



# THE LAURELS

AN OPERA IN ONE SHORT ACT

Music **Jeffrey Ryan** | Libretto **Michael MacLennan**

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**Jacqueline Woodley** | **Nathan Keoughan** | **Rosemary Thomson**

## THE LAURELS | AN OPERA IN ONE SHORT ACT

RUNNING TIME 14:07

Music **Jeffrey Ryan** | Libretto **Michael MacLennan**

**Jacqueline Woodley**, Soprano

**Nathan Keoughan**, Baritone

**Rosemary Thomson**, Conductor

**AK Coope**, Clarinet / Bass Clarinet

**Katie Rife**, Percussion

**Janelle Nadeau**, Harp

**Rebecca Ruthven**, Violin

**Isabelle Roland**, Viola

**Rebecca Wenham**, Violoncello

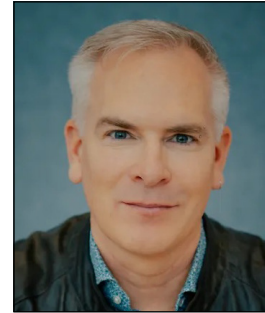
**Meaghan Williams**, Contrabass

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### Programme Note

THE LAURELS is a short one-act opera – a contemporary retelling of the Daphne and Apollo myth, conceived as a thriller charting one woman’s psychological unravelling in the aftermath of a harrowing crisis.

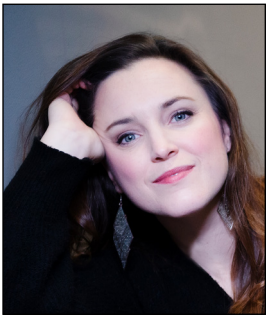
Laurel runs through the forest of a city park at night, chased by a male Stranger. He’s evidently a dangerous stalker while she’s a helpless victim. Or is something more happening? Is The Stranger real, or a haunting manifestation of Laurel’s own psyche? In his dogged pursuit, does he seek to harm, or is she in fact the villain here? As the opera runs along this knife’s edge, THE LAURELS questions the scope of morality and how the past haunts us. You can run, but...



Librettist **MICHAEL LEWIS MACLENNAN** is a Toronto-based writer. Award-winning plays include *Beat the Sunset*, *Grace*, *The Shooting Stage* and *Last Romantics* – and have been widely produced and published. As a writer-producer on close to 300 TV episodes, he has been nominated seven times for the Writers Guild of Canada Screenwriting Award and was honoured as the recipient of the WGC’s Showrunner of the Year Award. Series include *Bomb Girls*, *Queer as Folk*, *Godiva’s*, *The Bletchley Circle: San Francisco*, and the hit Netflix series *Tiny Pretty Things*. As a librettist, this is his third collaboration with Jeffrey Ryan. [michaelmacleannan.com](http://michaelmacleannan.com)



Praised for his “strong personal voice” (Globe and Mail), “masterful command of instrumental colour” (Georgia Straight) and “superb attention to rhythm” (Audio Ideas Guide), and recipient of SOCAN’s Jan V. Matejcek New Classical Music Award, composer **JEFFREY RYAN** grew up training his ear with Petula Clark, The Partridge Family and Captain & Tennille, playing saxophone and flute in high school bands, singing in two choirs, and writing his own songs for voice class. Now, as a freelance composer based in Vancouver, Canada, he takes inspiration from the world around him and creates music that runs the gamut from orchestral and chamber works to opera, art song, and choral music. [jeffreyryan.com](http://jeffreyryan.com)



Canadian soprano **JACQUELINE WOODLEY** has been praised for her fearless versatility, fluidly changing styles from baroque to contemporary, from opera to art song. Sought after for her exceptional talent in interpreting modern works, Jacqueline premiered the role of Milica in Ana Sokolovic's *Svadba* with Queen of Puddings Music Theatre, which she then performed many times, including at San Francisco Opera and Opera Philadelphia.

