

Media Release

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Pacific Opera's Rebecca Hass Honoured by Opera Canada

Victoria, BC – Pacific Opera's Director of Engagement Programs and Partnerships, Rebecca Hass, is being honoured by Opera Canada at their annual awards ceremony in Toronto next week. Introduced in 2000, the [Opera Canada Awards](#), nicknamed 'The Rubies,' were launched in honour of founding Editor, Ruby Mercer. The gala event celebrates the talent and accomplishments of Canadians who have made a significant contribution to the opera world as artists, builders, administrators and philanthropists.

Rebecca will receive the The Nada Ristich Change Maker Ruby Award, a new award that also honours BMO Canada Corporate philanthropy champion, Nada Ristich. As a change maker at Pacific Opera, Rebecca builds partnerships inside the local community, creates educational programs, podcasts and other online material, and develops and manages artistic development programs.

One of the programs created and curated by Rebecca is Pacific Opera's Civic Engagement Artists Residency, Rebecca said about the program, "It is about empowering artists with skills to self produce, and the confidence to trust their artistic instincts. The many versions of Pop up Opera that have opera singers in jeans and t-shirts and singing in surprising locations, really celebrates my belief that opera is a sound wave, and the human voice is felt deeply in each of us. You don't need to understand the singer, you need to feel the singer, and what they are sharing. The reactions of tears, and joy from the public, who have never heard opera before, thrills me. It reminds us all of the importance and the power of art in our public spaces."

Young artists have raved about the opportunity to work with Rebecca, recent participant Tim Carter said, "Being an Apprentice Civic Engagement Artist allowed me to stretch into undiscovered territory and develop creative skills that aren't taught in music school, broadening my scope as a musical creator in an ever-changing field. Rebecca brings a unique perspective that is sorely needed in opera today. Preventing artistic atrophy is the perennial challenge, and Rebecca guided us toward thoughtfully re-examining our roles as creators within our communities."

Singer and pianist Alex Chen added, “Rebecca’s mentorship has been invaluable in realizing a greater awareness of community and decolonial practice in my artistic work as a singer, collaborative pianist, and producer. Moreover, her mentorship has offered a holistic view of how to work towards a personally fulfilling life as an artist.”

Alex and Tim’s Music Alive video recitals, the final project of their time as Apprentice Civic Engagement Artists will be released on pacificopera.ca later this month.

This is not the first honour for Rebecca, her work has been recognized with the 2019 Arts and Culture Award for Community work in Victoria, and the Creative Builder Award for the City of Victoria for 2021.

A citizen of the Métis Nation of British Columbia, Rebecca is personally and professionally engaged with local Indigenous community to develop theatre skills programs and musical performance opportunities through community festivals and events through her work at Pacific Opera.

Looking ahead Rebecca said, “Going forward, I’m excited to work with the opera field to create more opportunities that offer spaces to singers beyond the productions we feature each season. Opera companies can support them by making space for an artists full self in rehearsal spaces and in public interactions. As a Métis, that isn’t separate from my identity as an opera singer. It brings with it an understanding of music and the role music plays culturally in my ancestry. Singers are often also eager to be more than voices on a stage. They have stories to share and passions that can manifest in videos, creating recitals, in building new opera works that tell stories they care about. They can mentor, they can inspire, they can be activists in the world, with art as their tool. They are artists, not just singers. They have so much to offer, and I want to create spaces that celebrate this, and more opportunities for them. It’s not just for us, here at Pacific Opera, I want more opera companies to do the same.”

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