

## Update on voice and opera alumni, November 2024

The UW–Madison opera and voice programs have been successful for decades in training young singers, conductors, and educators who are enjoying careers that span musical endeavors around the world.

**Brenda Rae** (BM 2004), is enjoying international operatic stardom. A 2021 winner of the Beverly Sills Award, she made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 2020 in the role of Poppea in *Agrippina*, and at the Lyric Opera in 2019 in the role of Ginevra in *Ariodante*. She performed numerous major roles as a member of the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt. Recent debuts include Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Edinburgh International Festival and the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Royal Opera House (London). She made her debut with the Vienna State Opera in 2012 in the role of Lucia (broadcast live over international radio). She returned to the Metropolitan Opera in the 2021-22 season as Zerbinetta and as Ophelia in Brett Dean's *Hamlet*.

<http://www.brendarae.com/>

**Nathaniel Stampley** (BM 2008) starred as Porgy in the 2013-14 national tour of “The Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, and as Mufasa in “The Lion King” on Broadway. He was in the cast of the Broadway production “The Color Purple”, played Mufasa in West End London in a long-run production of “The Lion King”, and toured across the United States in “Ragtime”. He was featured in a new work, “Lempicka” on Broadway in 2024, as well as in “Paradise Square” in Chicago and on Broadway, and “A Man of No Importance” on Broadway in 2022. He recently starred in the title role in “Sweeney Todd” with Signature Theatre in Washington D.C. and played the role of Herbie in Chicago Marriott Theatre’s 2023 production of “Gypsy”. He performed in the premiere of “In Every Grain of Sand” with the Knickerbocker Chamber Orchestra. <https://www.nathanielstampley.com/>

**Hein Jung** (MM 2002, DMA 2006) is a Professor of Voice and Director of Vocal Studies at the University of Tampa. Recent performances include recitals with the Sarasota Artist Series and guest soloist with the Sarasota Chopin Festival, Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* with the University of Florida -Gainesville, Zerbinetta with St. Petersburg Opera, and concerts in Tampa and Illinois for the New Music Festival. Her CD of songs of Liszt was released on Centaur Records in 2013. The recipient of a Collins Fellowship, she was a Fellow at Tanglewood, and an apprentice at Merola. <http://www.heinjung.com>

Tenor **Greg Schmidt** made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the role of Arbace in Mozart’s *Idomeneo*, with James Levine conducting. His professional debut with Washington D. C. Opera was in the role of Belfiore in Mozart’s *La Finta Giardiniera*, and he returned to the Kennedy Center the following season as Tamino in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. Recent engagements include Edgardo and Almaviva with Opera Tampa, Nemorino and Tebaldo with Tulsa Opera, Camille and Alfredo with St. Petersburg Opera, Don Ramiro with Fresno Grand Opera, and Ferrando with El Paso Opera. Schmidt has performed leading roles with Tacoma Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Chattanooga Opera, Nevada Opera, Skylight Opera Theater, Nashville Opera, Opera Carolina,

Skylight Opera and Madison Opera. In 2023 he appeared in A Capacity for Evil with Opera Las Vegas.

<http://www.lombardoassociates.org/gregory-schmidt>

**Emily Eagen** (MM 1999) received a Fulbright Scholarship to attend the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Since moving to New York City she has been active in performance and teaching in the city and across the country. She was a co-founder of the M6: Meredith Monk Third Generation, an ensemble that works close with Monk to prepare and perform her works. She serves on the faculty at the Amherst Early Music Festival where she performs and teaches, and she has toured with the contemporary ensemble Bang on a Can for their production of Julia Wolfe's Steel Hammer. She is a teaching artist for Carnegie Hall, where she teaches songwriting workshops, in particular to young mothers who learn to write lullabies for their children. She is co-composer of "NOOMA", an opera for babies, premiered at Carnegie Hall in April 2019. The opera premiered at Minnesota Opera later that year, with additional performances set for the San Francisco Opera in a future season. <https://www.emilyeagen.com/>

**Anthony Cao** (BM music ed 2002, MM music ed 2010) has been the Director of Choirs at Madison West High School since 2004. He teaches Freshman Chorale, Treble Choir, Concert Choir, Popular Vocal Styles, History of American Popular Music, and Hip Hop Studies. Cao has worked as guest clinician/composer with choirs throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest. Equally comfortable in many genres of music, he stays active as a pianist/vocalist, including his all-request show every week at The Ivory Room. He served as artistic director of Madison Chamber Choir, and has been chorus master of Madison Opera since 2010.

