



2011-12 Media Package



Press Release – Season Overview

THE NATHANIEL DETT CHORALE

to feature LAWRENCE HILL, COBA Dance Collective,
and 100th anniversary performance of Afro-American opera Treemonisha
in 13th ANNUAL TORONTO CONCERT SERIES now in
KOERNER HALL at the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning!

For Immediate Release –Thursday, October 20, 2011 - The Nathaniel Dett Chorale’s 13th Annual Toronto Concert Series offers a mélange of artistic disciplines with dance, literature, opera and choral music intermingled in a celebration of the arts, culture and heritage of the African Diaspora. From a Latin-infused dance program featuring Toronto’s own contemporary performance collective, COBA (Collective of Black Artists); to a musical and visual illumination of Lawrence Hill’s critically acclaimed novel *The Book of Negroes*; followed by a semi-staged performance of famed ragtime composer Scott Joplin’s Afro-American opera *Treemonisha*, this extraordinary season promises to be one to The Chorale’s most inspiring and uplifting to date.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is celebrating a milestone in their upcoming season with a move to the acoustically stunning Koerner Hall at the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning. This concert series will now take place on a Tuesday evening in December, February, and May.

“Koerner Hall has been an exciting new addition to the city’s cultural landscape and we are honoured to share the stage which has already been graced by so many international and national performing artists,” says Artistic Director and Founder, Dr. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor. “We’re looking forward to our Koerner Hall debut, and to presenting a series that offers a heightened perspective of the many colours and facets of Afrocentric culture”.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale’s 2011/2012 Concert Season includes:

An Indigo Christmas... Navidad Nuestra - Tuesday, December 6, 2011, 8pm
Maderaz, and COBA (Collective of Black Artists) join The Nathaniel Chorale for a lively and exuberant program of Afro-Latino and Andean rhythms. Featuring Misa Criolla and Navidad Nuestra of Argentinian composer Ariel Ramirez, both of which weave together a colourful array of folk traditions from across South America.

Voices of the Diaspora... *The Book of Negroes* - Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 8pm
Renowned Canadian writer Lawrence Hill joins The Nathaniel Dett Chorale for a multimedia presentation based on his award winning novel, *The Book of Negroes*. This concert will marry excerpts read by Mr. Hill, with spiritual, folk, classical and jazz selections by The Chorale and the Joe Sealy Quartet.



And Still We Sing ... Treemonisha - Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 8pm

Join us in celebrating the 100th anniversary of North America's first Afro-American opera, Scott Joplin's, Treemonisha. Set during the period of reconstruction, this story of racial uplift reflects the great hunger for education in African American communities after the civil war. Never fully performed in Joplin's lifetime, this brilliant work draws on both ragtime and 18th century operatic traditions. Featuring talented Chorale alumni in principal roles.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale's 2011/2012 Concert Season takes place in Koerner Hall at the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, 273 Bloor St, West, Toronto. Single tickets are \$53.00 - \$39.50, Seniors \$53.00 - \$31.10, and 30 & Under \$53.00 - \$20.00. A 10% discount is offered with the purchase of a subscription to all 3 performances.

Subscription tickets are \$144.00 - \$105.30, Seniors \$144.00 - \$95.00 and 30 & Under \$60.00 Tickets are available by calling 416.408.0208 at the Koerner Hall Box Office or on-line performance.rcmusic.ca/nathanieldettchorale.

For more information please visit www.nathanieldettchorale.org.

About THE NATHANIEL DETT CHORALE

Magical and transformative. Toronto Sun Columnist, Errol Nazareth writes, "The Nathaniel Dett Chorale continues to blow minds with its exploration and presentation of various sounds and styles from the African Diaspora."

The voices and community of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale carry audiences on a journey through the beauty and intricacies of Afrocentric music from around the world. One of Canada's "national treasures", The Chorale takes its name for the celebrated African-Canadian composer, R. Nathaniel Dett who is highly regarded for the vocal works he composed based on African American spirituals, as well as works for solo piano in a 19th century Romantic style. Now in its 13th season, this 20+ member ensemble features a diverse group of outstanding classically-trained musicians who have shared the stage with internationally recognized artists such as Juno Award-winning jazz pianist Joe Sealy, opera star Kathleen Battle, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Nathaniel Dett Chorale has also been invited to take part in concerts honouring Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mohammed Ali and recently had the distinct honour of performing at various ceremonies in Washington on the occasion of President Obama's historic inauguration. Specializing in Afrocentric musical traditions ranging in style from classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk and blues The Nathaniel Dett Chorale's highly anticipated third commercial recording, Nguzo Saba, was released last year.

