

The following is list of all of the mini operas which were written for Opera From Scratch since 2012:

Opera From Scratch 2012

Aunt Helen

Composer: Monica Pearce / **Libretto:** Monica Pearce, Helen Creighton / **Mezzo Soprano:** Maureen Batt

Aunt Helen is an opera about celebrated folklorist Helen Creighton, based on her autobiography *Life in Folklore*. Using the format of a radio interview that might have occurred when she was in her seventies, *Aunt Helen* gives us a glimpse into her life and her personality. Amidst her interview, several folksongs are heard, partly to give further meaning to her answers, and partly to colour her experience with the most intrinsic material of her life.

Cry of Stars

Composer: Kala Pierson / **Libretto:** Lorri Neilsen Glenn / **Soprano:** Sarah Albu

Cry of Stars is an opera-meditation based on a poem by Lorri Neilsen Glenn, former Poet Laureate of Halifax. The text is about mindfulness, breath, singing (in all its senses), and distillation of complex passions into peaceful focus. In the piece, the performers have some rhythmic flexibility, always making choices based on listening to one another.

Escape to Freedom

Composer: Sandy Moore / **Libretto:** S. Moore, A. Hill, R. Ziegler, R. Huch / **Mezzo Soprano:** Megan Johnson

Escape to Freedom was inspired by the life of Mona Parsons (1901-1976), a woman raised in privilege in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, who eventually spent over three years in prison camps in Nazi Germany. She escaped during the Allied Invasion in March 1945 and staggered through war torn landscapes to the border of Holland where she was finally rescued. "Lift, I lift, my tongue again unfolds its prayer."

Images of John A. Wilson

Composer: Adam Scime / **Libretto:** Adam Scime / **Soprano:** Annie Jacques

John A. Wilson was a famous Nova Scotian sculptor whose art stands throughout North America. This piece is a reflection of three specific works created by Wilson: The Pennsylvania Volunteer, Silent Sam, and Hector Pioneer. Throughout the piece, Wilson's widow remembers her husband as she gazes upon pictures of his work.

One Thousand White Paper Cranes for Japan

Composer: Rita Ueda / **Libretto:** Rod Robertson / **Soprano:** Celeste Godin

One thousand paper cranes (senbazuru) ... Senbazurus are popular gifts among Japanese people to friends and family to wish them a quick recovery from illness or injury. Japan Tsunami disaster ... Cataclysmic earthquakes, tsunamis and nuclear meltdowns in the Tohoku region of Japan, leaving 18,000 people dead and 300,000 people homeless. Alecks Burchill ... An 8 year old boy from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, began a senbazuru project to send the Japanese people a message of love and hope.

She is in the Sea

Composer: Evan Meier / **Libretto:** Luke Richmond / **Soprano:** Emily Thorner

She is in the Sea is loosely based on the ballad "The Cruel Mother," a story of spurned love and infanticide, which was recorded by ethnologist Helen Creighton in Nova Scotia. In this adaptation, set around the time of the French and Indian War, a young woman falls in love with a soldier and gives birth to a daughter. Disowned by her family and embittered by her fate, she throws her child into the Sackville River.

Opera From Scratch 2013

The Homecoming

Composer: Sophie Dupuis / **Tenor:** Daniel Wheeler

The Homecoming features a fictional crew member of the HMCS Shawinigan, a corvette that was attacked in the Cabot Strait by a German submarine during World War II. The ship sunk in less than four minutes, taking down all 91 members of the crew. This opera is an attempt to capture some of the fear and heaviness of the loss experienced by those serving in war, and by their friends and families.

The Dream of the White Robe and the Floating Island

Composer: Liam Elliot / **Soprano:** Lisa Faieta

The Dream of the White Robe and the Floating Island is a retelling of a Mi'kmaq legend that chronicles the first arrival of European settlers to Mi'kmaq territory. The legend is told through the eyes of a Catholic priest, the Wise Men of the the Mi'kmaq, and a young woman who first predicts the Europeans' arrival.

the after time

Composer: Jenny Johnson / **Sopranos:** Nicole London with Alondra Vega-Zaldivar

the after time meditates on the surreal emotional experiences of a young woman following a mysterious accident she cannot remember--an accident that also resulted in the tragic death of her best friend. Hovering between life and death, she encounters a ghost, and faces unspoken feelings for her friend, as well as her pressing need to decide between the pain and ecstasy of staying alive, and the unknown terror of dying.