**Jordan Wilson** (DMA 2014) completed his undergraduate and MM studies at the Eastman School of Music and taught at Roberts Wesleyan College. While a student at Madison, Jordan taught at Beloit College as well as serving as TA for the voice area, winning the Campus-Wide Teaching Award. He joined the faculty at Missouri Southern State University in fall 2014 as an Assistant Professor, and in 2018 joined the faculty at Wingate University, where he is an Associate Professor and Assistant Dean in the Honors College. He was granted a Spivey Fellowship from Wingate for 2022-23 to pursue his research and performance of Russian song repertoire.

**Abbie Furmansky** has sung leading roles at New York City Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Mainz Oper, and Canadian Opera, and performed with the Los Angeles Symphony and the Amsterdam radio symphony. She performed her first Madama Butterfly in 2010 under the direction of Katharina Wagner. <http://abbiefurmansky.net/> Anne Seaton had a decades-long career as a member of the Singing Sergeants in Washington D.C. and performed with them on numerous official occasions.

**Rachel Renee** performed as lead singer/dancer on round-the-world cruises, and is free-lancing in Chicago.

**Randy Pagel** (MM in music education) directed the choirs at Thurman White Middle School (Las Vegas), winning national competitions, performing at venues including Carnegie Hall and the White House, and releasing CDs including original works. The choirs were featured in the music video *Love Sees No Color*, which aired on national networks and was presented at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. Randy served as principal of Morris Sunset East High School (Las Vegas) for ten years, and continued to mentor young singers in Las Vegas as administrator and Dean at Morris Sunset East HS. His book, “The Choral Director’s Guide to Sanity... and Success!” was published in 2004. He continues to conduct honor choirs and music clinics around the country, as well as serving as conductor of the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Society. His *Ritchie Valens Medley* was published by Hal Leonard Corporation. [randypagel.com](http://randypagel.com)

**Antonio Souza** (MM 2016) is an active performer and teacher in Fortaleza, Brazil. He most recently sang with the Cear Nova Ensemble. He teaches classical singing in the new Municipal School of Music, the first of its kind in Fortaleza.

**Kristin Schwecke** (MM 2010) made her orchestral debut as soprano soloist in “*Carmina Burana*” with the Cobb Symphony in Atlanta. She participated in the Crested Butte Festival Young Artist Program, and was fifth place winner in the 2009 International Czech-Slovak Competition in Montreal. She won an Encouragement Award in the 2011 Regional auditions of the Metropolitan National Council and was a Fellow with the AJ Fletcher Opera.

**Karen Bishop** (MM in opera 2008, DMA 2011) focused her research and performance on unpublished songs of American composers. Her first volume of songs by Ernst Bacon was published by Classical Vocal Reprints and showcased at the National NATS Convention in 2013. She has edited a volume of songs by John Duke, and her article on these was published in the NATS Journal in 2014. She presented a lecture on her work at the International Congress of Voice Teachers in Brisbane in summer, 2013.

Venezuelan baritone **Juan Toms Martnez** (BA 1988) enjoys an extensive international career as a singer of opera, zarzuela, oratorio, recitals and musicals. In 1995 he won the Latin-American Luciano Pavarotti International Voice Competition. His operatic career has taken him to Per, Ecuador, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, the United States, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Rumania, Bulgaria and Korea.

