



TAPESTRY OPERA

WOMEN IN MUSICAL LEADERSHIP



1. A MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSION

“Convention has kept the field dominated by men. Convention and, of course, some everyday sexism – because before a woman gets on the podium, she needs to get into a conducting class at university, and before that even, she needs to see the career as a viable option, something I didn’t as a child.”

Barbara Hannigan, Canadian conductor and soprano

Music Directors and conductors occupy a rarefied position in the music world. They provide musical leadership, oversee artistic vision of an organization, create the musical culture of a place, and act as ambassador for their community. There can be enormous power and prestige associated with the role.

**Less than 5% of music directors
in Canada are women**

The reasons for this dismal statistic has nothing to do with women’s skill, talent, drive, or musicality. In many cases, perception is reality, and the perception is that women aren’t conductors. Yet, despite these traditional perceptions, most major Canadian music organizations say they would hire female conductors if they knew any.

2. OBSTACLES FOR WOMEN

There is a pervasive perception that a “conductor” looks like one thing: a usually white, slightly older man. That perception leads to unconscious bias that limits women’s opportunities, and undermines their potential.

There are very few female role models at the top, so there are fewer women coming up through the ranks. Representation is not everything, but it matters.

**Our vision is to change the face
of leadership on the podium.**

3. OPPORTUNITY IS THE KEY

The path to becoming a nationally acclaimed conductor:

ORCHESTRAL SECTOR



In the orchestral sector, it starts as an orchestral player or soloist.

OPERA



In opera, conductors have a background as a pianist and are familiar with theatre.

OTHER



Alternatively, some conductors train at the university level.

On all of these paths, an **organizational leader or music director** must give an aspiring conductor the opportunity to be an assistant conductor.

Mentorship tends to be offered to people who **reflect the mentor.**



Subsequently, the **majority of opportunities** are offered to white men.

Fewer women **on the podium** means fewer women getting opportunities to learn how to **take the podium.**

4. LET'S CHANGE THE STATUS QUO

A multi-year, multi-company paid Conductorship to cultivate the next generation of conductors in Canada

A Tapestry Opera-facilitated, multi-year, multi-company national Conductorship program to discover and advance female and non-binary Conductors in Canada is one path to addressing the gender imbalance in classical music and opera.

This innovative five-year pilot supports six three-year conductorships in partnership with orchestras, opera companies, and music ensembles across Canada. The goal is to provide multi-faceted practical conducting training, mentorship, and increasing professional opportunities to

promising conducting talent, allowing them to focus solely on conducting for three years. Successful Conductors will be given the opportunity to not only be mentored while practicing their craft, but to do so with a broad range of organizations engaged in early music, core repertoire, and contemporary music and opera while working with the best conductors across the country, gaining experience and dramatically expanding their professional network. With this dynamic program, we will build a unique infrastructure that provides promising female and non-binary Conductors the time and experiences they need to enter into the profession.

5. WHY TAPESTRY

Tapestry Opera is a thought leader in the opera sector, with a well-established network of lasting partnerships across the country. Our focus on new works means that the opportunities we offer emerging music directors include broad exposure to dramaturgy and the development process. We have a proven track record of successfully challenging the status quo, making space for underrepresented and diverse voices, and hiring equitably and thoughtfully at all levels of the organization, including conductors.



6. THE PROGRAM - 4 KEY PILLARS

EXPERIENCE

With the help of music partners across Canada, no fewer than 8 assistant conductor placements will be offered annually to each Conductor in the program. Over the three-year Conductorship, each Conductor will gain immeasurable experience from a wide variety of organizations working with an array of expert mentors on diverse repertoire. This experience will set them apart and give them unique and growing expertise.

MENTORSHIPS

In addition to mentoring with conductors while on placements, Tapestry will connect Conductors in the program with established female mentors to ensure they have someone to advise and guide them through the many challenges of growing their careers and navigating the Canadian musical landscape. Mentors will function in a support capacity through monthly check-ins with Conductors and be available by phone and email on an ongoing basis.

RELATIONSHIPS

Building working relationships and becoming known to the sector is a vital part of the path to success. A network of industry contacts and real world working relationships will be a natural bi-product of the 8 placements per year. This makes the participating conductors highly employable to organizations upon graduation from the program.

