



## Denise Williams CURRICULUM VITAE

Singer, Voice Teacher, Adjudicator, Music Facilitator, Artistic Director/Producer  
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[www.nostringstheatre.com](http://www.nostringstheatre.com)

### Holding the culture of musical creativity high!

Denise Williams draws on her passion for the performing arts, her extensive professional performing and teaching experience in the industry, and her network of talented professionals to spread the joy of artistic performance and education. She believes that music has a transformative power which can unify people across many barriers.

### Highlights of Stage Appearances and Business Development

Canadian soprano Denise Williams is a versatile and accomplished singer who is equally at home on the concert, opera and theatre stages. Highlights of her performance career include a concert performance with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Oriente in Cuba, Walk Together Children - A Cross-Cultural Concert Celebration (Black, Jewish, Muslim) at the George Weston Recital Hall, Toronto (Fall 2018), the role of 'Monisha' in The Nathaniel Dett Chorale's concert performance of *Treemonisha* at Koerner Hall, the cast of Mirvish's North American Premier of *The Sound of Music* at the Princes of Wales Theatre, and other highlighted solo performances including *African Sanctus* with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, *Spirituals* with Kathleen Battle, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, excerpts from *Porgy and Bess* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the title role of the Canadian stage premiere *Portia White-First You Dream* (Eastern Front Theatre, Halifax, NS and Theatre North West, Prince George, BC). She was a founding member of Tafelmusick choir, the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, and sang as a solo lead with various other choral groups namely Musica Antiqua, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Toronto Jewish Folk Choir, St Thomas' Anglican Church, Metropolitan United Church, Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, among others.

Over the years, Denise has collaborated with many notable artists such as musician and producer, Andrew Craig (*King's Playlist*), visual artist, Robin Pacific (*A Black Tie Affair*), baritone, Marcus Nance, and pianists, Brahm Goldhamer and Nina Shapilsky. Denise has created many self-produced concerts that blend unique themes and diverse cultures (Music in Times of Conflict-Strauss and Weill, *Sophisticated Soul*, *Classical Steel*). Her CD, *Walk Together Children*, is a cross-cultural initiative, featuring music from the roots of Black & Jewish music and has been aired on CBC's *Music Around Us*. Denise is a long-standing community arts educator, currently concentrating her efforts on performance education, community arts engagement, has a wealth of music education, integrated arts promotion, marketing, and production experience and has recently completed a masters in community music at Wilfrid Laurier University.

### Education

Masters of Community Music, Wilfrid Laurier University, (2019)  
Arts and Entertainment Administration - Raymond Chang School, Toronto Metropolitan U (formerly Ryerson), (2013)  
Kodaly Pedagogy Certificate, RCM, (1992)  
Early Childhood Music Education, RCM/Ryerson, (1992)  
ARCT Singing Diploma, Royal Conservatory of Music, (1990)  
Bachelor of Science, University of Toronto, Trinity College, (1981)

## Professional Development Workshops

Anti-Racist Theatre: A Foundational Course - Nicole Brewer, (June 2021)

Singing With Style - Matt Edwards, Head of Voice and Artistic Director of the Contemporary Commercial Music Pedagogy at Shenandoah University, (March 2021)

Anti-Racist Theatre Workshop - Nicole Brewer, (October 2020)

NATS Professional Development Workshop with Matt Edwards- Technical & stylistic ingredients in CCM & Music Theatre styles, (April 2017)

## Relevant Work Experience

### Faculty Professor

The curricula for all faculty positions below were also adapted for virtual delivery during the pandemic lockdown periods.

2018 - present

Sheridan College Music Theatre - Part-time Faculty - courses taught:

Historically Informed Performance Practise - building student-centred curricula to accomplish the learning goals of studying music theatre style origins and its development through to the Golden Age

Vocal Technique - building student-centred curricula to accomplish the learning goals of acquiring creativity and artistry in vocal performance as well as discussions on vocal health, range and voice classifications in the modern world

Teaching Private Vocal Tutorials - 1st year through to 4th yr students

2016 - 2021

Canada Christian College - Sessional Voice Professor in the Korean Department

built student-centred curriculum to accomplish the learning goals of acquiring practical skills for music sacred music leadership (classical and CCM voice technique, style, vocal warm-up exercises, musicianship skills, music collaboration,)

Private voice lessons with college students - 1st year to PhD

### Private Voice Lessons

1990 - present

Voices of Colour Music (previously Denise Williams Studio) - owner of voice studio, trained and managed 2 teaching assistants – private voice lessons, masterclasses, music theory, speech arts and drama (currently teaching ages 7 to77+)

Sept 2011 - 2012

Nathaniel Dett Youth Chorale - taught vocal technique to Afro-Centric pre-college youth

1998-2000

Kingdom Covenant Center Pat Francis Ministries- voice teacher for worship team

### Founder, Artistic Director, Producer, Music Director

2005 - present

Founder of No Strings Theatre (charitable organization) - create, produce and oversee music theatre workshops, training, showcases, seminars, produced full stage productions and new work developments for pre-college students, and emerging artists; recently launched a summer opera young artist intensive program for site-specific performance in rural Ontario.

