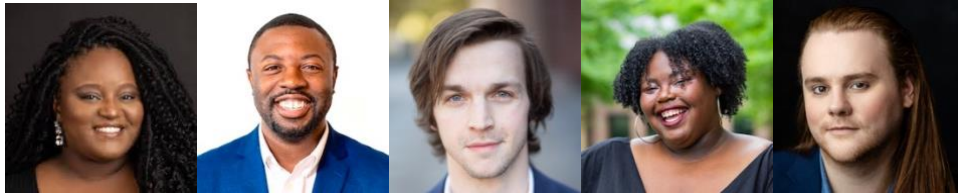


Detroit Opera announces five 2024–25 Resident Artists



Detroit Opera 2024–25 Resident Artists (left to right): Brianna J. Robinson, Cameron J. Rolling, Cole Bellamy, Kendra Faith Beasley, River Guard

DETROIT, March 21, 2024—After an international search, Detroit Opera has announced the five singers who will train in Detroit Opera’s Resident Artist Program during the 2024–25 season: soprano **Brianna J. Robinson**, mezzo-soprano **Kendra Faith Beasley**, tenor **River Guard**, and baritones **Cole Bellamy** and **Cameron J. Rolling**. The five were chosen from more than 830 artists who applied to the program, which is spearheaded by Detroit Opera’s Associate Artistic Director, soprano **Christine Goerke**, and Head of Music **Nathalie Doucet**. This is the third season of Detroit Opera’s Resident Artist program, which builds on the strong foundations of the Studio Artist program founded in 2015 by Dr. David DiChiera, the company’s founder. While embodying the forward-looking leadership of Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director, and President and CEO Patty Isacson Sabee, this program embraces individualized study and direct performing experience to provide world-class educational opportunity to the next generation of opera talent.

The five Resident Artists have committed to an intensive program while living in Detroit from September 2024 through May 2025, training directly with Goerke, Doucet, and guest faculty in specially crafted and individualized curricula of voice, movement, language and career guidance. In addition to their hands-on training and performances in Detroit Opera in mainstage productions, Resident Artists work with guest artists, directors, and conductors. Professionals who have worked with Resident Artists in the past two years include sopranos Wendy Bryn Harmer, Ana Maria Martinez, and Janet Williams; mezzo-soprano Susan Graham; bass-baritone Alfred Walker; conductors Valerio Galli, Roberto Kalb, and Francesco Milioto; coaches Ellen Rissinger, Ricardo Herrera, and Timothy Cheek; and Yuval Sharon, Detroit Opera’s Artistic Director. In keeping with Detroit Opera’s longstanding focus on making opera accessible to the surrounding community, Resident Artists forge direct ties to Detroit through recitals, concerts, and other collaborations with local schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and institutions. They perform regularly for patients at Henry Ford Hospital and in public concert series at Christ Church Cranbrook and The War Memorial. All Resident Artists begin on a one-year contract, and selected artists are invited to participate in a second year.

Goerke was instrumental in reshaping the Resident Artist Program in 2022 to keep pace with the spirit of innovation, outreach, and community-building that has characterized

Detroit Opera's programming and administration since the arrival of Yuval Sharon as artistic director. Goerke appointed internationally renowned opera coach and pianist Nathalie Doucet as Director of the program; together they created a program that offers individualized study to cater to the unique needs of each artist and aligns with the country's top training programs.

"When I was asked to design the Detroit Opera Resident Artist Program, I knew that I wanted it to be something special," says **Goerke**. "I am proud that what has been created here in Detroit is a space where emerging artists feel safe in their environment: a place where they can connect with their colleagues and our community in an atmosphere where they can explore who they are and what they want to say as artists. I am so fortunate to have created lasting relationships with incredible artists worldwide over the course of my career, and happy that they love to be part of this remarkable artistic mentorship in Detroit. Most important, our Resident Artists have the opportunity to experience "the future of American opera unfolding in Detroit," as the *New York Times* put it, by spending time observing and working with our incredible Artistic Director, Yuval Sharon. It is my great honor to oversee this intimate training program, and to have a hand in fostering the artists who will be our storytellers for the 21st century."

"Serving as Director of the Detroit Opera Resident Artist Program for the past two years has been an absolute honor and privilege," says **Doucet**. "It is profoundly inspiring to witness the caliber of singers we attract, not only in vocal skill but in sheer artistry. My lifelong passion is to foster and guide the next generation of singers, offering them a nurturing haven to blossom and thrive in their musical journeys. Every day spent alongside these remarkable artists during their residencies in Detroit fills me with great joy, as we strive together to empower and prepare them for success in the demanding profession of the performing arts."

"I am so excited and grateful to be returning to Detroit Opera as a Resident Artist for a second year," says tenor **River Guard**. "This first year has been valuable in preparing me for a career on the operatic stage, and has given me the tools and the confidence to present my best artistic self every time I sing. A highlight of the year for me was singing the roles of Harlekin and the Soldat in *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis* by Viktor Ullmann. This piece allowed me to explore my interpretive skills as an artist, and pushed me to grapple with difficult subject matter while still maintaining a solid vocal technique. Another highlight was covering B.F. Pinkerton in our mainstage production of *Madame Butterfly*. This role challenged me immensely as a singer and actor, and through the preparation I received from Detroit Opera's Resident Artist program, I now feel capable of taking on such a demanding role in the future. I am so happy to be returning for a second year and am eager to see what will come from these crucial years of learning and development at such an amazing company."