Nguzo Saba Suite, the title track from the new album and written by the late composer, pianist, and conductor, Glenn Edward Burleigh, has seven movements that each represent principles celebrated during Kwanzaa. A seven-day festival in late December, Kwanzaa celebrates African culture including unity, purpose, creativity and faith, which inspires a year-round way of life. Nguzo Saba is a musical masterpiece that combines African musical elements with classical, jazz and gospel themes giving listeners a new piece of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale magic to take home.

MEDIA CONTACT: Victoria Lord, Office: 416-484-9047 / victoria@vlpr.com

HISTORY & HIGHLIGHTS

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is Canada's first professional choral group dedicated to Afrocentric music of all styles, including classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk, and blues. These 24 classically-trained, outstanding vocalists have shared the stage with internationally recognized artists such as Juno Award-winning jazz pianist Joe Sealy; and opera star Kathleen Battle and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Chorale had the unique privilege being the only Canadian ensemble invited to perform as part of the celebrations surrounding the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama. The Chorale has also performed at events honoring world leaders Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and personalities Muhammad Ali and Oscar Peterson. The multi-faceted vocalists of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, whose talent stretches beyond the traditional expectations of a classical chamber choir, perform all styles and genres of music as appropriate to the traditions of the African Diaspora.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale's vision is to be a premier performer of Afrocentric composers, and a touchstone for the education of audiences regarding the full spectrum of Afrocentric choral music. The Chorale's mission is to build bridges of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance between communities of people through the medium of music.

Founder Brainerd Blyden-Taylor named The Chorale after internationally-renowned African-Canadian composer R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), who performed at prestigious concert halls such as Carnegie Hall and Boston Symphony Hall. Dett was dedicated to the cause of Black music, winning the Bowdoin and Frances Boott prizes in 1920 from Harvard University. Blyden-Taylor established The Chorale to draw attention not only to Dett's legacy but also to the wealth of Afrocentric choral music, and to be a professional choral group where persons of African heritage could see themselves represented in the majority. Since its inception in 1998, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale has honoured the memory of its namesake, performing a jubilant and uplifting repertoire extensively throughout Ontario and North America and delighting national audiences in critically-acclaimed extended tours to the Maritimes (2000, 2004, 2006), Quebec (2002, 2005, 2006), Manitoba (2003), Western Canada (2001, 2004, 2005, 2009), and the United States (2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009.) The Chorale has also garnered international attention, accepting invitations to perform at Polyfolia in France (2004), the 7th World Symposium on Choral Music in Japan (2005), and the prestigious chamber music series at the U.S. Library of Congress (2007).

Recordings:

Listen to the Lambs (Marquis Classics, 2002)
An Indigo Christmas (Marquis Classics, 2003)
Nguzo Saba (in.Dett.ed Records, 2010)

Films:

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel (performance video – Romalis Productions)
Baptism (performance video – Romalis Productions)
An Indigo Christmas LIVE! (DVD) – The Nathaniel Dett Chorale in Concert (Riddle Films, 2003)
Carry Me Home – The Story & Music of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale (Riddle Films, 2003) (*Winner of the 2003 Canada Award (Gemini Awards))
In Performance: the Music of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale (Riddle Films, 2004)

FOUNDER / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / CONDUCTOR

DR. BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR

*"Fill the cup that clears today
of past regrets and future fears."
- Omar Khayyam*

Brainerd Blyden-Taylor is the Founder, Artistic Director and conductor of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Canada's first professional chamber choir dedicated to the creation and performance of Afrocentric music of all styles. Born in Trinidad & Tobago, Mr. Blyden-Taylor immigrated to Canada in 1973. He founded The Chorale in 1998, in response to a musical void in Canada; there had never before been a professional ensemble dedicated to the dissemination of Afrocentric choral music. The response that The Chorale has received in Canada and the United States since its inception has certainly given credence to Mr. Blyden-Taylor's vision.