Career highlights have included Waldvogel (*Siegfried*) with the Canadian Opera Company, Natalia (world premiere, Gervais's *Oksana G*) for Tapestry Opera, Tina (Dove's *Flight*) with Pacific Opera Victoria, and concert engagements with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, among others.

Ms. Woodley has recorded works by Canadian composer Norbert Palej for the Canadian Art Song Project, and recently released albums of the music of Québécois composer Lionel Daunais (*Mémoires*), and Iranian-Canadian composer Parisa Sabet (*A Cup of Sins*).  
[jacquelinewoodley.com](http://jacquelinewoodley.com)



Canadian baritone **NATHAN KEOUGHAN** has been praised for his "booming, rich voice" (Broadway World), and "commanding presence" (Bachtrack).

Career highlights include his American debut with Cincinnati Opera for Bilodeau's *Another Brick in the Wall* as the leading role of Pink, and his Canadian Opera Company debut in Bilodeau's *La reine-garçon* as Karl Gustav. Additional credits include Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen* with Vancouver Opera, and the Canadian premiere of Braunfels's *Die Vögel* with Pacific Opera Victoria, as well as multiple assignments with l'Opera de Montréal, the Canadian Opera Company, and Calgary Opera, in repertoire ranging from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* to Gordon's *Twenty-Seven*.

On the concert stage, Nathan has performed Bernstein's *Mass* (Chorus Niagara), and Orff's *Carmina Burana* (Grand Philharmonic Choir, Brott Festival) to much acclaim, and joined Sound the Alarm Theatre for over two-dozen performances of *Music of the Night: The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber* across Canada.  
[nathankeoughan.com](http://nathankeoughan.com)



Conductor **ROSEMARY THOMSON** has proven herself a highly skilled musician, embracing a broad range of repertoire and programming innovative, audience-centred presentations. For 14 seasons, she led Continuum Ensemble, followed by 16 seasons as Music Director of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra. As a guest conductor, she has led many Canadian orchestras, including the symphonies of Edmonton, Kingston, Thunder Bay, Vancouver, Victoria, and the National Arts Centre. Thomson was Resident Conductor and Chorus Master of Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and Conductor-in-Residence for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

In opera, Rosemary has conducted across Canada, with the Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, Calgary Opera, and most recently Opera Kelowna, which appointed her Artistic Director in 2020. Nominated for a Dora Award for Music Direction for the world premiere of *Shanawdithit*, Rosemary is a national mentor for Tapestry Opera's Women in Musical Leadership initiative. She was awarded the 2021 Community Spirit Award by the BC Provincial Achievement Foundation.

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Libretto **Michael MacLennan**

## LAUREL

Lost!  
Lost!

The trees in here  
Loom grim at night,  
The trees in here  
Leer down at me,  
The trees in here  
Obscure the path,  
I'm lost, I'm lost

I must keep calm  
I'll find the gate  
Run and the beast will chase  
But even in these woods I see  
Even in my mind I see  
The black of his blood.  
The black of his blood

In this dark park  
In this harsh place  
A chill has cracked my heart  
And carved a wicked space

Lost!

Oh God!

He found me.

Must run!

The weight of my feet

My legs are like wood  
Run! Run!

## THE STRANGER

Laurel...

Laurel...

I followed...

I am with you.

I've watched you

No!

Wild shapes of men

Their looming needs

Darker than blood

Wild shapes of men

Their looming needs

Darker than blood.

He tears at my heels

His breath on my neck

His voice in my head

My numb legs stumble

They are rooted to soil.

Am I caught? I don't know.

Turn...

See who you run from

You'd stop if you knew

I'm hidden in shadow

See what you run from

You know me, you do

Turn and face me.

Think why I chase you,  
The one who still loves you  
Now, even now.

I am not your wolf

You are not my lamb

Even in flight, you urge me on:  
The winds fling your hair  
So it flies back to me  
Your rampant legs blush  
Bare in the night.

