

OPERA CANADA

ARTIST OF THE WEEK

22 Qs for Kwamé Ryan

by **Máiri Demings** | Dec 8, 2025 | **Artist of the Week, Featured, News**



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The Artist of the Week is **Trinidadian-Canadian conductor Kwamé Ryan**. He will be making his **Metropolitan Opera** debut conducting **Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*** from December 2nd to January 24th.

Kwamé is in his second season as Music Director of the **Charlotte Symphony Orchestra** and formerly held the positions of General Music director of **Freiburg Opera** and musical and Artistic Director of the **National Orchestra of Bordeaux Aquitaine**.

Along with his Met debut, this season he will return to **Washington National Opera** and the **New York Philharmonic**.

This week, Kwame shares his long history with *Porgy and Bess*, what success looks like to him and his favourite kitchen gadgets.

Read on to find out more.

Drink of choice?

Everyday Drink: Lemon Ginger Tea; Cocktail: Mojito

Favourite city that you've worked in?

Amsterdam

Top 3 favourite operas

Tosca, Salome, Porgy and Bess

What's the strangest/funniest thing that has happened to you on stage?

I noticed a few minutes into a university opera performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* that the percussionist hadn't turned up. There were percussion sounds (church bells and whip cracks) that triggered chorus actions on stage, so during the overture, I had to communicate to the 4th horn player in sign language that he should go over to the percussion to play the bell solo and exactly seven whip cracks —which he did!

What are you afraid of?

Frogs, Snakes and Lizards

What was the first opera you ever saw?

Porgy and Bess

Are there more musicians in your family? If yes, who and what do they play/sing?

I'm the only musician in my family, but when I was growing up my Mom, a respected actress, would take me to rehearsals with her. So I had early exposure to the theater and a wide range of gifted creatives.

What's your favourite mind-calming practice?

Watching Rugby on TV. I used to play when I was a student and remain passionate about the sport.

Watching a good match takes my mind off music completely which is relaxing.

Where did you go to school?

Trinidad until my mid-teens, then I went to a boarding school in England with a strong music department.

Are you a cat person or dog person?

I'm a dog person, but I have met one or two "doggy cats" I really enjoyed.

What's the best meal you've ever had?

I love Indian food and recently had a menu at [Indian Accent](#) in New York which blew my socks off.

What was your childhood dream job?

I told my folks I wanted to be a conductor when I was seven, so I'm actually doing my childhood dream job!

Are you happiest in the country or in the city?

I love the city for work, but need the country to regenerate.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Double Decker Carrot Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

Which TV show did you binge-watch last?

The Outsider

Do you enjoy cooking? If yes, what is your best dish?

I like to cook but only if I can use fun kitchen technology to make delicious things quickly. My Thermomix or Air Fryer curries and stews are popular in our household.

What is something most people don't know about you?

I'm a trained Yoga Teacher and Ayurveda Consultant.

What is one very popular thing that you have no interest in?

Social Media

When was the first time you cried at the opera?

Recently, during a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*.

How old were you when you discovered opera?

Seven years old.

Are you a perfectionist?

Only in my work. I'm quite relaxed in other areas of life.

What does success look like to you?

Being professionally fulfilled and materially comfortable, while being physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.