

Valerie Kuinka – Project/Stage/Production Director, Professional Violist

Having worked within the realm of alternative multi-disciplinary theatre to grand opera for over 30 years, Canadian director Valerie Kuinka brings a wealth of experience and unique creativity to her work. The list of highly accomplished international artists with whom she has collaborated is extensive.

As a stage director at the Metropolitan Opera (2004–08), she contributed to productions such as *Romeo et Juliette*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Idomeneo*, and *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*. Valerie has also directed productions for Edmonton Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera de Quebec, Pacific Opera Victoria, Opera Hamilton, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Quartetto Gelato, International Vocal Arts Festival (Tel-Aviv), The Banff Centre, The Canadian Childrens' Opera Chorus (Toronto), and has assisted at the New York City Opera and the Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp.

In 1996, Valerie established her own Toronto-based multi-disciplinary theatre company, COLLABORATIONS, and during its nine-year existence wrote, produced, directed, and often performed in 14 productions.

Beginning her career as a classical violist, Valerie has been (and continues to be) active as a chamber, orchestral, studio, and performance artist for over thirty years. She was a member of the orchestras of the Canadian Opera Company (since 1986) and the National Ballet of Canada (since 1984), playing every position from section to principal before her retirement from the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra in June 2005.

In recent years, Valerie has been devoting most of her time to working with emerging operatic artists as a dramatic/musicianship coach and career consultant and to building and running Highlands Opera Studio. Often working in tandem with her husband, Richard Margison, she is a regular guest coach and masterclass teacher with L'Atelier Lyrique (L'Opera de Montreal), and other national and international vocal institutions.

Lauren Margison – Lead Mentor, Professional Soprano, Writer, Singer/Songwriter

Toronto-born soprano Lauren Margison is a graduate of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble studio and the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. She is 2024 first prize winner of the Sullivan Foundation. She was a first prize winner of the 2018 George London Competition, and was also the youngest finalist in the Meistersinger von Nürnberg competition in 2016. In 2020 she was a semi finalist in the Glyndebourne Cup, in 2021 a grand prize laureate Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques and in 2022 a semi finalist of the CMIM competition in Montreal, the recipient of a Sylva Gelber Foundation grant, and the first prize winner of Edmonton Opera's inaugural Rumbold Vocal Prize. In

2023 Lauren was a semi-finalist in the Paris Opera Competition. Her recent credits include Desdemona in *Otello*, Nedda in *Pagliacci* and Anna in *Le Villi* (Staatstheater Mainz); Micaëla in *Carmen* (Pacific Opera Victoria); the titular role in *Vanessa* (VoiceBox Opera); the titular role in *the Csardas Princess* (Toronto Operetta Theatre); Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and Suor Angelica in *Suor Angelica* (Highlands Opera Studio) and appeared as the soprano soloist in Beethoven Nine with the Quebec Symphony. In the 24/25 season she will sing the role of Mimi in *La Boheme* with Opera de Montreal. Margison holds a masters degree from the University of Montreal where she studied under the tutelage of Rosemarie Landry and Richard Margison.

Danika Lorèn – Lead Mentor, Professional Soprano, Composer, Keyboard

Multifaceted artist Danika Lorèn has made a name for themselves as vocalist and composer. Having obtained a Bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance and Master's degree in Opera Performance at the University of Toronto, Danika continued their training as a vocalist with the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Program from 2016-18. Danika has also been a member of Barbara Hannigan's Equilibrium Young Artists since 2020. With a true love of art song through a performer's lens, Danika began to compose seriously in 2015.

Since then, Danika has composed over 60 songs and 2 operas, and Danika's compositional work has been presented across Canada by the CBC, the Canadian Art Song Project, Canadian Opera Company, Pacific Opera Victoria and Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra. Internationally, Danika's work has been performed at the National Sawdust Theatre, at the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, at the Leeds Lieder Festival and at Wigmore Hall. Recently, Danika participated in the Performer Composer residency at Westben festival, further cementing their artist practice as a multifaceted creator of classical music.

Michael Murphy – Lead Mentor, Sound Design, Percussion

Hailed as "*astonishing*" (Opera Canada, 2023), "*excellent*" (New York Times, 2022) and "*just a boy and his electronic drum*" (Myanmar Times, 2018), **Michael Murphy** is a Chinese-Canadian percussionist who has toured North America, Scandinavia, Europe, and Asia. As an orchestral musician, he has performed with the Toronto Symphony, the National Ballet of Canada, the Esprit Orchestra, and the Philharmonisches Orchester Freiburg. In the contemporary music world, he is regularly involved in groups such as New Music Concerts, Arraymusic, Soundstreams, Freesound, Ensemble Scope, and with festivals such as Nuit Blanche, the New Creations Festival, 2D2N in Odessa, and Frau* musica nova. Michael's expertise as a chamber musician and performer of new works is captured in the discography of music by Paolo Griffin, Russell Hartenberger, and Sophie Dupuis, with an upcoming release by composer Chris Paul Harman later this year. He is also the featured xylophone-soloist in the videogame Cuphead.