Don't burn your lungs,  
Don't tear your heels

Slow, and I'll slow

# THE LAURELS | AN OPERA IN ONE SHORT ACT

Libretto **Michael MacLennan**

**LAUREL**

I can't feel if I'm caught!

Just get out!

Get out!

Get out!

(THE STRANGER *grabs* LAUREL *close, covering her mouth.*)

(*She sings frightened, muffled sounds.*)

(*Muffled sounds.*)

Please forget me;  
Let me...

(*She breaks away from him. Cornered, she gets distance, terrified.*)

My blade could cut you.

**THE STRANGER**

Stop, and I'll stop

Our ragged breath together

As though finally conjoined,

Shuddering into each other.

Slow and I will slow.  
Stop, and I will stop.

I know what you say:  
(*Singing as LAUREL, a tender falsetto*)  
"Please don't hold me  
Not now, not here  
Not among the watchful trees  
Who cluster 'round so near."

I know what you think:  
"Please forget me;  
Let me be free."

But your aim isn't true.  
I am with you always;  
You may try to ignore me,  
Or try to destroy me,  
But I've wanted this moment,  
And you led me here tonight.  
Don't deny it—

Leave me now!

(*She pulls a knife from under her cloak. It is covered in blood. THE STRANGER smiles.*)

I have done so much worse.

See the blood on this knife?

(LAUREL *grabs him, getting the upper hand. Strangely, he lets her.*)

Then you shouldn't have come.

I lured him in the trees,  
I was asking for trouble;  
He gave it to me.

(*She stabs THE STRANGER.*)

I slipped in the knife  
There was a place in him that ached for it.  
He fell against my breast  
Slid his leaking body over me  
Like he craved more.

(THE STRANGER *leans in close to her, sliding to the ground, the knife with him.*)

Even as his life left me.  
Lost.

And so I killed a man tonight.  
It doesn't matter why,  
My reasons are now irrelevant,  
But I could do it – that's the thrill  
And I can leave here, face the world  
My secret safe inside.

You think you can hurt me?

Laurel, I know...

I was there...

You summoned me here.  
I am not the enemy.  
I am part of you.

Lost...

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Libretto **Michael MacLennan**

## LAUREL

While you, my voice, my still, small voice,  
Lie silent in the loam.  
You can't hold me now.  
The coming dawn glows through the trees  
And warms my limbs and shows the way.

*(As LAUREL starts to leave, THE STRANGER stirs. She turns to look at him in astonishment.)*

No! No!  
I cut you away!

*(THE STRANGER takes the knife from his body and holds it.)*

I could if I wanted  
You know there's a way.

*(He offers her the knife.)*

Lost...

Lost...

Lost...

Lost...

*(LAUREL moves toward THE STRANGER and the knife. She reaches out to tenderly touch the knife, then pulls her fingers away. She meets eyes with THE STRANGER.)*

*(Lights fade. The End.)*

## THE STRANGER

Laurel, you should know.

I am the one thing you can't kill.  
I live in you.

One dark, lonely way.  
And so ask yourself:

Do you want the knife?

Will you take it again?

Or shall I keep it?

Who shall hold it, Laurel.  
Do you trust your aim is true?

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## CREDITS

Producer **Denise Ball**  
Recording Engineer, Digital Editing,  
and Mastering **Don Harder**

Recorded Sept 11, 2025 at  
CBC Studio One Vancouver

Redshift Records **Jordan Nobles**

## ARTIST PHOTOS

MacLennan: **Rachel Morris**  
Ryan: **Wendy D Photography**  
Woodley: **Bo Huang**  
Keoughan: **Sam Gaetz**  
Thomson: **Alexa Grace Photography**

Graphic Design **Pascal Milelli**

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**Claire Hopkinson**, and was commissioned by Tapestry New  
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**FACTOR**  
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**Canada**

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