

CCOC – Gifts of Light Concert
Holy Blossom Temple – Dec. 8, 2024

CCOC Bio:

Canadian Children’s Opera Company
Executive Director, Katherine Semcesen
Music Director, Teri Dunn
Head of Drama, Chelsea Woolley



Since its founding 55 years ago, the Canadian Children’s Opera Company (CCOC) has grown from a single chorus to a company that expands over six choruses, reaching thousands of young people and their families annually through its outreach initiatives, professional self-produced operas, and performances and collaborations with other renowned artists and leading arts organizations in Canada. Members of the CCOC appear regularly in the Canadian Opera Company’s productions, most recently in *La Bohème* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

During a young person’s time at the CCOC they work alongside professional conductors, drama coaches, directors, collaborative pianists, and other guest artists as they explore the many facets of opera. They unlock the power of their voices while learning how to sing healthily and expressively, developing strong vocal, performance, and musicianship skills; and journey towards their full potential by learning about themselves and the world around them through storytelling and music.

The only permanent children’s opera company in Canada, the CCOC has commissioned over a dozen major operatic works for children by Canadian and international composers and librettists including Alice Ping Yee Ho, Marjorie Chan, Dean Burry, Robertson Davies, Harry Somers, and Giancarlo Menotti. This season the CCOC presents *The Monkiest King*, based on a traditional Chinese folk tale, composed by Canadian composer, Alice Ping Yee Ho, and librettist, Marjorie Chan.

Discover more at canadianchildrensopera.com.

CCOC Leadership Bios

Teri Dunn – Music Director, CCOC

A celebrated singer, conductor, and educator, Teri Dunn she has held the post of Music Director of the Canadian Children’s Opera Company since 2015. Besides choral programmes, she has prepared the Children’s Chorus and soloists for numerous Canadian Opera Company productions including *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute* and *Hansel and Gretel*. She has led several operas with the CCOC including the world premiere of Alice Ho’s *The Monkiest King* (recorded for CMC), Serouj Kradjian’s *The Nightingale of Thousand Songs* and a European tour of Hans Krása’s *Brundibar*. In addition, she is the Dean of Choral Studies at St. Michael’s Choir School, where she conducts three of their internationally acclaimed choirs. Her choirs have been invited guests at Carnegie Hall, the Toronto International Choral Festival, and been awarded first prize in the National Competition of Canadian Amateur Choirs. Teri is a recipient of the Leslie Bell Prize in Choral Conducting.

Chelsea Woolley – Head of Drama, CCOC

Chelsea is a playwright, staging director, and arts educator. Her playwriting work includes: *Paint Me This House of Love* (Tarragon Theatre, Upcoming: USA Premiere), *Enormity, Girl*, and *the Earthquake in Her Lungs* (Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell Festival), and *The Mountain* which toured Eastern/Central Canada with *Geordie Theatre*, and later with *Spinning Dot Theatre* in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Chelsea's work has been featured at the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C., and at the "Shakespeare is Dead" Festival in Leuven, Belgium.

She is the founder of the Mixed-Arts Performance Partnership Program connecting young artists living in precarity to professional mentorship, and co-wrote a script titled, *One Day* with teens living at Red Door Shelter. As an arts educator she has worked with: Etobicoke School of the Arts, Cawthra School of the Arts, TDSBcreates, The WeeFestival, and the Harbourfront Centre's Powerplant Program in partnership with Boys and Girls Club Toronto.

Chelsea has a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Lethbridge where she won the 2024 Young Alumni Award. She is also a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's prestigious Playwriting Program.

Katherine Semcesen – Executive Director, CCOC

Katherine Semcesen has worked in opera education and arts administration for 18 years, with a deep passion for bringing opera to diverse communities. Prior to her current role as Executive Director of the Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC), she served as Associate Director, Education and Outreach at the Canadian Opera Company (COC). Her career highlights include: producing the premiere production of the CCOC's *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs* by composer Serouj Kradjian and librettist Marjorie Chan; championing and producing 10 seasons of touring opera for children for the COC, including a tour of *Cinderella* to Inuit communities in northern Quebec; and bringing together five community choirs—including the Canadian Children's Opera Company, Nai Children's Choir, and St. James Town's Children's Choir—to perform as a mass children's chorus in the COC's Opera for Young Families mainstage production of *Hansel & Gretel*. She also collaborated with six schools and community organizations from underrepresented communities to create animated works set to opera, which premiered at Nathan Phillips Square during the opening of Canada's first purpose-built opera house.

Katherine was one of two Canadians chosen for OPERA America's Leadership Intensive in 2012 and served for 11 years on the Board of the Performing Arts Organizations Network for Education (PAONE).