**Jeffery McGhee** (DMA 2006) is Professor of Voice at Roberts Wesleyan University. He has appeared as soloist with the Rochester Orchestra and the Rochester Oratorio Society. He has presented a lecture-recital on spirituals at universities and churches around the country and at the 2017 NYSSMA Winter Conference.

**Melanie Cain** (MM 2003, DMA 2005) is artistic director and founder of Fresco Opera Theatre and owner of Maven Vocal Arts. She served on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Teachers of Singing and as Co-Director of The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Wisconsin District.

**Dan Plummer Koehn** (BM 1997, DMA 2003) was general director of Opera for the Young for many years, and also served as Director of New Initiatives & Special Projects at Florida Grand Opera. He is currently Alumni Relations Director for Student Affairs Advancement at UW-Madison.

**Benjamin Schultz-Burkel** (DMA 2012) is the author of *Singing in Polish: A Guide to Polish Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire*. Published in 2015 by Scarecrow Press, it is based on his doctoral research on this repertoire. He has taught as lecturer of voice at UW-Platteville and Beloit College and performed numerous roles with University Opera. He currently serves as Director of Faculty and Executive Recruitment for the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

**David Williams** (DMA 1995) holds a JD from New York Law School. A fierce advocate for artists' rights, he left the corporate setting in 2015 to dedicate himself to this work full time focusing on completing his first book, *The Enterprising Musician's Guide to Performer Contracts* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017). His second book, *The Enterprising Musician's Legal Toolkit*, was published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2023. As a writer, he is a regular contributor to *Modern Singer Magazine*. He has been a faculty member at the Crane Institute for Music Business at SUNY Potsdam and the College of Performing Arts at The New School in New York City. An active guest lecturer, he has delivered talks on music industry law at Yale University, Tanglewood, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, among others.

**Lindsey Meekhof** (DMA 2022) was selected to be a Studio Artist with Madison Opera in 2022-23, making her company debut in their production of *Salome*.

**Amanda Lauricella** (DMA 2021) toured with Opera for the Young in 2022-23 as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* and in their 2023-24 production of *Beauty and the Beast*. She served on the voice faculties at Beloit College and Viterbo University in 2021-22 and is currently serving on the faculties at Beloit College and Carroll University.

**Cayla Rosché** (MM 2018, DMA 2020) was awarded a Fulbright Arctic Scholar Grant for fall 2022, and taught diction, voice and master classes at the Iceland University for the Arts in Reykjavik, as well as continuing her research on Icelandic song repertoire. She was awarded an American-Scandinavian Foundation grant in support of her research on Icelandic repertoire and diction. She has served on the voice faculties at UW-Oshkosh and Edgewood College, and started a new position teaching voice at Lawrence University in fall 2023.

**Jessica Timman Schwefel** (MM 2005, DMA) runs a private music studio in Madison. She served on the faculty at UW-Whitewater, and her articles have been published in the *VOICEPrints Journal of the NYSTA*, the *Wisconsin School Musician Magazine*, and the *NATS Journal of Singing*. She has performed in over 35 operatic productions with the Florentine Opera Company, Madison Opera, Candid Concert Opera, Opera for the Young, Fresco Opera Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, Stoughton Opera, UW Opera, among many other professional engagements. Dr. Schwefel will be appearing this season

with Four Seasons Theatre, Just Bach Concert Series, and Madison Choral Project. She has also been actively promoting Korean Art Songs with with her colleagues, Youngjoo Hong and Susan Gaeddert, giving many performances in the Dane County area. Jessica is joining the voice faculty at UW-Madison in fall 2024 as Lecturer in Voice.

**Anja Pustaver** (MM 2020) was selected to be a Studio Artist with Madison Opera for the 2021-22 season.

**Lydia Eiche** (BM 2014) won 1st place in Upper College Musical Theatre Women at National NATS in 2017. She has been performing processional throughout the Midwest, including special projects with Milwaukee Opera Theatre and Wild Space Dance Company <https://onmilwaukee.com/ent/articles/svadba-wedding-review.html>

Baritone **Ryan Thorn** (BM 2009) completed his MM in Voice at UCLA. He sang the role of Figaro in both *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Pacific Opera Project. He participated in the 2015 Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, and performed in January 2016 in Carnegie Hall as part of Marilyn Horne's "The Song Continues". Ryan was a resident artist at Portland Opera in 2016-17.