Mr. Blyden-Taylor has conducted several university, youth and concert choirs, most notably completing a 25-year tenure with The Orpheus Choir of Toronto. In addition he works frequently as a guest conductor, having appeared with organizations such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, Hannaford Street Silver Band, Nova Scotia Youth Choir, Ontario Youth Choir, Central Manitoba Youth Choir and the New Brunswick Choral Federation Youth Sing. He has also worked as artistic director and advisor for the Algoma Festival Choir, the Nova Scotia Mass Choir and the Chatham-Kent Roots Festival.

Mr. Blyden-Taylor has served as a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto and the Faculty of Music, Queen's University. He is a Master Teacher with the Toronto Board of Education, coaching teachers and students in conducting and choral technique, and was recently awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from York University in Toronto.

Mr. Blyden-Taylor is also in constant demand as a Clinician, Adjudicator and Lecturer both nationally and internationally, working extensively across Canada and the United States of America, as well as in Cuba and France. He has also been invited to deliver workshops in Japan, Turkey and Israel. In addition Mr. Blyden-Taylor is an active church musician, serving currently as Music Director of St Timothy's Anglican Church, North Toronto.



Sponsor of the Artistic Director and Conductor 2011-12

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KIM BERNHARDT (Co-Chair) - Kim Bernhardt is a lawyer specializing in labour, employment, and human rights law. Kim has written papers and presented at numerous conferences and events, and has served as a member of a number of boards and agencies including the Human Rights Board of Inquiry and the Ontario Judicial Council. In addition to her work with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Kim has a long history of involvement in community and legal organizations concerned with equity, law, education, and social issues including the Ontario Black History Society; Amnesty International; Urban Alliance on Race Relations; Canadian Association of Black Lawyers; and the African and Canadian Women's Human Rights Project (ACWHRP).

MICHELINE MCKAY (Co-Chair) - Micheline McKay is a public affairs consultant with a focus in the cultural sector. Since 1993, Micheline has worked with clients to respond to the increased need for the engagement of cultural organizations in public policy and organizational development. In that year, she also founded The Arts Advocate Report, a report on politics and policies affecting the arts and culture sector in Ontario. Prior to launching her own practice, Micheline worked at TVOntario and the Ministry of Finance in the Ontario government. In addition to serving on the board of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Micheline is the President of the Cultural Careers Council of Ontario and a member of the Board of Directors of the Toronto Arts Foundation.

MARK BARNES (Treasurer) - Mark Barnes is the President of IMAC Group, a management consultancy he co-founded in 1995. Professionally, Mark assists businesses and organizations to achieve their objectives through the development and implementation of pro-active strategies. Mark serves on the boards of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale and the Jazz Performance and Education Centre and is the publisher of two respected music magazines.

BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR (Founder) - As Founder/Artistic Director, Brainerd Blyden-Taylor has been in the driver's seat of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale for its entire thirteen seasons. He continues to play a vital role on the Board of Directors for The Chorale in helping to lead the organization on its mission of building bridges of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance through the medium of music.

MICHELLE FARRELL (Secretary)

TONY FERNANDO (Member) – Tony Fernando has worked for major and independent oil companies for the last 20 years. Tony is a specialist in Operations, Marketing and Retail Network construction in the Petroleum Downstream sector. Since 2004, he has worked as a Downstream Petroleum Consultant and as a Management Consultant for the MLC Group with a focus on Project Management, Enterprise Risk Management and Business Analysis. He is a Director of BONPET FireSafety Systems Inc., Associate Director of Business Strategy at the Canadian Business Strategy Association and a member of the Board of Directors of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

GEORGE GOODWIN (Past President) - George Goodwin is a businessman with a background that includes banking, publishing and not-for-profit management. He currently works for Wittington Investments in Toronto. His involvement with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale began as an audience member soon after its founding. In 2007, he joined the Board as Chair. For the past several years, he has been pleased to assist this groundbreaking and unique group of artists in furthering its mission of helping communities connect with one another.

