



No Strings Theatre

Building Equity, Access, & Excellence in the Performing Arts

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Our Mission & Founding Story

Our Mission:

To empower, inspire, and develop the next generation of performing artists while fostering an inclusive, equitable space for artistic expression.

Our Story:

Founded by Denise Williams in 2005, No Strings Theatre was born out of a need to address systemic exclusion in arts education. Through accessible training, paid performance opportunities, and equity-centered programming, NST creates pathways for emerging artists to thrive—no strings attached. NST has since supported 200+ artists across Canada, many of whom have gone on to national and international careers.



Our Core Programs

Spotlight: Young Artist Opera Program



Opera training and productions featuring emerging artists from across Canada in rural and urban settings

Many Voices, Many Stories: New Works Initiative



Critical support for underrepresented playwrights, composers, and theatre creators to develop original Canadian work

ArtConnect: Impact Through Performance



Bringing professional opera and theatre to schools, seniors, and underserved communities through touring showcases and free events

200+

Emerging artists supported

1,000+

Audience members engaged annually

15+

Original or equity-focused productions mounted

Our Impact

NST offers multiple scholarships each year and fosters strong, meaningful community partnerships with Sheridan College, Toronto Music Alliance, and Opera by Request.

We are proud to say NST alumni now work with Broadway, The Canadian Opera Company, Obsidian Theatre, Volcano Theatre, and more!

Artist Development & Alumni Success

Your funding directly supports:

- Paid roles for 35+ creatives: directors, performers, musicians, interns
- Equity-centered mentorship for BIPOC emerging artists
- Scholarships for Black and low-income participants
- Artistic leadership roles for underrepresented voices

NST alumni success stories include:



Sean Mayes

Broadway conductor,
The Lion King
(Mirvish)



Sheree Spencer

Assistant Director
(Of the Sea, Obsidian
Theatre)



Anique Mercier

Founder and Artistic
Director of North
Stage



Michael Spiroff

M.Mus composition,
composer, band
leader/accompanist



Michael Spiroff

Soprano appearing
with TOT, Theatre
Aquarius

Equity in Action



NST is committed to anti-racist, non-biased practices across all programming:

- Inclusive casting and mentorship
- Equity-focused production themes
- Targeted outreach to underserved communities
- Ongoing DEI training and programming (e.g., *Black on Stage* discussions)

Scholarships & Access Programs:

- Denise Williams Scholarship (Sheridan College – Black vocal students)
- ORMTA Scholarships for performance of Black composers
- Reduced or waived fees for low-income artists

Governance, Leadership & Community

NST operates on a lean, highly motivated team structure with working board and apprentice staff gaining real-world experience.

Some of our key community collaborators include Sheridan College, Pleiades Theatre, Opera by Request, and The Toronto Music Alliance.



Denise Williams

Artistic Director, Educator, Performer, & Leader in inclusive arts



Volunteer Board

Working board with with lived experience & arts governance background



Community Collaborators

Including Sheridan College, Pleiades Theatre, Opera by Request, & The Toronto Music Alliance

Brighter Stages: The Next Chapter

2025 – 2026 Projects

Hansel and Gretel
Production (Summer
2025)

Così fan tutte
Production (Summer
2025)

Sparky the Musical (Fall 2025 – Spring 2026)

**Spotlight: Young Artist
Opera Program
(Summer 2025)**

Sparky the Musical
Workshops
(Fall 2025 & Winter 2026)

Sparky the Musical
Rehearsals
(Spring 2026)

Sparky the Musical
Production (Spring
2026)

2025–2026 Projects

Two Transformative Productions

- Spotlight: Young Artist Opera Program (Jul–Aug 2025 | Adjala Township, ON)
- Sparky the Musical (Aug 2025–May 2026 | Toronto, ON)

One Bold Vision

- To create professional growth and equitable access to Canadian performing arts—for those traditionally left out.



Spotlight: Young Artist Opera Program

What:

- Full-scale productions of Hansel and Gretel and Così fan tutte by 25+ emerging artists mentored by top professionals

Where:

- Adjala Township, rural Ontario

Who It Serves:

- Emerging and re-emerging artists (esp. BIPOC and low-income)
- Rural communities hungry for cultural access
- Youth chorus and interns from diverse backgrounds

Why It Matters:

- Opera shouldn't only live in Toronto.
- Talent shouldn't only come from privilege.
- This program proves both.



Sparky the Musical



What:

- A new Canadian musical based on the beloved book by Caribbean-Canadian author Richardo Keens-Douglas

Themes:

- Belonging, difference, resilience — told through the story of a firefly born without a light

Impact:

- 750+ youth and families reached
- Led by a professional Black creative team
- Empowers diverse narratives for children
- Adds a joyful new work to the Canadian canon

Audience & Community Reach

Spotlight Opera Program:

- Rural audiences: **400** attendees
- Youth Chorus: **10** children involved
- Free tickets for local seniors and youth

Sparky the Musical:

- **750+** children and families
- Targeted school invites + community group partnerships
- Pay-what-you-can options and Black History Month engagement

Additional Impact

- Alumni engaged as mentors, stage managers, and creatives
- Training pipeline from youth chorus to paid roles



Looking Ahead: Our Vision

3–5 Year Strategic Goals

Expand to 2–3 annual professional productions

Develop artist touring & rural access programs

Deepen community impact through education partnerships & digital access

Increase paid roles & mentorship placements

Build organizational infrastructure: fundraising, admin, & production staff

Through your generous support,, NST can:

- Sustain emerging artist pay equity
- Scale its programming to serve more communities
- Create space for new, underrepresented Canadian stories

Your Support in Action

This project brings our values to life — and your continued investment ensures they thrive:

- **Canadian Culture & Heritage:** Opera and new theatre, rooted in local and national stories
- **Education:** Training next-gen artists and audiences
- **Equity & Access:** Centering marginalized voices and removing systemic barriers
- **Contemporary Concerns:** Inclusion, representation, decentralization of the arts



**We're ready for the next chapter —
and we invite you to be part of our
story.**