## **Voice Adjudicator and Examiner**

Examiner Jan 2001 - present Royal Conservatory of Music Voice Examiner  
Adjudicator 2000 - present Chatham Kiwanis Music Festival (2016), Brantford Kiwanis Music Festival (April 2014 & 2015), Windsor Kiwanis Music Festival (2009), Burlington Music Festival (2003), Peel Music Festival (2000), Ontario Registered Music Teachers Association, Mississauga Branch (2022)

## **Lectures/International Symposia**

International lectures and panel discussions on race, equity, diversity, inclusion and social intervention

### Saskatchewan Music (March 2022)

Virtual Panel Discussion in honour of International Woman's Day - The Work/Life/Art Balance of Female Artists

### Wilfrid Laurier University (February 2022)

Guest Lecturer for Undergraduate Community Music students, virtual

Topic: Cultural and Musical Intersections - a look at the music commonalities of forcible migrants and notable effects of Black and Jewish music interconnections throughout the 20th and 21st century.

### Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (February 2022)

Roots, Rhythm and Resilience: Musical Intersections of Black and Jewish Diasporas

Guest speakers: musicians and educators Denise Williams and Jordan Klapman

A four-part virtual lecture and concert series exploring the cultural, musical, and political intersectionality of Black and Jewish cultures throughout the centuries – the effects of their forcible migrations and marginalizations, common struggles for equality, musical assimilations, and quests for bridging the gaps. Presented as part of Black History Month.

### International Centre for Community Music (ICCM), York St John University, UK, (June 2020)

Music Collaboration Across Difference: Community Music Projects from Canada

Invited to present at a virtual webinar where we shared discussions of various opportunities and limitations that music can have across cultures of privilege and oppression

Presented a precis of my 2018 Master's capstone based on intercultural sharing of music.

### 'Walk Together Children' Symposium, Toronto (September 2018)

Prepared and presented a symposium based on the intercultural 2018 Black, Jewish, and Muslim concert program and corresponding narrative research capstone featuring some of the concert musicians. This was designed to stimulate dialogues on cultural music roots, sharing, colonial infiltrations, ways toward better understanding.

Excerpts: [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMwRwsMszPRmb-jn1YN\\_Ic5QBKk1yDhTT](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMwRwsMszPRmb-jn1YN_Ic5QBKk1yDhTT)

### International Centre for Community Music, York St John University, UK (September 2018)

Music and Social Intervention Networks Symposium (in person and remote presenters)

Presented a Video Poster of the 'Walk Together Children' concert/capstone and its social commentary on building race relations. This was a remote presentation followed by a question-and-answer period. Video: <https://youtu.be/POmadRMj1mM>

## **Community Facilitation Workshops/Choirs/Artist in Schools**

### Malton Black Development Association - Black Excellence in Schools Program (June-August 2022)

Created multi-disciplined artistic programming (music, dance, visual arts, creative writing), for at-risk Black youth (ages 12-14) in the Malton community. Managed 4 well-established Black creative team mentors. Deliverables included introduction to the arts, acquisition of artistic skills and behavioural objectives (etiquette, listening, communication, cooperation, self-efficacy).

### Mel Brown Festival Round Table, Waterloo, ON (May 2022)

Served on a panel of Educators Topic - Equity Diversity, and Inclusion in Higher Level Education

Black on Stage (2020, 2021) - As the AD of No Strings Theatre, formulated a virtual panel discussion open to the public, with Black identifying performing artists (established and emerging) relating their experiences on mainstream stages.