**Abbie Furmansky** has sung leading roles at New York City Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Mainz Oper, and Canadian Opera, and performed with the Los Angeles Symphony and the Amsterdam radio symphony. She performed her first *Madama Butterfly* in 2010 under the direction of Katharina Wagner. <http://abbiefurmansky.net/>

**Steven Ebel** (BM 2001) has sung with companies including New York City Opera, Opera Cleveland, and Opera Delaware. The winner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grand Prize at the 2007 Montreal International Vocal Competition, he made his Covent Garden debut and was a member of the Royal Opera House Jette Parker Young Artist Programme from 2009 to 2011. He is now a member of the ensemble at the Baden State Theatre in Karlsruhe, and maintains an active career as a composer. In 2016 his engagements include the roles of *Steuermann* at Theater Mainz and *Pylades* with the Gluck International Festspiel in Nürnberg, following a series of New Year's Operetta Concerts in Konstanz.

**Jamie-Rose Guarrine**, (DMA 2005) obtained New York management in 2007 following training in the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program. She has bowed on the stages of the Minnesota Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Anchorage Opera, Opera Fairbanks, Utah Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and Bach aria group, National Symphony Orchestra, and Orquestra Sinfonica Nacional de Costa Rica. In 2011-12 she made debuts with Austin Lyric Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Fort Worth Opera, and sings the Brahms Requiem with the Santa Fe Symphony. She joined the faculty of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in fall, 2015.

**Fabian Qamar** (MM 2016) serves as Director of the Sheboygan Area Youth Symphony Sinfonia Orchestra and as Associate Director of Sacred Music at St. Stanislaus Oratory in

Milwaukee. A multi-instrumentalist, Fabian plays piano, viola, guitar, and church organ, with additional experience in percussion and horn, and he is also an established singer. He enjoys creating music as a composer, arranger, and improviser. His projects include playing and singing in the jazz trio Jive Safely, and he teaches voice, strings, and piano privately.

**Amanda Poulson** (BM 1998) has pursued a career as performer, dancer, choreographer, and director. After graduation she moved to New York City and performed in cabarets, BMI Workshops, appeared on stage at Radio City Music Hall with the band Smash Mouth and was featured in several performances with the Broadway Dance Center. She has both performed in and directed musical theatre productions, and has been featured in radio jingles, voiceovers and commercials. In 2008, Amanda was offered a contract as a Featured Singer with Royal Caribbean Productions and was thrilled to find her home at sea. She has spent the last five years performing aboard *The Independence of The Seas* and *The Jewel of The Seas* where she was featured in the production shows, sang with the Jazz Quintet, sang rock and roll on the pool deck and was the headliner for special receptions and cocktail parties. In 2012, she joined the 5 star cruise line Azamara Club Cruises and is currently a Featured Singer aboard the *Azamara Quest*. With *The Quest* and the *Journey* she has sailed to five continents and begun to perform her own headliner show. <http://www.amandapoulson.net/>