THE NATHANIEL DETT CHORALE



*A spirit of unity, rendered in song.
—The Globe & Mail*

Dr. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, Artistic Director

Joy Lee, Collaborative Pianist

SOPRANOS

Alexandra Asher
Stephanie Barone
Leonie Hentschel
Karen Scovell
Tahirih Vejdani
Carolyn Williams

TENORS

Benjamin MacDonald
Walter Mahabir
Lucas Marchand
Floyd Ricketts
Michael Sawarna
Akufuna Sifuba

ALTOS

Jenna Burke
Katy Harmer
Gillian Margot
Ianjai Mounsey
Renaé Reid
Aria Umezawa

BASSES

Dallas Bergen
Jeremy Carver-James
Tom Lillington
Ryan Wesley Keir Moilliet
Graham Robinson
David Yung

CHORALE BIOGRAPHIES

JOY LEE, collaborative pianist



Joy Lee has worked with many singers and instrumentalists in Toronto as well as Michigan. She received her Master's degree in Collaborative Piano from

the University of Michigan with a full scholarship, where she studied with world-renowned Collaborative Pianist Marin Katz. In the summer of 2004 and 2005, Ms. Lee was Assistant Conductor and Coach/Pianist for the Bay View Music Festival's Production of Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* and Pine Mountain Music Festival's Production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. She is a scholarship winner of numerous music competitions and festivals such as the Orford Arts Centre and the Banff Centre. Joy worked as a Faculty member at Albion College in Michigan as Adjunct Piano Instructor and Staff Coach/Pianist for both University of Michigan and Albion College. Currently, Joy coaches and collaborates with singers at the University of Toronto.

ALEXANDRA ASHER, soprano



Alexandra Asher is a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University's Bachelor of Music program. At Laurier, she participated in the opera program, and sang in

many ensembles including WLU Chapel Choir, and both the WLU Ensemble Concert Choir and Laurier Singers Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Lee Willingham. Alexandra was thrilled to join The Nathaniel Dett Chorale in 2008, marking their tenth anniversary season.

STEPHANIE BARONE, soprano



Stephanie Barone earned a Bachelor of Arts combined honours in Music and Theatre from Dalhousie University. Last summer she was a part of the

New Actors' Colony Theatre's inaugural season playing lead roles in four different

productions. She is the lead soprano at St. John's United Church in Oakville. Stephanie joined The Chorale in 2010, and is thrilled to be a part of such an amazing group.

DALLAS BERGEN, bass



Dallas Bergen received his Bachelor of Music in Secondary Education from the University of Victoria, and later moved to New York

where he conducted the New York Consort, and was a vocalist with the chamber choirs Canticum Novum, Cerddorion and Manhattan Concert Productions. He has sung with the Canadian Chamber Choir and sang with the Elora Festival Singers for the 2008 Elora Festival where he also participated in the Festival Conductor's Workshop with renowned conductors Stephen Layton and Noel Edison. He conducts the Harbourfront Chorus, and is the newly appointed music director at First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. Dallas serves on the music panel of the Toronto Arts Council and is the founding Artistic Director of Univox, a Toronto community choir for young adults.

JENNA BURKE, alto



Jenna Burke has established herself as an accomplished musician and performer in the GTA. Growing up in a musical family, Jenna has been greatly influenced

by her mother, who is the director of the Juno Award-winning Toronto Mass Choir. Beginning with classical piano training from an early age, Jenna's style was further developed through study of jazz keyboards at Humber College and a Fine Arts in Music degree from York University. Jenna's performance opportunities have included everything from intimate solo settings to touring with the Toronto Mass Choir throughout Canada, United States and Europe. Jenna is a sought after studio vocalist as well as a prolific songwriter. Her debut album, appropriately titled 'Insight', is a snapshot of the musical journey on

which she finds herself. 'Insight' was nominated for two Urban/Soul GMA Covenant awards in 2008. Jenna is currently the Director of Music and Worship at Kingsview Free Methodist Church in Toronto, and a member of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

JEREMY CARVER-JAMES, bass



Jeremy Carver-James is a singer and actor known for his unique versatility of genres. Ranging from opera, musical theater, jazz, pop/R&B, gospel, and classical art song, he

has been noted for his musical and theatrical interpretations. He recently completed his Bachelor of Music at McGill University's Schulich School of Music and has performed in a variety of staged performances including leading roles in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Hair*. Jeremy has been a soloist for a number of contemporary ensembles including the soul and pop influenced a cappella group, Soulstice. In the summer of 2011 he was a guest soloist for the Elvis A-Z concerts with Gregory Charles for the Festival Mondial Choral. He was also featured as a gospel soloist for the Alberta Honour Choir and Festival 500 in Newfoundland, Canada where he first met Brainerd Blyden-Taylor. This is Jeremy's first season with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

KATY HARMER, alto



Katy Harmer is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario's Bachelor of Music program, where she studied voice with Rachel Mallon. She has

been involved in choral music her whole life, singing with the Canadian Children's Opera Company for many years in Toronto, university faculty choirs, church choirs, the Ontario Youth Choir (2007) and the Banff Choral Workshop (2008). In 2009, Katy was the assistant artistic director of the Conspirato Chamber Singers in London,



Ontario. Currently, she is an alto in The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, and chorus coordinator for the Canadian Children's Opera Company.

