

The Dallas Opera Announces Claire Lewis as the 2026/2027 Season Peak Fellow



[Dallas, April 21, 2026]—[The Dallas Opera \(TDO\)](#) is pleased to announce **Claire Lewis** as the company's second **Martha R. and Preston A. Peak Fellow** for the upcoming 2026/2027 Season. An extension of the [Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors](#) (HIWC), this seasonal fellowship position is given to one HIWC alumna each season.

Lewis (HIWC Class of 2025) won Chamber Orchestra of New York's Respighi Prize and debuted at Carnegie Hall at age 19. She has participated in conductor training programs with New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Richmond Symphony, and the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship Mentoring Program.

"Claire is a highly talented conductor and pianist," TDO Chorus Director and Head of Music Paolo Bressan says. "During her time at The Dallas Opera this winter, we were impressed by her curiosity, her personal approach to the music, and her ability to interact with the orchestra. I am eager to watch her continue to mature as a conductor during her Peak Fellowship."

The **Martha R. and Preston A. Peak Fellowship** was established during the 2025/2026 Season, with Jingqi Zhu (HIWC class of 2023) as the inaugural Peak Fellow. The position provides practical, firsthand experience as an assistant conductor, rehearsal pianist, offstage conductor, vocal coach, assistant chorus director, and more. "My Peak Fellowship experience was even more dense and expansive than my HIWC experience," Zhu says. "The takeaways and impacts were richer and deeper from many perspectives, and I now feel far more confident stepping into these roles when opportunities arise in my professional career."

During her fellowship, Lewis will observe various rehearsals of THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN on the TDO mainstage; work closely with Mrs. Eugene McDermott Music Director Emmanuel Villaume and Bressan; attend the virtual Hart Institute training with the class of 2026 as a speaker; and conduct two student matinee performances of Rachel Portman's THE LITTLE PRINCE, adapted by TDO in a shorter version. She will also attend performances of TDO mainstage productions and connect with TDO administrative staff to learn how music directors work with various opera company departments.

"I'm honored to be the 2026/2027 Martha R. and Preston A. Peak Fellowship Fellow, and I'm especially excited to bring *The Little Prince* to young audiences while learning firsthand from Emmanuel Villaume and Paolo Bressan," Lewis says. "I'm also looking forward to engaging with the next cohort of the Hart Institute for Women Conductors and sharing a bit of my own path as I continue to grow through this experience."

Each season, the new Peak Fellow is selected from the previous season's Hart Institute class. Established in 2015, the Hart Institute addresses the leadership gender imbalance on operatic and symphonic podiums around the world by training the next generations of women conductors. [Applications](#) for the 2026/2027 Season Hart Institute are open through June 1, 2026, at 11:59 PM CDT.

More about the Hart Institute:

The Hart Institute has been one of the brass rings for women conductors over the past 10 years, having already offered career advancement through advanced coaching and mentorship to 49 conductors. These alumnae have gone on to receive appointments as music directors, principal conductors, principal guest conductors, and guest conductors on some of the world's most prestigious stages, including Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Opera Theater, Opera Australia, Washington National Opera, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Musikverein in Vienna, New York Philharmonic, BBC Proms,

LA Opera, Seattle Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, West Australian Ballet, English National Opera, Delaware Symphony, São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Opera, and many more.

Above image: Claire Lewis conducts The Dallas Opera Orchestra during a reading in February 2026. c. Amy O'Neil.

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