**Sam Handley** (MM 2001) has been praised for “his rich, burnished” voice and the “genuine emotional depth of his characterizations.” As a member of Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center, he performed more than a dozen roles. After appearing in *Il tritico* at the Castleton Festival, he returned to sing Colline in *La bohème* with Lorin Maazel. On the symphonic stage, his repertoire includes Handel, Haydn, Bach, Beethoven, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, and Mozart. In the 2015/16 season, Mr. Handley performed the role of Konrad Nachtigall in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with the San Francisco Opera and Alberich in *The Essential Ring* with the Lexington Symphony and Symphony New Hampshire. He sang the Sprecher in Opera Colorado’s production of *Die Zauberflöte*, and on the concert stage performed as soloist in a concert performance of Roger Waters’ opera *Ça Ira* with the Nashville Symphony, both in the 2014/15 season. With the Atlanta Opera, he sang Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He recently made his European debut (as well as his role debut) as Escamillo in a new production of *Carmen* with Theater Aachen. He returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for their production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as Hans Folz. Mr. Handley made his Asian debut in Beijing at the National Centre for the Performing Arts as Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, conducted by Lorin Maazel. He made his Severance Hall and Carnegie Hall debuts with The Cleveland Orchestra in performances of *Salome* with Franz Welser-Möst. Recent concert engagements included a return to the Santa Fe Symphony for Handel’s *Messiah*, and added the Requiems of Verdi and Brahms plus Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* to his repertoire. Additional career highlights include Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with the Ryan Opera Center, Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* with the Merola Opera Program, the title role in *Don Pasquale* on tour with the Santa Fe Opera,

Mr. Emerson in Nelson's *A Room with a View* (DVD by Newport Classics), Sancho in Telemann's *Don Quichotte* and Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea* with Houston's Mercury Baroque (KUHf records), Bottom in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Caspar in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Jaggars in Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire*, The King in Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, Dikoy in Janáček's *Katya Kabanova*, and Dr. Miracle in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. A fervent proponent of contemporary composers, Handley has delivered several world premieres, including Wlad Marhulet's *The Property* with Chicago's Lyric Unlimited, plus the music of Scott Gendel and Dan Black with the Madison Contemporary Orchestra. He has been a guest artist with the Houston Symphony, the National Symphony with Leonard Slatkin, and the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia with James Conlon. Among his several recordings, Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming* is available through Newport Classics and the DVD of his collaboration with Peter Schickele for *P. D. Q. Bach in Houston: We Have a Problem* is available from Acorn Media. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Sam now lives in Chicago, Illinois, and enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter, especially while camping, hiking, sailing, cooking, and fine dining! [SamHandleyBassBaritone.com](http://SamHandleyBassBaritone.com)

Countertenor **Gerrod Pagenkopf** (BM music ed, 2002) joined the ensemble Chanticleer in spring 2016. He made his Amarillo Opera debut as Prince Orlofsky. Other opera credits include Rinaldo, Oberon, Tolomeo, Arsamenes, Public Opinion, the Sorceress, 2nd Witch, and Messenger (Dido and Aeneas), and Actéon. As a concert soloist, he has performed with ensembles including the Mercury Baroque Ensemble, Ars Lyrica Houston, the Bach Society of Houston, the Houston Chamber Choir, Ballet Florida, Orchestra X (Houston), and the Green Bay Symphony. He has performed as soloist in Handel's Messiah and Israel in Egypt; Bach's Passions, Magnificat and Mass in B Minor; Vivaldi's Gloria and Dixit Dominus; and numerous works of Scarlatti, Caldara, and Telemann. <http://gerrodpagenkopf.com/>

**Cooper Grodin** (BM 2002) received his Master's in Vocal Performance from the Manhattan School of Music. He is an avid singer of all genres and an accomplished pianist, composer, and music director. Cooper starred in the new national tour of *The Phantom of the Opera* as The Phantom. He was also an original member of the 25th Anniversary National Tour of *Les Misérables* (Combeferre), the title role in the first Asian tour of *Zorro, Into the Woods* (Rapunzel's Prince) at NYC's Shakespeare in the Park, the Drama Desk nominated best revival of *Golden Land, 110 in the Shade* (Bill Starbuck), *Grease* (Danny), *Les Misérables* (Javert), *A Little Night Music* (The Count), *Joseph...* (Pharaoh), *Carousel* (Billy) at Chicago's Light Opera Works and Olney Theatre Center, *Parade* (Governor Slaton), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Perchik), and *The Fantasticks* (El Gallo). Cooper has sung numerous concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Brooklyn Philharmonic, and The American Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed in the New York premiere of *Grendel* at City Opera directed by Julie Taymor, and *Zaide* as part of the Mostly Mozart Festival directed by Peter Sellars. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in Paul McCartney's *Ecce Cor Meum*. He can be seen in such films as *Music and Lyrics* and *Salt* and the lead in Romano's Macaroni Grill national commercial. He was awarded a Lys Syonette Award for "Outstanding Performance of an Individual Number" in the Lotte Lenya/Kurt Weill competition. His new original album It's The

