music Academy of the West, College Conservatory of Music at University of Cincinnati, The Glenn Gould School, and Eastman School of Music.

### **Nicholas Murphy – bass-baritone**

Praised for his “excellent baritone” (*Le Devoir*) and “outstanding acting” (*Opera Canada*), Acadian bass-baritone Nicholas Murphy is a rising name in Canada. Currently in residence with Calgary Opera's McPhee Artist Development Program, Murphy looks forward to making his mainstage debut with the company as Maestro Spinelloccio and Pinellino in *Gianni Schicchi*. Recent roles include Don Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* with Brott Opera and Highlands Opera Studio, and Pandolfe in *Cendrillon* and Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* with Opera McGill. This past season he placed as a finalist in the Wirth Vocal Prize, Atelier lyrique's Talent Gala, and the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio Competition.

### **Angelo Moretti – tenor**

Angelo Moretti debuted professionally in 2022 as Ruiz in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* at Opéra de Montréal, where other recent roles include Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville*, Don Curzio in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Gastone in Verdi's *La Traviata*. He also portrayed Count Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at UofT Opera along with Martin in Copland's *The Tender Land*. This season, Moretti performs as a soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with Orchestre Classique de Montreal and returns to Opéra de Montréal as Parpignol in Puccini's *La Bohème* and in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, reprising Teapot and adding the roles of L'Arithmétique and La Rainette.

### **Emma Pennell – soprano**

Emma Pennell (they/them) is a Two-Spirit opera singer with Mi'kmaq roots from South River, rural Northern Ontario. Educated in Voice Performance and Indigenous Studies at Western University, Cambrian College, and The Glenn Gould School, Pennell is an Indigenous activist dedicated to carving spaces in opera. They recently debuted at Koerner Hall with Tanya Tagaq for The National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. Pennell's notable roles include Alice Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff* and Kitty in Ian Cusson's *Indians on Vacation* at the Banff Centre. In October 2024, they placed as a finalist and secured Second Prize in the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio Competition.

### **Ben Wallace – baritone**

“Versatile and vocally powerful” baritone Ben Wallace currently studies at the University of Toronto. He completed his Bachelor of Music at Wilfrid Laurier University, where he received the Laurier Alumni Gold Medal and won the Laurier Concerto Competition. Recent performance highlights include Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* (Highlands Opera Studio), Pandolfe in *Cendrillon* (UofT Opera), John Brooke in *Little Women* (Opera Laurier), Baron Douphol/Doctor Grenvil in *La Traviata* (Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony), and a workshop performance of Ian Cusson and Royce Vavrek's *Indians on Vacation* at the Banff Centre. Wallace, also a conductor, formed his own chamber choir and orchestra in 2022 and has since premiered three choral works by Canadian composer Justin Lapierre.

## **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 David C. Ferguson joined the company in 2024, 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 company is an incubator for the future of the art form, nurturing Canada's new wave of opera performers and creators with customized training and support. The COC's purpose-built opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, is hailed internationally as one of the finest in the world. For more information, visit [coc.ca](https://coc.ca).

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