LEONIE HENTSCHEL, soprano



Leonie Hentschel graduated from University of the Arts in Berlin and Free University of Berlin completing her Bachelor in Music Education, a

Masters in Vocal Pedagogy as well as a Masters in Business Economics. In Germany, Leonie performed in opera productions such as Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. On the concert stage performances include Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, Mozart's *Exultate, jubilate* and de Falla's *7 canciones*, among others. After relocating to Canada in 2007, she worked at Soundstreams where she founded Soundstreams' successful Salon 21 series. Currently, she works for a voice over agency. Leonie is delighted to be a member of the inspiring Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

TOM LILLINGTON, bass



Tom Lillington is a professional vocalist and pianist who keeps busy with a wide range of activities in the Toronto area. As well as maintaining a full

schedule as a Certified Piano Technician, Tom is also an accomplished composer (BFA, York University 1994), accompanist, arranger, director and vocalist performing with various different groups. He is a founding member of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, sings part-time with the Elora Festival Singers and is also a founding member of The Canadian Chamber Choir. He sang with 80's band Retrocity as well as Hampton Avenue, an award-winning a cappella group. Tom's bass voice can be heard singing in many jingles, soundtracks and recordings, and as a writer he is entering his 10th season as composer and music director of the Driftwood Theatre Company, a touring outdoor Shakespeare company dedicated to reaching out to audiences in urban and rural communities

across the Ontario that do not have access to professional classical theatre.

GILLIAN MARGOT, alto



Gillian Margot is gifted with an exquisite voice and an exceptional understanding of the jazz idiom, is known for the impact she continues

to have on the Canadian jazz scene. Her authentic sound and creatively modern approach to music make for unforgettable performances. Margot performed extensively with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale between 1999 and 2006 and is happy to return this year. Margot graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts double major in Music and Anthropology from York University where she twice received the Ella Fitzgerald Award and scholarship for excellence in jazz performance. After taking her jazz trio to Australia (2003) and Hong Kong (2006), Margot was awarded the Chalmers Professional Development Grant by the Ontario Arts Council in 2007. Recently, Margot completed her studies in piano and composition with internationally renowned American jazz pianist, Norman Simmon, and released her debut CD in 2010.

BENJAMIN MACDONALD, tenor



Benjamin MacDonald comes from a musical background and has been singing and playing instruments for ten years including piano, clarinet, alto and tenor

saxophone. Known for his versatility, Benjamin has sung as a soloist for over ten years at St. Simon's Anglican Church. Benjamin has recently graduated from Humber College studying Jazz and Contemporary Music and specializing in tenor saxophone.

WALTER MAHABIR, tenor



Walter Mahabir is a graduate of Toronto's St. Michael's Choir School, where he learned classical piano and began his classical voice training. He acted as

cantor for the National Catholic

Broadcasting Council of Toronto for over three years, with St. Michael's Cathedral and St. Basil's Church in downtown Toronto. He has sung in several choirs all over Toronto, including the Cantabile Chamber Singers and the Victoria Scholars, and was a lead tenor for the Humber Valley United Church Choir. In 2008, Walter sang with the St. Michael's Choir at the International Boys and Men's Choral Festival in Prague, Czech Republic, and later on in February of 2011, sang with the Cantabile Chamber Singers for the International Choral Festival in Montréal, Quebec. In April of 2011, Walter had the opportunity to sing for the Video Games Live Tour. Walter is currently a student at York University, studying in the honours program for a B.A in Music. He is also a section leader for St. Timothy's Anglican Church. This is his second season with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

LUCAS MARCHAND, tenor



Lucas Marchand studied voice at the University of Victoria where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Music with distinction. Lucas then spent time touring with

various groups, to parts of North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, performing various styles of music including Opera, Jazz, Pop, Salsa, and R&B. He has shared the stage with performers like Tom Johnston, Martha Reeves, James Ingram, Nikki Yanovsky, Jacksoul, Colm Wilkinson, and Measha Bruegggosman. In addition to The Chorale, Lucas also works with Speech Level Singing international as a certified instructor and as Educational Advisor for Northeastern US and Canada. He also arranges and performs with Toronto-based rock-a-pella group Fine Grind.