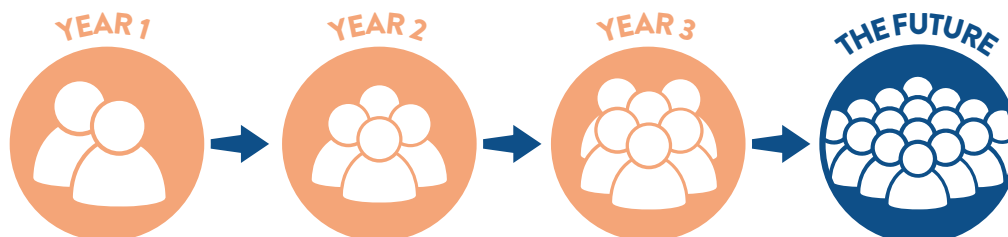
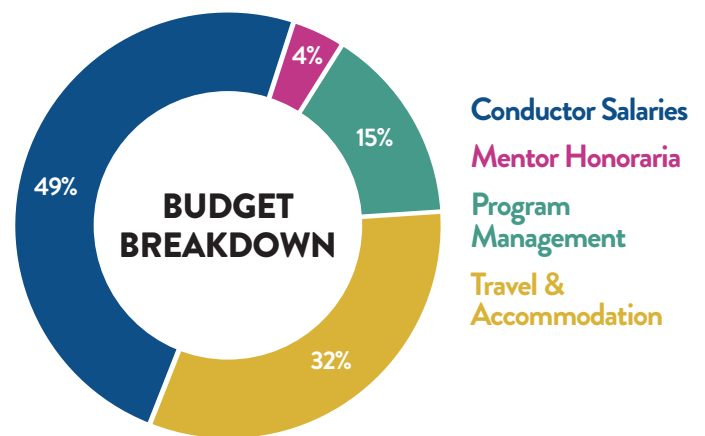
SECTORAL CHANGE

One of the biggest challenges facing women in a male-dominated industry is the pervasive unconscious bias that competence, skill, and professionalism look only one way. In order to ensure more women who begin the journey to conducting are able to reach their highest potential, we must ensure that conversations across the sector are pushing broad change forward. By building deep relationships, speaking and writing publicly about their experiences, and being the visible representation for the next generation of young conductors, we aim to shift our conceptions of who deserves a space at the podium.

7. THE CONDUCTOR EXPERIENCE

The Conductors will be paid a full-time salary and benefits for the years of their participation, with the intention that their learning and career growth become their primary focus.

Across the three years, the Conductors will have opportunities to participate in musical dramaturgy and workshopping of new works; assist visiting and guest conductors at prominent institutions; conduct rehearsals and small programs; guest at young artist programs; assist in recordings made for film and digital releases; and conduct full programs and performances. The opportunities are varied and wide-ranging, and will both support and challenge the Conductors.



8. THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

You can't be what you can't see

The impact of Women in Musical Leadership expands far beyond the 6 women who will be the future participants. By showing talented female musicians that women can be conductors, that their goals are attainable, we impact the future of women in music. Specifically this program will put its Conductors in front of audiences across the country, dramatically increasing the number of appearances of a woman on the podium far beyond those that a normal emerging conductor would have. These Conductors will be the next generation of musical leaders in the best way, affecting thousands of people: the musicians that they work with, the audiences that they perform for, and the young women they inspire.

This program offers not only an amazing opportunity for the Conductors and those they inspire, it is also an opportunity to change the hearts and minds of producers and artistic directors. While it is popular to talk the talk, institutional bias does not change overnight. Collaborating with the Conductors over the course of the program will normalize hiring women as conductors well beyond the scope of this program.

This work contributes to an ongoing conversation on gender equity in music, with programming pledges by prominent

festivals such as the BBC Proms and Aldeburgh Festival to feature 50% women composers. It aligns with other initiatives happening abroad in parallel fields of composition, stage direction, and administration, including:

- **Taki-Alsop Fellowship** (spearheaded by Marin Alsop, one of the leading conductors in the world and Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, USA)
- **Opera America Grants for Female Composers, Conductors and Directors** (USA)
- **Dallas Institute for Female Conductors and Administrators** (USA)
- **La Maestra Competition** (France)
- **Girls Who Conduct Mentorship program at Georgia Symphony** (USA)
- **Royal Opera House Women Conductors Intensive** (UK)
- **Luna Composition Lab** (led by award-winning composers Missy Mazzoli and Ellen Reid at Kaufmann Music Centre, USA)
- **National Sawdust Hildegard Competition** (USA)
- **Musique 3 Femmes "Prix 3 Femmes" for emerging female composers** (Canada)

9. YOU CAN CHANGE THE FACE OF THE PODIUM IN CANADA

“ I think that the next generation of conductors will finally be the one that stops saying ‘female conductor’ and just says ‘conductor’.

The Women in Musical Leadership program can change the status quo. But we can't do it alone. We need you!

Making positive change depends on many people coming together, rallying behind a common cause. Tapestry Opera is launching a \$1M fundraising campaign to establish Canada's first Women in Musical Leadership Conductorship program, joining an international effort to create gender equity in classical music conductorship. You can be at the forefront of a groundbreaking initiative, helping create the future for the next generation of women and girls to see themselves as leaders, conductors, and music directors with a pathway to fulfill their musical potential. Every person can have an impact. Join us to build a future where women and girls are welcomed at the front of the podium!

We're going to change the perception by providing opportunities for multiple women to see themselves in that role. And over time, the programme won't be necessary anymore. Then we'll know we've succeeded. ”

Rosemary Thomson, Artistic Director, Opera Kelowna