Little Things is now available on iTunes. Cooper is a member of Actors' Equity and is signed with About Artists Agency. ([www.coopergrodin.com](http://www.coopergrodin.com))

Hailed as a soprano with "a vocalism that is rich and unforced", **Shannon Prickett** (MM opera 2013) is currently a member of the Resident Artist Program at Minnesota Opera. She sang roles for University Opera including the title role in Cherubini's *Médée*, Suzel in Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz*, Mimì in *La bohème* and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*. In 2012, Shannon performed the title role of *Suor Angelica* with Opera Siena in Italy, and won first place at the Iowa District Metropolitan National Council Opera Auditions, advancing to the regional competition in Saint Paul, MN, where she received third place. In Minnesota Opera's 2013-2014 season, she appeared as the Fortuneteller in *Arabella*, the Lady-in-waiting in *Macbeth* and the Woman in Red in *The Dream of Valentino*. In Minnesota Opera's 2014-2015 season, she will sing Micaela in *Carmen*, The Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel*, Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore*, and Dora in *The Manchurian Candidate*. Shannon will also be appearing as the soprano soloist in Verdi's Requiem with the Wayzata Symphony in Minnesota in spring 2015.

Baritone **Ryan Thorn** (BM 2009) completed his MM in Voice at UCLA. He sang the role of Figaro in both *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Pacific Opera Project. He participated in the 2015 Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, and performed in January 2016 in Carnegie Hall in a master class with Sir Thomas Allen as part of Marilyn Horne's "The Song Continues". Ryan was a resident artist at Portland Opera in 2016-17.

**Caitlin Cisler** (MM in opera 2009) appeared as Adele in Tacoma Opera's 2016 production of *Die Fledermaus*. She sang the title role in Madison Opera's 2014 production of "Le fille du régiment". She has also appeared as featured soloist with Madison Opera in "Opera in the Park" and the Dayton Philharmonic for their 2012 New Year's Eve concert.

Soprano **Saira Frank**'s credits run from opera to stage works to Broadway recitals. Saira (MM in opera, 2009) has performed roles with Madison Opera, Pacific Opera Project, and Elgin Opera, and been a featured soloist with the Grant Park Symphony Chorus, the Florentine Opera, and Opera San Luis Obispo. Saira's passion for building opera's audience led her to perform with Opera for the Young in seven productions and spend two years as resident teaching artist for Madison Opera. In addition to performing, Saira also serves as Managing Director for Opera for the Young and is a voice faculty member at Carroll University.

**Christiaan Smith-Kotlarek** (BM 2008, [www.christiaansmithkotlarek.com](http://www.christiaansmithkotlarek.com)) is enjoying success in both opera and musical theatre. He is currently singing the role of Gaston in the national tour of "Beauty and the Beast". He recently sang on a show that included Liza Minelli among the performers:

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Liza-Minnelli-Joins-EVERYTHINGS-COMING-UP-BROADWAYWORLD.COM-A-JULE-STYNE-TRIBUTE-On-May-11-20140408#.U0RYxO29LCS>

**Anne Seaton** was a member of the Singing Sergeants in Washington D.C., performing with them on numerous official occasions.

**Charlotte Hellekant** has sung major opera roles at the Chicago Lyric, Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera Bastille, the Salzburg Festival, Santa Fe, and Glimmerglass.

**David Gagnon** was in the Broadway cast of “Les Miserables” for four years, and performed in “Forever Plaid” in Chicago as well as touring with “Ragtime”.

**Christine Seitz** has sung with the Stadttheater Bern, Central City Opera, Florentine Opera, and covered with the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She is currently on the faculty of University of Missouri-Columbia.