RYAN WESLEY KEIR MOILLET, bass



Ryan Wesley Keir Moillet started his choral journey as a young lad in the Toronto Children's Chorus under the baton of Jean Ashworth Bartle. Since

TCC, Ryan has sung in vocal ensembles such as The Ridley Singers, Ridley Chapel



Night Visitors while attending Cambrian College, Karen has found her home on stage. In addition to singing with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Karen also acts as The Chorale Coordinator as well as accompanist and substitute theory Instructor for The Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale. When Karen is not singing with the Chorale, she can be found singing as an alto section lead in St. Timothy's Anglican Church adult choir and Etobicoke Centennial Choir, directing the Junior Choir and St. Timothy's Anglican Church, and teaching voice at StageCoach Theatre Arts School in Peterborough.

AKUFUNA SIFUBA, tenor



Akufuna Sifuba is an established conductor, having worked with several church and community ensembles in Namibia and Zambia, including his work at the

Namibian College of the Arts. As a singer, he has performed and recorded with the acclaimed Mascato Coastal Choir of Namibia. Akufuna is a well-established African drummer, and has toured with the Ongoma Drummers. Akufuna immigrated to Canada in 2006. He has worked with the AfriCan Theatre Ensemble, acting as musical director for several of their productions. Currently, Akufuna conducts choral and drumming workshops throughout the Greater Toronto Area, and is a music and education student at York University.

ARIA UMEZAWA, alto



Aria Umezawa is a Canadian opera director and freelance singer based in Toronto. She is a founding partner of Opera Five, an opera company that produces

mixed-media operas. Aria has worked with Patrick Hansen at Opera McGill, acting as Stage Manager or Assistant Director in many of their recent productions. She has also assisted Canadian directors François Racine, and acclaimed counter-tenor Daniel Taylor in his directorial debut of *Dido and Aeneas*. For the past two seasons, Aria has worked at the Janeic Opera Company at the Brevard Institute of Music

Choir, WIBI a cappella, York University Chamber Choir, York University Concert Choir, and finally York University Men's Choir. Ryan is a recent graduate of York University receiving a Hon. BA with a specialization in Theatre Studies. Currently Ryan is a bass section lead at Humber Valley United Church and Etobicoke Centennial Choir, and is a founding member of the a cappella quartet Catch-Phrase. This is Ryan's first season with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

IANJAI MOUNSEY, alto



Ianjai Mounsey is a graduate of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music and Faculty of Education (O.I.S.E.). She holds an A.R.C.T. in Piano

Performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music. She has been choir director at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Scarborough since 2005 and is the former music director at Agape Temple Seventh Day Adventist Church in Pickering. She also sings with the award winning University of Toronto Gospel Choir. When she is not touring and performing she shares her love for music with children as a music teacher with the Durham District School Board and in her own private piano studio.

RENAÉ REID, alto



Renaé Reid was a member of the jazz ensemble, Take Note, in Red Deer, Alberta, which attended the International Association of Jazz Educators

Conference in Long Beach, California; was the feature group of The Canadian Jazz Festival held in Brandon, Manitoba; and also participated in workshops headed by Phil Mattson (which included a performance in Carnegie Hall) in New York. Renaé currently attends McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario where she is working towards a degree Bachelor of Arts in Labour Studies!(Honours) with minors in Psychology and Sociology. She plans to go on to complete her Masters and Ph.D.

FLOYDD RICKETTS, tenor



Floydd Ricketts is in his third season as a tenor with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale. He is also The Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale's program

director, conductor and theory teacher. He is the Artistic Associate and orchestrator at The Grand Theatre in London for the 2011-2012 season and is the founder of the Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra.

GRAHAM ROBINSON, bass



Graham Robinson is an ambitious bass-baritone hailing from Vancouver Island, British Columbia. He received a Bachelor of Music in Voice at the University of Victoria

and has been featured with the University of Victoria Chorus, the University of Victoria Chamber Singers and the Victoria Chamber Orchestra. Now based in Toronto, he sings with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Elora Festival Singers and Univox, as well as many others.

