

## 'Fairytale' continues for budding opera singer

Warner to sing lead role in Cendrillon; joins Calgary Opera this fall

By Stephanie Hounsell  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

This weekend, opera singer Cassandra Warner will take to the stage in fairytale fashion, no doubt bedecked in a sumptuous ball gown and surrounded by a set that's nothing short of enchanting.

She'll dance the night away with her prince charming until the stroke of midnight.

"It's absolutely gorgeous," Warner said of Jules Massenet's Cendrillon, The Cinderella Story. "It's completely lush musically (and) has beautiful costumes. It's a sparkly fairytale."

But the true magic of the performance will have nothing to do with Warner's dress or a glass slipper that fits just right.

It'll be the voice of the 25-year-old mezzo-soprano.

Warner will sing the lead role of Cinderella in the Glenn Gould School performance Sunday at 2 p.m. and next Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the new Koerner Hall in The Royal Conservatory's TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. (at Avenue Road), in Toronto.

### Farewell performance

It'll be a bittersweet experience, marking Warner's last performance with The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School, where she's been studying for the past five years, earning her performance diploma.

In October, her career as a professional opera singer will officially begin as she joins the Calgary Opera.

Warner is the first to admit her life over the past few years has been something of a fairytale, with her opera career affording her opportunities to travel across the world, sing



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM LEYES

**NEW CHALLENGE AWAITS:** Though sad to be leaving The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School, Cassandra Warner eagerly awaits the next chapter in her opera singing career, which will come with the Calgary Opera.

for VIPs and appear on TV and radio.

"I've been pretty fortunate," she said.

She might even be tempted to wonder if things have gone a little too well. Will her carriage turn into a pumpkin?

Fortunately, she has an overriding sense she's exactly where she's supposed to be, doing what she's supposed to do — whether of her own making or with some help from something bigger.

"I half believe in fate, half believe it's what you make of life," she said.

Accolades are in no short order.

Warner has been featured on CBC television and radio, as well as Toronto's Classical 96.3FM. In 2007, she toured China with vocal trio The Divas, whose performance was broadcast nationwide on TV and radio.

She had her principal debut at Opera Atelier last fall and performed at the Elgin Theatre — an unusual feat for someone so young.

"At the ripe old age of 24, I made my professional debut. That's actually quite unheard of. There aren't many people who break in that early," she explained.

She's also the recipient of Glenn Gould School's highest scholarship in voice.

Growing up, Warner was involved in music, particularly in school, although not vocally.

She played piano and alto saxophone, receiving encouragement from music teachers at Stewarttown Middle School and Milton District High School, where she played in jazz bands.

She was also involved in sports, and actually dreamed of being a professional soccer player. That dream was set aside after she sustained a knee injury toward the end of high school.

### Discovers new passion

Finding some extra time on her hands, Warner decided to take singing lessons.

"It hit me very quickly, the opera bug," she said. "I found myself very quickly skyrocketed into this realm of music."

She was taken with the way opera brings together many art forms including singing, acting, dancing and set design.

"It really is a sensory explosion," she said. "It's like nothing else."

Warner's mom, Lina, couldn't be more proud.

"We're very excited for her," Lina said. "We had no idea her voice would take her to where she's at now."

Warner hopes more people will give opera a try, maybe even starting by attending Cendrillon. Opera, she said, isn't some "hoity-toity" thing for the upper classes.

"Opera is for the people," she said.

Although Cendrillon is sung in French, there are English subtitles — not that they're necessary, Warner said, explaining that as with any opera, the story can be felt even if it can't be understood word for word.

Tickets cost \$10, \$20 and \$30 and are available by calling (416) 408-0208 or visiting [www.rcmusic.ca](http://www.rcmusic.ca).

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