



Maritime Concert Opera - Lunenburg, NS

PRESS RELEASE

THE SHEILA A. HELLSTROM MEMORIAL AWARD IN CLASSICAL VOICE FOR ATLANTIC CANADIANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - LUNENBURG, NS - FEBRUARY 28, 2025

The Lunenburg-based Maritime Concert Opera Society announces the second year of their new vocal music award in honour of Lunenburg-born Brigadier-General Sheila Hellstrom, lifelong opera aficionado. The \$1500.00 Sheila A. Hellstrom Memorial Prize in Voice will be awarded annually to support the education of classical singers from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland & Labrador, on the basis of competitive digital auditions.

"We're very excited to continue this competition and prize for young Atlantic Canadian singers" said MCO Artistic Director Nina Scott-Stoddart. "Since our founding we've made a point of hiring singers born or raised in the Atlantic provinces. We are proud of the number of talented young singers who've had their first professional gig with us, and we're delighted to continue supporting their education and careers with this prize".

Candidates must have been born or raised in one of the Atlantic Provinces, and be currently enrolled in any accredited University, College or Conservatory for vocal music at the undergraduate or graduate level. There are no age restrictions. Applications are \$25 and must be submitted online, accompanied by a biography and curriculum vitae along with a current photo, video recordings and letters of support from current teachers. Applications must be received by April 30, 2025..

PO Box 1819, Lunenburg, NS
902-521-8577

maritimeconcertopera@gmail.com

Applications will be assessed by our panel of judges, and the winner will be announced by June 15, 2025.

Please see the MCO website at maritimeconcertopera.com/hellstrom_award for details of required audition selections and supporting materials, and for the link to the application form.

ABOUT SHEILA A. HELLSTROM

First female regular force member to achieve the rank of brigadier-general, 1987

Sheila Hellstrom was born on 15 January 1935 in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. She graduated from Lunenburg Academy in 1953 and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) University Reserve Training Plan at Mount Allison University the following year. Her long and distinguished career in the Armed Forces featured many highlights: she was flight lieutenant in 1962, she was the first woman to attend the Canadian Forces Staff College in Toronto, and, after rising through the ranks, became the first woman to achieve the rank of brigadier-general.

Beyond her work with the Canadian Armed Forces, Hellstrom worked with NATO and other organizations to help achieve equality for women in the services. She was a life-long patron of the opera, one of her great passions. Throughout her career and life, Hellstrom demonstrated an unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion. She died on 7 December 2020 in Ottawa, Ontario.

ABOUT MARITIME CONCERT OPERA

Founded in 2003, the Maritime Concert Opera Society has presented over 35 full-length productions in concert, including Bizet's *Carmen*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*, Verdi's *La traviata* and *Rigoletto*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, *Suor Angelica* and *La bohème* and a number of operettas, including Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore* as well as Lehar's *The Merry Widow* and Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. The company marked its 20th anniversary in the fall of 2023 with a concert of operatic highlights and presents their first Marriage of Figaro in June 2025.

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