Detroit Opera 2024–25 Resident Artists

Brianna J. Robinson, soprano

Soprano Brianna J. Robinson, proclaimed as “a radiant voice and presence” by the *Boston Globe*, is a native of Ravenna, Ohio and a proud graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and the Eastman School of Music. A former Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist with Boston Lyric Opera, she covered and performed roles including Lucy in Gregory Spears’s *Fellow Travelers*, Mimì (cover) in Puccini’s *La bohème*, Lena in Ana Solokovic’s *Svabda* and covered several roles in Paul Ruders’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. She recently stepped in as Julie in *Omar*, Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels’s 2023 Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, at Boston Lyric Opera. In the 2023–24 season, she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Cecilia Chorus of New York in Vaughan Williams’s *Dona nobis pacem* and was a District Winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. Brianna has performed in the Handel and Haydn Society’s powerful immersive concert experience *Crossing the Deep* and with ensembles including the Akron Symphony Orchestra, and Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra/New World Chorale. Brianna was a finalist in Opera Ebony’s Benjamin Matthews Vocal Competition and was awarded first prize at the Getting to Carnegie Competition in 2020. She made her international debut in Ruse, Bulgaria in 2021, creating the role of Ophelia in the world premiere of Joseph Summer’s *Hamlet*. Brianna returned to Boston Lyric Opera in 2024 in the role of Leontine in Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges’ *The Anonymous Lover*.
<https://www.briannajrobinson.com/>

Kendra Faith Beasley, mezzo-soprano

Mezzo-soprano Kendra Faith Beasley, acclaimed by *Opera News* for her “big voice, powerful at both extremes of the range,” will make her debut at Des Moines Metro Opera this summer. As an Apprentice Artist with DMMO, Kendra will take on the dual roles of Florence McKeller/Mrs. Smithson in the world premiere of Damien Geter and Lila Palmer’s riveting opera *American Apollo*, which is about Thomas Eugene McKeller, a Black hotel worker who served as model and muse for famous portraitist John Singer Sargent. In 2023, Kendra captivated audiences with standout performances as Berta in Cincinnati Opera’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Girlfriend #3 in New Orleans Opera’s *Blue*. In 2022, Kendra premiered the role of Raksha in the Glimmerglass Festival’s innovative adaptation of *The Jungle Book*, directed by Francesca Zambello. She earned an Artist Diploma from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and a master’s degree in performance from the University of Kentucky. During her Detroit Opera residency, Kendra will perform on the Detroit Opera House stage and various other performance venues in the metro Detroit region.

River Guard, tenor

Tenor River Guard, hailing from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, boasts an impressive musical journey. He holds a bachelor’s degree in music and an opera diploma from Wilfrid Laurier University, and a master’s degree in opera from the University of Toronto Opera School, where he studied with Wendy Nielsen. River is a 2021 recipient of the Rebanks Family Fellowship and International Performance and Residency Program from the Royal

Conservatory of Music's Glenn Gould School. He is an alumnus of the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Opera in the 21st Century program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Past roles include Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (Highlands Opera Studio), Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (Glenn Gould School), Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* (Canadian Vocal Arts Institute/CVAI), and Miles in Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Proving Up* (Aspen Music Festival and School). River has covered the roles of Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Sam Polk in *Susannah* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. As a 2023–24 Detroit Opera Resident Artist, he covers roles include Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* and Dr. Richardson in Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Breaking the Waves*. He performed as Soldat and Harlekin in Viktor Ullmann's opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings in February 2024. In May, River will make his debut on the Detroit Opera mainstage in the role of Pasek in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. This summer, River will be a member of the Florentine Opera Summer Studio Ensemble before returning as a Detroit Opera Resident Artist for a second year in September.

Cole Bellamy, baritone

Baritone Cole Bellamy hails from Olathe, Kansas. In 2024, Cole will make his debut at Santa Fe Opera as an Apprentice Singer in the world premiere of Gregory Spears's *The Righteous* singing the role of Deacon 1. In the 2023–24 season, Cole was a studio artist at Opera Neo in San Diego, where he was featured in the annual Aria Gala at the Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center and was described by the *San Diego Story* as a "rich baritone" with "commanding presence and fearless declamation." In the same season, he was a first-place winner in Mobile Opera's 2024 Madame Role Palmat-Tenser Scholarship competition. Cole's solo professional debut was with Wichita Grand Opera in the role of Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; he made his professional concert debut with Tallahassee Community Chorus as the baritone soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana*. As a master's degree student at Florida State University, Cole has participated in numerous productions by the Florida State Opera, including Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Stanley Kowalski) and Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Figaro). He earned his undergraduate degree at Wichita State University, where he performed in productions including *Così fan tutte* (Guglielmo) and *Street Scene* (Frank), and was baritone soloist in the university choir's performances of Brahms's Requiem and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Cameron J. Rolling, baritone

Cameron J. Rolling, hailing from Waycross, Georgia, is recognized for his "mellifluous baritone" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) in the realms of opera, oratorio, symphonic, and recital performance. As a 2023 Young Artist at the prestigious Merola Opera Program, Cameron performed the role of Junius in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. He has been selected as a Young Artist for the Glimmerglass Festival for the 2024 season, where he will sing the role of Sylvano in Cavalli's *La Calisto* and cover the roles of Mr. Lister/Karl Marx/Voiceover/Solomon Weil/Witness #8 in Kevin Puts's *Elizabeth Cree*. In November, he will make his symphonic debut as bass soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Savannah Philharmonic. Recent performances include the role of Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory, UMKC), bass soloist in Bach's

Jesu, meine Freude and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (UMKC), as well as bass soloist in Handel's *Messiah* (Spire Chamber Ensemble). He has also served as chorus master for Massenet's *Chérubin* (UMKC Opera). Cameron won first place in *Classical Singer Magazine's* national voice competition in 2020. He holds master's degrees in Choral Conducting and Vocal Performance from UMKC and a bachelor's degree in music education with concentrations in voice and conducting from Mercer University.

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 Patty Isacson Sabee; 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. Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), and X/Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

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