

**Detroit Opera Youth Chorus appoints  
Sadarra Fields Principal Chorus Conductor;  
Sarah Hawkins Rusk to direct *Odyssey* in April 2024**



Sadarra J. Fields, Principal Chorus Conductor, Detroit Opera Youth Chorus

DETROIT, August 2023—Detroit Opera has announced two appointments to the Detroit Opera Youth Chorus (DOYC). **Sadarra J. Fields** has been selected as Principal Chorus Conductor, responsible for training the chorus’s young vocalists and conducting weekly rehearsals in preparation for their season performances. She succeeds longtime Principal Chorus Conductor Dianna Hochella, who stepped down in May 2023. **Sarah Hawkins Rusk**, who directed DOYC’s first-ever digital production in 2020, *The Very Last Green Thing*, will return in April 2024 to direct Ben Moore and Kelley Rourke’s *Odyssey*, an action-packed operatic rendition of Homer’s epic tale of a hero’s journey home.

**Sadarra J. Fields**, a Michigan native originally from Lansing, is an educator, conductor, vocalist, and pianist. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in music education from Western Michigan University and a Master of Science in Education - Family Life from Concordia University Wisconsin. Currently, Sadarra teaches choir at Forsythe Middle School in Ann Arbor. She is a singer in Detroit's Brazeal Dennard Chorale; a pianist for Detroit Northwest Seventh-Day Adventist Church and Clarenceville United Methodist Church; and works as a trauma recovery coach. Sadarra is a foodie who enjoys yoga, salsa dancing, travel, blogging, and spending time with loved ones.



Director Sarah Hawkins Rusk. Photo by Mark Bennington

**Sarah Hawkins Rusk**, a native of Indiana, has been working as an actor, director, and educator across the country for the past 18 years. Hawkins Rusk received her Master of Fine Arts degree from Wayne State University and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. As a director, she has worked with such theaters as Open Book Theatre Company, Tipping Point Theatre, Wagon Wheel Theatre, Motor City Youth Theatre, and Detroit Mercy Theatre Company, where she garnered national recognition in 2021 for her production of *Antigone*. She directed DOYC's first-ever digital opera performance of Cary John Franklin and Michael Albano's *The Very Last Green Thing* in 2020. As a performer, Hawkins Rusk has graced the stages of theaters including the Detroit-area theaters of Tipping Point Theatre, Planet Ant, and Matrix Theatre; the Commonweal Theatre Company in Lanesboro, Minnesota; CLIMB Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota; and the prestigious Creede Repertory Theatre in Creede, Colorado. Hawkins

Rusk is a certified teacher in the transformative Michael Chekhov technique and is on the theater faculty of the University of Detroit Mercy.

Auditions for DOYC continue throughout this summer, with the **next DOYC audition** set for Monday, **August 14** at 5pm at the Detroit Opera House. Selected choristers will perform a **“Winter Fantasy” concert** on December 3 at First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak. The chorus will take center stage on April 20, 2024 at the Detroit Opera House in ***Odyssey***, a one-hour opera with many solo roles, all filled by singers from the ensemble. In **May 2024**, singers from the Principal Chorus also will perform in the Detroit Opera’s professional presentation of Janáček’s opera ***The Cunning Little Vixen***, with several small solo roles to be selected from the DOYC.

To **register to audition**, visit the [2023–24 Season Audition Registration page](#). Contact Chorus Administrator Twannette Nash at [TNash@Detroitopera.org](mailto:TNash@Detroitopera.org) for more information about the chorus, including full and partial tuition scholarships based on financial need. **Auditions will continue until all positions are filled.**

### **About the Detroit Opera Youth Chorus**

The Detroit Opera Youth Chorus (DOYC), led by Detroit Opera Chorus Master Suzanne Mallare Acton, is a permanent children’s ensemble for metropolitan Detroit youth interested in vocal musical theatrical art. The DOYC performs as a separate ensemble as well as with international opera stars in Detroit Opera mainstage productions. In the 2023–24 season, DOYC performances include a December “Winter Fantasy” concert in Royal Oak, Michigan, and Ben Moore and Kelley Rourke’s *Odyssey*, a fully staged opera presentation in April. Past DOYC performances have included the Seymour Barab’s *The Maker of Illusions*—a children’s opera with characters who teach moral lessons—Cary John Franklin and Michael Albano’s *The Very Last Green Thing*, Malcolm Williamson’s *The Happy Prince*, Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Hans Krása’s *Brundibár*. The chorus is open to all voice types: sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, ranging from elementary-school students to high-school seniors.

### **About Detroit Opera**

Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theatre), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, aspires to influence the future of opera and dance with a goal of invigorating audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera and dance that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration. Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. David DiChiera, Detroit Opera is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown; Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; and Board Chairman Ethan Davidson. For more information, visit [www.detroitopera.org](http://www.detroitopera.org). Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), and Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

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