MICHAEL SAWARNA, tenor



Michael Sawarna proudly joined The Nathaniel Dett Chorale last year. He has been a professional singer in the Toronto area for over ten years. He sings

with The Elmer Iseler Singers, Amadeus Choir, Soundstreams Canada, Choir 21, Elora Festival Singers, The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Aradia Ensemble. He is a proud father of a young son whom he enjoys teaching piano to, watching him develop as well as learning from him.

KAREN SCOVELL, soprano



Karen Scovell discovered her love of music at a very young age. From participating in almost all of the musical and drama groups at Bowmanville High

School, to being part of the chorus and dancers in a performance of *Amahl and the*



and family and has recently begun to find a growing enthusiasm for the field of graphic design.

DAVID YUNG, bass



David Yung is a former member of the Canadian Children's Opera chorus and a graduate of the Vocal Music program with Arts York at Unionville High School.

David is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Music, where he studied voice with Darryl Edwards, and was a member of the Faculty Singers. He sang with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir for two years, and has served as a substitute member of the Elmer Iseler Singers. He is currently serving as Section Lead with the Etobicoke Centennial Choir and the Humbercrest United Church choir, and is enjoying his tenth season with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

in North Carolina. Recent performance highlights include a 2010 Musimars performance in Montreal, singing with the choir at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, and soloist for the world premiere of Canadian composer Darren Russo's *Missa Sylabus*. She also sang and acted as vocal coach for the Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir under Lynn Janes for their 2007/2008 season. Aria is thrilled to be singing her first season with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale!

TAHIRIH VEJDANI, soprano



Tahirih Vejdani graduated with great distinction from the University of Regina with a double major in Vocal Performance and Music History. She has been a

soloist with Regina Symphony Orchestra, Regina Philharmonic Chorus, and Regina Lyric Musical Theatre Summer Stage. A diverse performer, Ms. Vejdani has been known to grace the stage as a singer, actress and dancer. She has had the opportunity to apprentice under actress

Sheila McCarthy of the hit CBC show *Little Mosque on the Prairie* for the past four years and most recently joined Wildfire Dance Theatre of Stratford, Ontario in a tour to Arviat, Nunavut. Now residing in Toronto, Ms. Vejdani sings professionally with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, along with Univox, the Toronto World Unity Choir and the St. George-on-the-Hill choirs.

CAROLYN WILLIAMS, soprano



Carolyn Williams holds a Master of Music Therapy degree from Wilfrid Laurier University and coupled with over seven years of experience in the field of

music therapy working with individuals of varying ability, Carolyn is a firm believer in the healing power of music. A lover of Praise and Worship music, as well as choral singing, Carolyn enjoys her position as one of the worship leaders in her local assembly and having the opportunity to fellowship with other Christians through song. Carolyn has a keen interest in scrapbooking, spending time with friends

THE NATHANIEL DETT YOUTH CHORALE

We are proud to present all of the individuals listed below as members of the unique community that is The Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale. In 2008, in partnership with the Toronto District School Board, and with the support of an Anonymous Foundation, TD Canada Trust, and the RBC Foundation, we launched a training program for senior high school students of African heritage. Every Wednesday, The Youth Chorale meets for instruction in Afrocentric history, music theory, and ensemble singing; each young singer also receives private voice lessons. The Youth Chorale also joins the professional ensemble for workshops and mentoring, and the occasional public performance.



All the instructors for this program are either current members or alumni of the professional ensemble. Through this unique program, we are furthering our mission to build bridges of understanding, appreciation and acceptance through the medium of music.

2011-12 MEMBERS

Lakesha Bambury
Steven Bennett
Denise Boateng
Shayka Braithwaite
Tinishya Gillis
Asiyh Haneef-Jabari
Hervé Kabongo-Kaniki
Seth Nyquist
Shantel Ogilvie
Alexi Oundo
Tamara Williams
Neville Winn

YOUTH CHORALE FACULTY

Conductor:	Floydd Ricketts
Accompanist:	Karen Scovell
History Instructor:	Akufuna Sifuba
Voice Instructors:	Alexandra Garrison Lucas Marchand Denise Williams
Theory Instructors:	Benjamin MacDonald Floydd Ricketts

For more information about The Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale,
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The conductor in residence and faculty of The Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale
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