Beechwood Manor Seniors Residence, Waterloo, ON (2018-2019)

Culturally diverse music facilitations for seniors

Choral Workshops on vocal technique and music style

Jubilate Singers (2016 - present)

Common Thread Choir (2016 - present)

Assistant choral director Royal Conservatory of Music Repertory Choir (2005 - 2006)

Royal St. Georges College- junior choir director (2003)

CAMMAC - *Singing Afro-American Spirituals; 'Let my people Go' - Common threads in Black and Jewish music* (1998)

Children's Programs

Director of St. Simon's Church Community Children's Choir, Royal Conservatory of Music - Early Childhood Music Educator, Suzuki Music Camps, Director of St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club Choir, Afterschool programs, Performance and Education programs on Black Cultural Music for the Toronto District School Board (1988-2001)

City of York Parks and Recreation (1995) - planned and delivered music and drama workshops for day camp counsellors

**Juror**

Ontario Arts Council - Music Organizations' Operating Advisory Panel (2017)

FACTOR Music Recording Grant Panel (2006)

**Self-Produced Concert Programs**

Music in Times of Conflict - Richard Strauss and Kurt Weill (2002)

Classical Steel - Classics with Steel Pan Orchestra (2000 - present)

Sophisticated Soul - Classical music with soulful, Afrocentric themes (2005 - present)

Walk Together Children - A cross-cultural multidisciplinary concert program of Black, Jewish and Muslim Diasporas (1996 - present) *Concert Excerpts:* <https://youtu.be/oE9L8iU9fHU>

**Research Capstone**

*My Voice, Your Voice, Our Voices: Dialogues with musicians of African Jewish and Muslim Diasporas in Toronto*

A narrative study that informed 1) the strong influence of Western music creating much fluidity of the cultural music divide and a situation of imprecise ownership of the music, 2) the quest for authenticity in music practices, and 3) the situation of racial marginalisation, injustice, and stereotyping having a substantial effect on the artistic practices and overall success of these groups (October, 2018).

## Awards/Grants

Ontario Arts Council - Music Production and Presentation (March 2022), “*Walk Together Children: Roots and Intersections*” (March 2023) in collaboration with the Jubilate Singers - Awarded

Ontario Arts Council - Opera Projects (October 2022), Site-specific, Bizet’s *Carmen* (No Strings Theatre in collaboration with Opera by Request) - Pending

## Added Experience

Social Media Marketing, Audience Development and Engagement, Grant Writing, Board Chair

## Active Professional Memberships

National Association for Teachers of Singing (2009 - present)

Ontario Registered Music Teachers Association - Central Toronto Branch (2009 - present), President June 2020 - June 2022

Canadian Actors Equity Association (2004 - present)

ACTRA (2004 - present)

Royal College of RCM Examiners (2000 - present)

## Other Memberships

Lions International 2006 – 2019 (past president of the Toronto Onyx Lions Club)

## References and Recommendations upon request

## Websites and other Social Links

<https://www.denisewilliamssoprano.com/>

<https://www.nostringstheatre.com/>

<https://www.voicesofcolourmusic.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/denisewilliamssoprano/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/denisewilliamssoprano/>

[https://www.facebook.com/WalkTogetherChildrenToronto/?modal=admin\\_todo\\_tour](https://www.facebook.com/WalkTogetherChildrenToronto/?modal=admin_todo_tour)

<https://www.instagram.com/operadenise/?hl=en>

<https://www.youtube.com/@denisewilliamssoprano>

<https://www.youtube.com/@NOSTRINGSTHEATRE>

[NST SUMMER 2022 - https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhLjI6sNyqa9VZMvQpj42ZKxyO8fxJReA](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhLjI6sNyqa9VZMvQpj42ZKxyO8fxJReA)

## Testimonials

"Denise's experience and talent is only matched by her passion. She is a supporter of not only her student's singing ambitions but their writing, creativity, careers, and well being. Every lesson and Masterclass with Denise is a warm and welcoming space, and I have always learned something new. Denise has been a mentor, a teacher, and a friend to me since we met and has changed my approach to singing and teaching. It is thanks to her that I have the confidence and drive I have today." *Kathleen Mills, Sheridan graduate, writer, composer, and teacher*

"Two years ago I thought I had lost my singing voice forever. I was teaching kindergarten through a mask and doing everything I could to keep my kindies safe. Subconsciously I changed the way I spoke through a mask and ended up with vocal nodules. I worked with an ENT and started to get my voice back again. Now I am so thankful to be working with the incredible soprano Denise Williams. She has helped me re-train and strengthen and restore my voice. I thought I had lost my singing voice forever and now it is better than before and I am hitting notes I had never reached before!" *Amy Craze, Private Voice Student, 2022, [www.amycraze.com](http://www.amycraze.com)*

