

CARMEN Creative Collaborators' Bios 2023



Gregory Finney, Director

Delighted to be starting at No Strings Theatre and returning to Opera By Request - after his company debut as Michonnet in ADRIANA LECOUVREUR – as Bartolo/Antonio in LE NOZZE DI FIGARO). Baritone Gregory Finney has been hailed for his versatility and skill after his turn as Escamillo in LA TRAGEDIE DE CARMEN with LooseTEA Music Theatre among others. One of Toronto's busiest singers, mostly at home in comedic roles, he garnered rave reviews for his turn as Antonio/ Bartolo in Against The Grain theatre's hit production FIGARO'S WEDDING. He's been seen as Il Conte (LE NOZZE DI FIGARO);

Papageno (DIE ZAUBERFLOTE) and as Figaro (LA MERE COUPABLE). He was seen in the Canadian premieres of JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA, LUISA FERNANDA, KATE AND THE DEVIL and KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY and the world premieres of KAMOURASKA and Eric Idles NOT THE MESSIAH. (@gregory_finney) (www.gregoryfinney.com)



Anthony Goncharov, Associate Director

Artistic Director | Director of Marketing | Co-Founder of Icarus Theatre
Graduate of Sheridan College Bachelor of Music Theatre, 2021
Anthony Goncharov is an actor, director, and (most importantly) CEO and Artistic Director of Icarus Theatre. He believes deeply in the craft of theatre, and hopes to build Icarus Theatre into a place where theatre artists can come to stretch their capabilities and tell beautiful stories. For theatre (selected): Concord Floral (PuSh, Touchstone,) Pericles, Prince of Tyre (Shakespeare by the Sea NL,) Happy End (Theatre Sheridan/Allyson McMackon,) Wyspa (Vancouver Fringe,) Private Peaceful (Peninsula Productions.) For film/TV: The Dark Side of Comedy (VICE,) Sam & Dennis (York U.) www.icarustheatre.ca



John Holland, Artist-Mentor, Voice Coach

Dr. John Holland completed his PhD in Musicology at York University in 2018. His scholarly work reaches over many genres, but is focused on the study of Czech Opera, Art Song, and Choral Works. His dissertation, Beyond the Silver Moon: Exploring the Lost Tradition of Dvořák's Operas Through a Study of Myth, Music, and Nationalism, critically analyzes these operas, and views them through the lenses of social, cultural, and political history, and pieces together the answers to why these operas are essentially lost works within the Czech lands, and abroad. In the fall of 2014, he produced the Canadian premiere of Dvořák's opera Jakobin. He is also the founding director of the Canadian Institute for Czech Music, and continues to be in demand as a performer, choral conductor, and lecturer, as well as being a member of the contract faculty at York University. www.johnhollandmusic.ca



Julie Nesrallah Artist-Mentor, Masterclass Clinician

The dazzling Julie Nesrallah performs for leading opera companies, symphonies, festivals and chamber music ensembles across Canada and around the world. Miss Nesrallah sang God Save the Queen for Will and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, for Canada Day festivities on Parliament Hill in a performance that was viewed by millions. She also sang for An Evening for Peace for Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan in Montreal. Miss Nesrallah is the host of Tempo on CBC Music and is also the executive producer and star of Carmen on Tap which performs Georges Bizet's Carmen as dinner theatre. Miss Nesrallah has been the recipient of several distinguished awards including the Canada Council for the Arts Emerging Artist Award & Mid-Career Grant, and the Queen's

Diamond Jubilee Medal for her cultural contribution to Canada's performing arts. www.julienesrallah.com



Ernesto Ramirez, Artist-Mentor, Voice Coach

Mexican tenor Ernesto Ramirez debuted as Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly with Mexico's Opera de Leon, Rodolfo in La bohème with Pacific Northwest Opera, and sang his first Don Jose with Opera Kelowna's Carmen, and in concert with KitchenerWaterloo Symphony. In 2022, Ernesto stars as Don Jose in concert performances of Carmen with Orchestre Classique de Montreal, and debuts as Ralph Rackstraw with Vancouver Opera in their updated production of HMS Pinafore, conducted by Rosemary Thomson. In 2014 while engaged as a cover for the title role of Roberto Devereux with the Canadian Opera Company, he was thrilled to share the stage in performance with soprano Sondra Radvanovsky. Operatic roles for Ernesto include Raoul in the Canadian Premiere of Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots, Arturo in I Puritani, and Alfredo in La Traviata with Sarasota Opera. Ernesto debuted in Against the Grain Theatre's digital project of Bound, a reaction to those displaced,

