



Media Release
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Opera Sprouts Inaugural Cohort Announced by Pacific Opera Victoria and Vancouver Opera

Victoria, BC - *Opera Sprouts*, a collaboration between **Vancouver Opera** and **Pacific Opera Victoria**, announces its inaugural cohort who will undertake the development of three imaginative new operas designed for young audiences. A trio of composer and librettist teams were chosen to take part in the pilot project, exploring the world of creating new opera for youth in BC schools. Supported by prominent mentors from the opera world and leading educational voices, *Opera Sprouts* aims to inspire children through new operatic storytelling that speaks directly to their world.

"I am absolutely thrilled about Pacific Opera Victoria's new *Opera Sprouts* project! This is exactly what our art form needs: a dynamic initiative focused on nurturing the next generation of opera creators by giving emerging composer/librettist teams the invaluable opportunity to develop their craft. What better proving ground for the raw power of music and storytelling than the toughest critics of all – kids? There's nothing quite like trial by fire, and if you can captivate a room full of energetic youngsters with your opera, you know you've struck gold," said Brenna Corner, Artistic Director of Pacific Opera. "The excitement is palpable knowing the high caliber of candidates who applied for this pilot project, a testament to the immense talent yearning for such development opportunities. I can't wait to see the incredible, innovative works that sprout from this truly essential program!"

"We believe that the future of opera lies in bold storytelling and meaningful connections with new generations. Through *Opera Sprouts*, we're investing in artists who are creating work that speaks to the curiosity, imagination, and complexity of young people today. These three works are only the beginning," said Tom Wright, Vancouver Opera General Director.

Through the yearlong mentorship program, the teams selected for *Opera Sprouts* will develop new operas that could be performed for youth (Grades 3-6), with 15 minutes of each to be presented next spring. In June of 2026 one work will be selected for a full commission that will conclude with a school tour of their works on Vancouver Island and the mainland around Vancouver. The three chosen teams and their proposed projects are:

Bossy Girl Saves the World - Composer Mishelle Cuttler, Librettist Scott Button

A fourth-grader with big ideas and a bigger voice takes on eco-anxiety, authority, and a talking crow. When ten-year-old Hortense overhears her parents saying the world is doomed, she builds a garden fortress to save it—only to realize she can't do it alone.

Howl – Composer Chris Thornborrow, Librettist Sarah Henstra

The riverbank animals rejoice when the wolf disappears—but soon realize their ecosystem can't survive without her. A lone wolf finds his voice—and saves his home—in this operatic call to defend the wild.

The Tortoise and the Feast in the Sky – Composer Tawnie Olson, Librettist Blessing O. Nwodo

A clever tortoise tricks his way into a feast in the sky—but learns that greed always has a price and justice comes, wrapped in music, rhythm, and fable.

"*Opera Sprouts* was born from a real desire to grow opera in new directions—while celebrating the unique spirit of Canada's West Coast. And what better way to do that than by inviting composers and librettists from across the country to create brand-new operas for elementary schools?" said Rebecca Hass, Director of Engagement and New Work at Pacific Opera. "What I love most about *Opera Sprouts* is that it gives artists a chance to stretch their creative muscles, try out bold ideas, and dive deeper into the operatic form. But just as exciting is how it brings local classrooms into the process. Students who will eventually see the finished operas get to share what they love (and what they don't!)—offering honest, unfiltered reactions that will help shape the final piece through interactive classroom sessions."

"*Opera Sprouts* is about planting new seeds for the future of our art form. These three projects—each so inventive, so deeply human, and so attuned to young audiences—remind us that opera can be funny, relevant, and joyfully unexpected. We're thrilled to support these artists as they grow their stories into something truly special," said Ashley Daniel Foot, Director of Engagement and Civic Practice at Vancouver Opera.

For more information about Opera Spouts, the teams and their proposed productions, visit: [Opera Sprouts - Pacific Opera Victoria](#)

"To me, *Opera Sprouts* represents a true meeting place for art, creativity, education, and community," added Hass.

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