Bay of Fundy

Composer: Fiona Linnane / **Soprano:** Vania Chan

Bay of Fundy is a short comic opera for soprano inspired by tidal ranges, the Atlantic Ocean, and separation. While waiting for a phone call, Katy, the wife of a marine biologist who is working at sea, tells us about tidal ranges, having the house to herself, and the wild imaginings she has when she worries about her husband's safety.

Lost Souls

Composer: Sally Norris / **Baritone:** Stuart Hiseler

Lost Souls searches for the identity of men lost at sea. It explores and celebrates the reciprocity between us and this formidable creature, and advocates for continued guardianship of its well-being and the safety of the sea-faring community. Unity is created through sustained harmonic construction and range, differences explored through texture and articulation.

Marguerite Helen McKay: An Epistolary Opera

Composer: Christopher Reiche / **Soprano:** Kate Corrigan

Marguerite Helen McKay is an invitation to get to know my great grandmother in her own words. The text provides an insight into her thoughts and day-to-day life in small town, depression era Nova Scotia. Taken from letters she wrote to her sister between March and June 1930, this non-narrative opera's goal is to allow you to know the person that was Marguerite Helen McKay.

Opera From Scratch 2014

Oceano Nox

Composer: Anna Hostman / **Soprano:** Jayani Abeysekera

Victor Hugo's youngest daughter Adèle was a child when her older sister, Leopoldine was drowned on the Seine. Although Victor Hugo wrote *Oceano Nox* a few years before this tragedy, it was a prescient foreshadowing of Leopoldine's drowning, and the later psychological drowning of his younger daughter Adèle to schizophrenia. Once a beautiful composer and writer, Adèle obsessively and tragically followed an English lieutenant to Halifax, a journey into complete mental unbalance and deterioration. She was returned to France completely broken, placed in a sanatorium, and was forgotten.

5 Shades of Emma

Composer: Jackson Fairfax-Perry / **Soprano:** Ann Denny

5 Shades of Emma is a comedic retelling of the Greek myth Orpheus and Eurydice, told from the viewpoint of the latter, here renamed Emma. It follows her journey through the underworld, reimagined as Halifax's Public Gardens, as she experiences the 5 stages/shades of death/grief.

Who Married Star Husbands

Composer: Shuying Li / **Soprano:** Sarah Albu with Krystyna MacKay (soprano) and Andrew Machum (baritone)

The Women Who Married Star Husbands is a short operetta based on a Mik'maq indigenous legend of two sisters who find themselves in the world above the sky while wishing on stars. This retelling examines the bonds between siblings, the tenuous nature of relationships and marriage, and what it means to truly shine. "The river breaks and we on its banks must choose a path."

La Belle Adèle

Composer: Sophie Dupuis / **Soprano:** Lauren Bryant-Monk

Adèle Hugo is in Saint-Mandé, the asylum where she spent the rest of her life. She recounts her adventures and emotional turmoil while at the pursuit of Lieutenant Albert Pinson. Her irrational infatuation with Pinson, due to her schizophrenia, drove her to follow the man to Halifax then to Barbados, where he had been deployed.

Mother of Dinosaurs: The First Reptiles

Composer: Fiona Ryan / **Soprano:** Caroline Whalen

A tale of life, death, and the discovery of Nova Scotia's provincial fossil. A time travelling opera that will transport you back over 300 million years to meet the first reptiles to ever walk the earth: the ancestors of dinosaurs.

One-Eleven Heavy

Composer: Matt Frey / **Soprano:** Karianne Pasma
with Andrew Machum (baritone) / Krystyna MacKay (soprano)

The passengers aboard Swissair Flight 111, which plunged into the Atlantic off the coast of Halifax in 1998, had no idea that anything was wrong until just before impact. What is it like to know death is imminent – in perhaps only minutes? *One-Eleven Heavy* harnesses this emotion and gives a glimpse into the aftermath of the disaster. Told in reverse chronology, the libretto is culled from interviews with first responders and family members of the victims as well as newspaper accounts of the tragedy.

Opera From Scratch 2015

Voice on the Wire

Composer: Carrie Magin **Librettist:** Kendall A. **Soprano:** Erin Passmore

Mabel Bell was the deaf wife of Alexander Graham Bell. In *Voice on the Wire*, she progresses from frustration and sadness that she can't use her husband's famous invention, to acceptance and encouragement as he pursues the development of the telephone instead of technologies for the deaf. Mabel comes to understand the significance of her connection to Alec as well as her contribution to the world.

