# 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

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

Many Voices, Many Stories: New Works Initiative



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

#### ArtConnect: Impact Through Performance





### 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 ۲

#### 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

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### **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



### <u>Denise Williams</u>

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



### Volunteer Board

Working board with with lived experience & arts governance background

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.



### **Community Collaborators**

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



# Brighter Stages: The Next Chapter





### 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

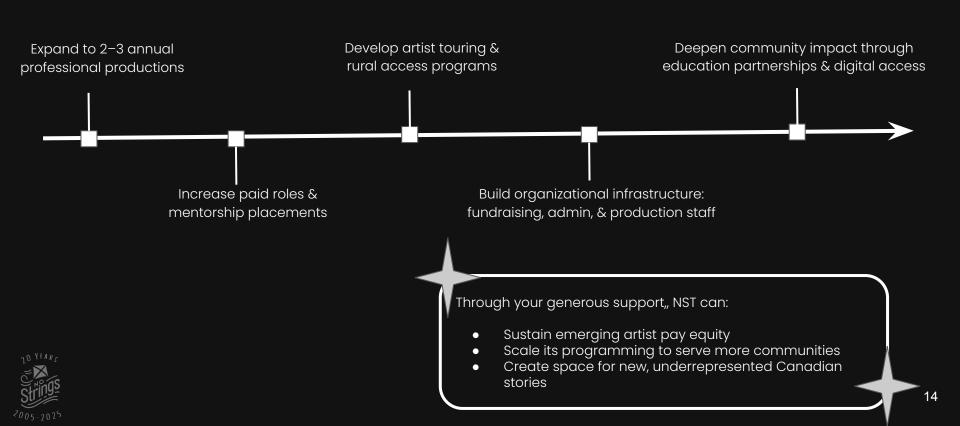
### **Additional Impact**

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





# Looking Ahead: Our Vision



# 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.



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