dehumanized and mistreated by recent geopolitical conflict, with original text by director Joel Ivany. Ernesto sang Stefano in John Estacio's acclaimed opera Filumena with Calgary Opera, and in 2021 reprised the role with Brott To You in their digital production of selected scenes. His "resplendent tenor" has been heard in performances of Verdi's Requiem with Brott Music Festival, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Niagara Symphony, and Kingston Symphony. He also performed at The 150th Anniversary of Puccini, a gala hosted by Simonetta Puccini. Ernesto Ramirez is a Canadian Resident and holds U.S. and Mexican Citizenship. www.ernestoramirez.ca



William Shookhoff, Co-producer, Music Director

William Shookhoff is a noted conductor, pianist and vocal coach throughout Canada and abroad. He has served on the music faculties of the Universities of Toronto, Alberta, Wilfrid Laurier, as well as the Banff Centre for the Arts and the Johannesen Summer Institute of Music. He has been on the Music Staff of the Canadian, Netherlands, Edmonton, and Portland (Oregon) Opera Companies. Mr Shookhoff was the Associate Conductor of the inaugural Canadian production of Les Miserables, and of the Canadian Tour and Toronto productions of Phantom of the Opera. He has been a guest Music Director with Neptune Theatre (Halifax), Persephone Theatre (Saskatoon), and Citadel Theatre (Edmonton). Mr. Shookhoff makes frequent appearances in those

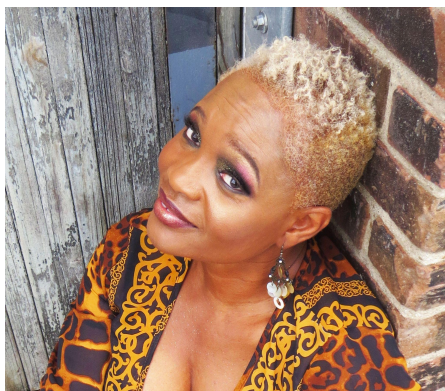
capacities throughout Western Europe and China, as well as maintaining an active coaching studio in Toronto. He is a regular guest conductor with the Bluebridge Festival and with Opera Kitchener. He has also devoted his efforts to the development and presentation of the Massed Piano or Monster Concert, and has conducted such events at Carnegie Hall, New York; Massey Hall and Nathan Philips Square, Toronto; the White House, Washington, DC; and the Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome. Mr. Shookhoff is Artistic Director Emeritus at Tryptych Productions. www.operabyrequest.ca



Marcia Whitehead, Masterclass Clinician

Marcia Whitehead sang professionally as a mezzo soprano with Opera companies and Symphonies across Canada for over 15 years. She apprenticed with Montréal Opera's L'Atelier Lyrique and is an alumnus of numerous young artist programs. Today, Marcia passes her stage experience and training on to her private students, as well as the young singers attending her lively vocal masterclasses at high schools and Universities in Toronto and online. She recently launched her mini-memoir, *Botox Me*, which

ignited her one-on-one coaching program, S.O.S. Sessions, for Singers Overcoming Setbacks. Marcia is thrilled to have been asked to mentor the artists of Opera by Request's summer production of Bizet's *Carmen*. To learn more about Marcia, please visit marciawhitehead.com



Denise Williams, Producer, Collaborative Artist, Voice Coach

Denise Williams (BSc, MA, ARCT, RMT) is a professional singer, music educator and facilitator. She holds an ARCT in Singing Performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music, a Masters in Community Music from Wilfrid Laurier University, and has studied Arts and Entertainment Administration at Ryerson University. Her 30+ year international solo performance career has put her at home on the concert, opera, and theatre stages, working with, to name a few national companies, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Mirvish Productions, Eastern Front Theatre, Theatre Northwest as well as international appearances. Denise's self-created and

self-produced, *Walk Together Children*, is a concert programming of Black and Jewish music intersections, which has had various presentations for over 20 years. This program has been awarded an OAC grant for its 2023 presentation with the Jubilate Singers and many fine Black, Jewish, and Muslim artists. Denise has participated in international symposiums, particularly addressing cross-cultural sharing of music traditions involving the African Diaspora. www.denisewilliamssoprano.com