All that Glitters

Composer: Matthew Tozer **Soprano:** Diana Cantrelle

All that Glitters tells the tale of Rusty the pirate and the buried treasure that he guards. *All that Glitters* is based loosely on Acadian folk legends.

the hopewell

Composer: Rachel Devorah Trapp **Soprano:** Malina Rauschenfels

the hopewell is about crossing into the unknown. It's based on an 1835 account of a nonagenarian's childhood voyage from Ireland to Nova Scotia published in the *Novascotian-Colonial Herald*.

Ja/ck/ie

Composer: Justin Jaramillo **Soprano:** Audrey Coté

Jackie, an elderly woman, contemplates her diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder. With text by Nova Scotian poet Kenneth Leslie.

A Haunted Tableau

Composer/Soprano: Alondra Vega-Zaldivar

In a *Haunted Tableau*, we are immersed in the haunted house of a Halifax ghost who wants to be the "scariest ghost alive" and finds her opportunity when a teenager walks in complaining about her misfortune. The two realize that they're similar and really just want someone to talk to, and not feel like a ghost after all.

The Pool of Memory

Composer: Christopher Park **Soprano:** Therese Abalo

The mythological character Mnemosyne welcomes the souls of the *Titanic* and sings about how to navigate the entrance to the afterlife. Mrs. McClure, a survivor, and Mrs. Strauss, who remained with her husband in the sinking ship, recall events of the tragedy. The text for *The Pool* is taken from Jay Henry Mowbray's *The Sinking of the Titanic (1912)*, and Richard Janko's translation (*The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 1984) of ancient gold leaves that contain instructions to departed souls.

Five and a half days

Composer: Kit Vaughan Sodan **Librettist:** Stephen Spencer **Soprano:** Lisa Perry

In the autumn of 1958, the town of Springhill, Nova Scotia, experienced three large underground earthquakes, called "bumps." Of the 174 miners in the mine at the time of the earthquake, 75 miners were killed by the earthquake and 99 survived. This mini-opera is a piece of historical fiction. The protagonist, Violet, is a fictional character developed by the librettist and the composer as they imagined what a wife of one of the miners might have gone through waiting to hear news of her beloved.

Opera From Scratch 2016

The Patterns of War

Composer: Steven Webb **Soprano:** Laura Mackay

The seemingly never-ending cycle of war is one that Mona Parsons, from Wolfville NS, experienced firsthand. Married to a Dutch businessman, Parsons was instrumental in saving many Allied airmen's lives during the Second World War. Through a combination of sound and music, the opera examines her desperate and frightening situation as she risked her life opposing the Nazi regime, while providing insight into Mona's incredible strength of spirit and selfless nature in the face of adversity.

Farewell to Nova Scotia

Composer: Tristan Zaba **Tenor:** Lucas Kuipers

A lighthouse keeper goes through stages of acceptance following a vision of his death, eventually arriving at the final moment. Features the Nova Scotian Ballad of the same name.

Trigger

Composer: Jessica Rudman **Soprano:** Afton Forsberg

In 2014, a Nova Scotian law enforcement officer was recorded disparaging a woman who had filed a domestic assault complaint against her boyfriend. In the recording, the officer implied that the victim might be lying about her injuries and asked if she deserved to get hit. "I was very disturbed by the situation, and my reactions to it were ultimately realized in *Trigger*."

what do you see?

Composer: Marc Hoffeditz **Soprano:** Sarah Hennessey

Poet El Jones struggles to write her final speech as Poet Laureate of Nova Scotia. After reminiscing on her time in this position, she must embrace what has happened and what will happen as she further develops her career.

Annie Kempton

Composer: Sojourner Hodges **Soprano:** Kristen McConnell

Annie Kempton was a 14-year-old Bear River NS girl who was murdered on a winter night in 1896. This setting focuses on Annie's fragmented memories of her life and death, including a brief revelation that the wrong man was accused and hung.

Violet

Composer: Kit Vaughan Soden; **Soprano:** Lisa Perry

Violet is a scene from larger opera that spun out of a mini-opera composed for the 2015 Opera from Scratch, where we first met the protagonist, Violet, on a fateful morning in 1958 in Springhill NS. The current mini-opera takes place much earlier in Violet's life, in the early 1940's, when she is a young woman living on Cape Breton Island. It is a happy moment as Violet recounts to us the story of the meeting, or actually the re-meeting, of a childhood friend, who is the man that she will eventually marry.