**Kitt Reuter-Foss** has sung with the Metropolitan Opera, Florentine Opera, Atlanta Opera, Pine Mountain Festival, Madison Opera, and Children’s Theatre of Madison.

**Christian Elser** ('94, BM) is on the faculty of Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina. As an operatic baritone, he has performed roles with the Chicago Opera Theater, Lyric Opera Kansas City, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Light Opera Oklahoma, the Southwest Symphony, Waukesha Symphony, and Chicago City Symphony.

**Heather Thorpe** (BM music education 1996) is choral director at Verona High School. She was choral director at Badger Ridge Middle School from 1997 to 2015. In addition to her duties in Verona, she directs two children's choirs and a High School teen choir and is a featured soloist at the First Unitarian Society of Madison. Ms. Thorpe has been a part of the artistic staff of the Madison Youth Choir. She has been a guest clinician, conductor, and teacher at many honors festivals, workshops, and camps throughout Wisconsin, and was recognized in 2000 as an outstanding teacher in the national edition of *Teaching Music* magazine in an article entitled "A Standing Ovation for Music Teachers". In 2004 she won the Herb Kohl Fellowship for excellence in education. She has also served as part of the Wisconsin School Music Association, Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance committee, and the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association Next Direction committee.

**Thomas Weis** (DMA 2007) is in his 15<sup>th</sup> year teaching at Carroll University as a voice instructor and men's chorus director. He continues to remain busy as a bass soloist, performing recitals and roles in opera and oratorio.

**Ryan McEldowney** (MM 2010) has been a full-time musician in the Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee since his graduation. He studied voice with Jim Doing at UW, but his work now primarily lies in the fields of organ performance and choral conducting -- a 21st Century *Kapellmeister*. He provides music multiple times per week at the Church of St. Anthony of Padua on the South Side of Milwaukee. The choir specializes in Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony, and a majority of the choir's

members are under the age of 30! As organist, Ryan gets to play their notable, 74-rank, 1889 Schuelke pipe organ. Besides being Director of Music and Organist at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Parish, Ryan also serves as Director of Liturgical Music at St. Francis de Sales Seminary.

**Leigh Akin** (BM 2010) is currently living in New York City, and singing primarily Oratorio and sacred music. She happily returned to Wisconsin in December to sing as the alto soloist in Handel's Messiah with the South Shore Chorale. In May she will sing the role of Tisbe in The Bronx Opera production of Rossini's "Cinderella" and in the fall will be singing the role of Ruggiero in the OperaRox NYC concert performance of "Alcina".

**Alumni** have gone on to graduate studies at schools including Julliard, Indiana University, Eastman, University of Michigan, University of Houston, and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

**Music educators** with degrees from UW-Madison are successful finding jobs at universities and K-12 programs throughout the nation. Our graduates are teaching at schools including University of Colorado-Boulder, Indiana University, Roberts Wesleyan, University of Vermont, University of Iowa, and Viterbo, as well as being music and choral directors at elementary, middle and high schools throughout the state.

**Other careers** available to music students can include management, recording, coaching, and music therapy:

**Jamie Schmidt**, who was music assistant and coach for University Opera, directed musical productions at Pleasant Place in Chicago and New York City. He recently toured with the Rockettes, was Assistant Conductor for the Broadway revival of "Ragtime", and conducted Liza Minelli's national tour. He is currently Associate Conductor on tour with "The Lion King".

**David Sytkowski** (BM piano 2009), pianist and vocal coach, is newly based in New York City. In summer 2015, he will serve as Principal Coach and Rehearsal Pianist for Dame Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* at Bard SummerScape. Recent engagements include Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* and Von Schillings's *Mona Lisa* with American Symphony Orchestra, Weber's *Euryanthe* with Bard SummerScape, the world premiere of Paul Richards's *Biennale* at The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, Guest Coach at the Seattle Opera Young Artist Program, and Opera Moderne's production of Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*. Before moving to New York, he served as Vocal Coach for University of Wisconsin Opera in Madison, WI, as well as pianist for various Madison Opera productions and outreach.

