
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Mississauga Arts Council announces the co-winners of the 2025
Arts for Mental Health Award**

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**Ian Hoare and Ruth Watkiss are recognized for bringing joy to
persons living with dementia through music by high school
students**

Mississauga, ON - October 7, 2025

Mississauga Arts Council (MAC) is pleased to announce the co-winners of this year's Arts for Mental Health Award, **Ian Hoare** (Music Teacher, Mentor College) & **Ruth Watkiss** (Music Therapist, Alzheimer Society Peel), co-founders of **Memories to Music**, a program that captures the stories and legacies of persons living with dementia through the musical talents of high school music students.

Sponsored by Bell Canada, this influential award recognizes the work of those who have made a significant contribution to arts for mental health initiatives in Mississauga. The award will be presented at MAC's gala fundraiser for the arts, the **MACsquerade Black Tie & Versailles**, on **November 20th, 2025, at Luxe Convention Centre at the Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre**.

"To receive the Arts for Mental Health Award is a tremendous validation of music's power to connect and bridge generations," says **Ruth Watkiss (Alzheimer Society Peel), 2025 Arts for Mental Health Award Co-Winner**, "This honour shines a light directly on persons living with dementia in our programs, celebrating the person within the diagnosis and reinforcing the importance of person-centred care. We sincerely hope this recognition brings greater awareness to the Memories to Music program, allowing us to provide more clients the profound opportunity to have their unique life story beautifully commemorated in song."

"The Memories to Music project holds a special place in my heart as an educator. It has provided our students with a meaningful opportunity to extend their learning beyond the classroom and make a positive impact in the broader community," mentions **Ian Hoare (Mentor College), 2025 Arts for Mental Health Award Co-Winner**. "I'm deeply grateful to our friends and families at the Alzheimer Society Peel for welcoming our students and

supporting their creative growth. It's truly inspiring to witness their learning and development through this initiative."

"The Memories to Music program is a shining example of how the arts can transform lives," commends **Mike Douglas, Executive Director, MAC**. "For 17 years, Ian and Ruth have connected high school music students with persons living with dementia, bringing joy, sparking cherished memories, and inspiring compassion. Congratulations, Ian and Ruth; we are honoured to celebrate the lasting impact of your remarkable work."

All are welcome to congratulate Ian Hoare & Ruth Watkiss at the Arts for Mental Health Award presentation at the **MACsquerade Black Tie & Versailles** on **November 20, 2025, at Luxe Convention Centre in the Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre**. Inspired by the grandeur of Versailles, the 2025 MACsquerade features live and silent auctions, captivating performances, dancing, gourmet food and more.

Tickets are on sale now! Don't miss out on your chance to attend this highly anticipated event in support of the Mississauga Arts Council. Tickets are \$175 each with assigned seating at tables of 12. Discounted tickets, priced at \$150 each, are available for block bookings of 10 or 12 seats. **Learn more and get tickets:**
macarts.ca/events/macsquerade/

Proceeds from this elegant event help the Mississauga Arts Council deliver artist-focused development programs, such as [MicroGrants](#) that support local artist-led projects and [ArtsCare](#), which advocates for and funds arts-based mental health programming.

Thank you to our MACsquerade Black Tie & Versailles Sponsors!

Presenting Sponsor: Luxe Convention Centre in the Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre

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About The Memories to Music Program

Since 2008, the annual Memories to Music program, run by Mentor College and Alzheimer Society Peel, has brought Mississauga high school music students together to create personalized compositions for persons living with dementia. Students craft original pieces inspired by each client's life story or essence, gathered through

interviews and activities. The program culminates in a final performance, where students share their music with clients, family, and friends, honouring the lives of the clients and showcasing the creativity and dedication of the students.

About Ian Hoare

Ian Hoare (BMus., BEd., Queen's University) is celebrating his 40th year of teaching music at Mentor College, where he has been a cornerstone of the school's arts community. As founder of the music program, Ian developed a comprehensive curriculum from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 13. At the high school level, he leads the Concert Band, emphasizing community outreach through initiatives like Memories to Music. He also directs the Jazz Band, Choir, and serves as Musical Director for the school's annual theatre productions.

About Mentor College

Founded in 1982, Mentor College provides education for children from junior kindergarten through to university preparation. Students are grouped by age and experience into three levels: primary, intermediate, and high school, following the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum. Their experienced educators are selected for their knowledge, classroom expertise, and natural teaching ability. This blend of care and skill helps students reach their full potential while fostering a sense of personal achievement. Learn more: mentorcollege.edu

About Ruth Watkiss

For over twenty years, Ruth Watkiss, MTA, has been the dedicated music therapist at Alzheimer Society Peel (ASP), championing the belief that persons living with dementia can live life to the fullest through music. A leader in cultural change, Ruth has created innovative programs, including Memories to Music with Mentor College, Raising Voices with the Mississauga Festival Choir, and a partnership with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to strengthen community connections. She also led ASP to become Canada's first Music Care Certified organization, training over 20 staff to integrate music into care. Ruth's dedication ensures the connecting power of music is integrated and sustained across the entire organization, supporting quality of life throughout the dementia journey.

About Alzheimer Society Peel

Alzheimer Society Peel (AS) was incorporated in 1983 as a charitable non-profit society, and to date has become the largest chapter across Canada. Last year alone, ASP worked diligently to provide more than 109,000 units of support and services to 55,000 Persons Living with Dementia and their CarePartners. The society provides services across the Region of Peel with locations throughout Mississauga. Their chapter

promotes public and professional awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias while offering various programs and services. Alzheimer Society Peel works with all service providers and levels of government to ensure that optimum health and social services are provided for persons with Alzheimer's disease and their CarePartners in the Region of Peel. Learn more: alzpeel.com

About MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award

MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award recognizes leaders and organizations which improve the health of individuals through arts programs and activities. Sponsored by Bell Canada, this award is presented annually at the MACsquerade Ball to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organizations who are making a difference in our community. Previous winners include Anu Srivastava (V-Serve Canada, 2024), Sybil Rampen (Joshua Farm Gallery, 2023), Dr. Colin Saldanha (ArtsCare, 2022), Susan Ksiezopolski (WriteWell, 2021), Anna Silgado (Artists in Momentum, 2019), and Mind Forward Brain Injury Services (2018). Learn more: macarts.ca/a4mhaward

About MACsquerade Ball

The MACsquerade is the Mississauga Arts Council (MAC)'s annual gala fundraiser for the organization. Each uniquely themed gala features live performances by local Mississauga artists, silent and live auctions, dancing, gourmet food, an open bar, and the presentation of the Arts for Mental Health Award. Proceeds support artist-focused development programs, including MAC's MicroGrant program, which funds local artist-led projects, and ArtsCare, which advocates for and funds arts-based mental health initiatives. Learn more: macarts.ca/macsquerade

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For more information about MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award or MACsquerade Black Tie & Versailles, please contact:

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