



Pianist, vocal coach and pedagogue Liz Upchurch performs with the top Canadian and international vocal artists and is currently in her 20th season as Head of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio, Canada's premier training program for young opera professionals. She performed her first major recital at the age of eight, one year after having accepting a coveted place at the Centre for Young Musicians, a music school for gifted children in London, England. At the CYM she studied piano, violin and voice, sang in choirs, as well as played in orchestras. She continued her training at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was an award-winning pianist, receiving top prizes in both solo piano and chamber music. She has performed and broadcast solo recitals, chamber music and song recitals across Europe and North America with the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and the CBC.

Ms. Upchurch has been on the music staff for over 150 operas in both European and Canadian opera houses. In 1992, she came to Canada to study art song at the Banff Centre for the Arts, where she met her mentor, Martin Isepp, who introduced and guided her love for opera. She went on to work in opera houses such as Opera North, Garsington Festival, and the Glyndebourne Festival, where she learned the core repertoire and was

involved in the production of many new works, including *Flight* by Johnathan Dove and *The Last Supper* by Sir Harrison Birtwistle (Glyndebourne).

For 20 years, Ms. Upchurch has trained an entire generation of Canadian singers and pianists as Head of the COC Ensemble Studio. In addition to training singers for their first major operatic roles on stage, she also nurtures their artistry through recital, in particular as part of the COC's Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre. She has curated and performed in over 100 concerts through the series since its inception, working alongside some of today's most significant operatic voices, including composers John Adams, Kaija Saariaho and Ana Sokolović, and singers Adrienne Pieczonka, Barbara Hannigan and Sondra Radvanovsky.

In addition to performing, Ms. Upchurch is sought after for teaching, which she also encourages other artists to take up. She is frequently asked to give masterclasses in all of Canada's major arts institutions and has taught alongside international artists and other venerable teachers. Most notably, she has pioneered a teaching approach in which artists of different disciplines collaborate in the teaching studio. This was recently featured in a TedXToronto talk she gave with her Ensemble Studio colleagues, head vocal consultant Wendy Nielsen and performance kinetics consultant Jennifer Swan.

A passionate advocate for composers, Ms. Upchurch has also been a performer and collaborator in many new Canadian creations, from the art song of Canadian composer Derek Holman, to the development of Canada's first Hip-Hopera with urban artist DJ Lil'Jaz, to the collaboration and performance of major new works such as Ana Sokolović's song cycle *dawn always begins in the bones*. This immense cycle features text by Canadian poets from every province and was commissioned for the COC Ensemble Studio through the Canadian Art Song Project as part of Canada's sesquicentennial celebrations. The making of this work can be seen in the YouTube documentary, *The Creation of dawn always begins in the bones*.

Future projects include creating a series of house concerts for voice and piano. Her mission is to put live music back into the heart of people's homes, where art song was originally conceived.

Ms. Upchurch lives in Toronto with her wife Jennifer Tarver and their nine-year-old son, Jack.

A Masterclass with Liz Upchurch

Friday, Nov. 15th, VKH 2:30-4:30

1. Jordan DaSouza (Luti) – *Look! Through The Port* (Britten)
2. Hillary Tufford (Luti) – *Cruda sorte* (Rossini)
3. Carmen Specht (Luti) – *Der Engel* (Wagner)
4. John Johnston (Fopoussi) – *Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen* (Korngold)
5. Camilla Montefusco (Tapia) – *O mio Fernando* (Donizetti)
6. Hailey Witt (Digout) – *Porgi amor* (Mozart)