Denise Williams is an incredibly gifted vocal coach, mentor, and teacher. I have been working with Denise for the past few years, and my vocal ability has grown further with her than I ever thought possible. I came to Denise with very little training and technical knowledge of my voice, singing mostly pop, jazz, and blues style music with poor technique, but with her guidance, I am now able to expand my repertoire to include musical theatre, classical, and even some opera with better technique. Denise possesses a wealth of knowledge when it comes to vocal pedagogy but can explain the technical aspects in a very straightforward and practical manner, while tailoring her coaching to each individual student's instrument and needs. She brings her own passion for music and imparts it to her students with joy and excitement, along with patient warmth and understanding when tackling difficult vocal issues. Aside from being a talented opera singer and performer herself, Denise is also the Founding Artistic Producer and Director of No Strings Theatre and is fully immersed in the creative process for the entire company's productions and endeavors. She is a champion of inclusivity and equality and provides opportunities for many people who are underprivileged and underrepresented in the theatre world. I would not have had the opportunity to grow and develop as a singer, artist, and performer if I had not met Denise, and I am honoured to be her student and friend. Denise is an absolute treasure to Toronto's music scene, and I would highly recommend her to anyone looking for vocal lessons and expand their musical endeavours! *Glenn Sevillo, Private Voice Student, 2017-2022*

"Denise is more than a teacher. She is a strong resource and the source of flourishing capacity." *Andrea McLean, Private Voice Student,*

"Denise is able to coordinate large numbers of people with ease, respect for their individual requirements while maintaining a high professional standard. Her attention to detail, both logistically and artistically is beyond reproach. I sincerely hope that we have the opportunity to work together again in the future."

*Steve Wilsher, Stunt coordinator / Stunt Performer / Stunt Rigger at Film & TV. Steve worked directly with Denise at No Strings Theatre*

"Denise worked with a wide range of voice types, ages with incredible ease and formed an enjoyable professional experience with No Strings as the artistic director. I recommend her for both private vocal coaching and her company No Strings to any person seeking a professional theatre and/or vocal experience."

*Kearyn Vos, Stage Manager. Kearyn worked directly with Denise at No Strings Theatre*

I have had students participate in the No-Strings Theatre program repeatedly and they thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I personally have attended final performances and found them to be of high quality, well-polished and entertaining. A consummate professional, Denise garners respect and admiration from both peers and students alike.

*Norma Churchill, Voice Examiner at Royal Conservatory of Music. Norma worked directly with Denise at The Royal Conservatory of Music*

"I met Denise through her students' participation in the North York Music Festival. I was very impressed by how well her students were taught, since most of them received very high marks and awards. I was also admiring the amount of personal attention each student receives. She was at the festival all the time, listening to and encouraging her students. Her students, from children to seniors, presented an admirable variety of repertoire and sung in different genres. I believe any student will be very lucky to have Denise Williams for a teacher." *Ella Poret, Chair and Founder, North York Music Festival*

"Denise is a deeply knowledgeable, effective, and compassionate teacher. She is able to connect with students of all levels and backgrounds, and can work with a huge range of musical styles. She is also a dynamic and moving performer in opera, musical theatre, art song and church music. I would not hesitate to recommend her wholeheartedly." *Erika Reiman, Independent Classical Music Professional*

"Denise is a creative and caring teacher who goes beyond technique to the true meaning of the voice. Her holistic approach brings out the best in each student and allows everyone to start from what they know, not what they don't know. I highly recommend Denise as a voice teacher and coach for anyone at any age or level." *the late Katherine Scott, Colleague*

Working with No Strings Theatre for my Directorial debut was nothing short of a dream. The support given to me as both an artist and administrator was almost more than one could ask for. Denise Williams and her team provided a safe, nurturing space for myself and my artists to explore Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*. The environment created by Denise, her team at No Strings Theatre, along with their partnership with Opera By Request was extraordinarily successful in combining artists of all skill levels and backgrounds. The seasoned professionals were still challenged in their art, and those artists who had zero operatic experience were able to perform a complete role in a fully-staged opera in less than a month. I am honoured to be given the opportunity to share my directorial debut with No Strings Theatre. It was an experience like no other, and I am thrilled at the possibility of future collaborations. *Gregory Finney, Director*

It has been my pleasure to have been associated with No Strings Theatre, as mentor, collaborator, and simply audience member, for a decade or more. From my first association with the organization, I have been impressed by its diversity and inclusivity, in terms of participants, program content, and audience outreach. It has been extremely gratifying over the years to witness new talent, nurtured by No Strings Theatre, achieve unimaginable success in the professional theatre world in southern Ontario and beyond. The creation of new work by some of its participants has achieved wide-spread recognition among directors, producers and performers. Throughout my association with this organization, I have never ceased to be impressed by the combination of kindness, encouragement, and professionalism bestowed by its director, Denise Williams. Those of us, like myself, who have also acted in a directorial capacity from time to time, have striven to live up to this example. I look forward to the continued success and ongoing achievements of No Strings Theatre. *William Shookhoff, Director, Opera by Request*