**Mark Ensley** received his MM in opera coaching, and is on the faculty of University of Memphis.

News of **recent graduates** includes:

Tenor **James Kryshak** (MM in opera 2009) joined the ensemble of the Deutsche Oper Berlin in 2016, where he has been seen in *Carmen*, *Salome*, *The Magic Flute*, as well as Pedrillo in a new production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and several others. James was the tenor soloist in *Messiah* with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in December 2016, and he made his house and role debut with Bob Boles in *Peter Grimes* at Teatro Nacional São Carlos in 2017. He was an Ensemble Member with the Vienna State Opera in 2013-2015. During 2013/14 he performed as Don Curzio in concert in Hamburg conducted by Adam Fischer; *Der Hirt (Tristan und Isolde)* conducted by Franz Welser-Möst; *Missail (Boris Gudunov)* conducted by Michael Güttler; *Third Jew (Salome)* - also in concert at Carnegie Hall conducted by Andris Nelsons; *Borsa (Rigoletto)* conducted by Jesús López-Cobos; *Scaramuccio (Ariadne auf Naxos)* conducted by Michael Boder; *Der Wirt (Der Rosenkavalier)* conducted by Franz Welser-Möst; as well as a recital in the Gustav Mahler Saal at the Vienna State Opera with mezzo-soprano Margarita Gritskova and pianist David Aronson. James made his role debuts as The Schoolmaster and the Mosquito in The Vienna State Opera's 2014 production of The Cunning Little Vixen. He made his house and role debut as Little Bat McLean in San Francisco Opera's premier production of Susannah in September 2014. In 2013 he covered the role of Borsa in a new production of *Rigoletto* at the Metropolitan Opera, and performed the role of Scaramuccio in a new production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Glyndebourne Festival. In 2012, he made his debut at Carnegie Hall with the Cleveland Orchestra, and sang the role of Sellem in *The Rake's Progress* at Wolf Trap. James represented UW-Madison in the semi-final round of the Metropolitan Opera National Auditions in New York in February, 2009. He was an Apprentice Artist at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and a recipient of the Voice Excellence Distinguished Graduate Fellowship.

**Jamie Van Eyck** (DMA 2012) made her Broadway debut in 2009 in the Encores! series at New York City Center. She sings the roles of Dido and The Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with the Mark Morris Dance Group and Chicago Opera Theater in Minneapolis, Indiana, and Chicago in spring 2016. She recently performed the role of Cherubino with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Sorceress with the Mark Morris Dance Group in Moscow, and gave a song recital at the Dallas Museum of Art. In 2011-12 she debuted with Boston Lyric Opera. She began a position as a member of the voice faculty at Baylor University in fall, 2013. <http://www.jamievaneyck.com/live/>

**Ariana Douglas** (BM 2013) did her graduate studies at Louisiana State University, and joining the Florentine Opera as a Young Artist for their 2015-2017 seasons. She was a member of the 2016 and 2017 Glimmerglass Festival Young Artist program.

**Thomas Leighton** is a member of the Florentine Opera Young Artist Program.

**Josh Sanders** (BM 2015) will be at Wolf Trap in summer 2015, singing Don Curzio, covering Don Basilio and singing scenes. He will begin his graduate studies at Manhattan School of Music in fall 2015.

**Scott Johnson** (MM in voice 2009) was a young artist with the Florentine Opera in Milwaukee after two summers as an apprentice artist in Central City, Colorado.

**Samus Haddad** (MM in opera 2009) has been an apprentice artist at Central City and the Sarasota Opera. He was the recipient of a Collins Fellowship.

**Joel Burcham** (DMA 2009) made his professional operatic debut as Lindoro in *L'Italiana in Algeri* for Central City Opera. He has sung with Madison Opera, Utah Opera, Opera Omaha, Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre, and Opera Fort Collins and the Utah, Omaha and Madison Symphonies. After serving on the faculty of University of Colorado, Boulder, he recently joined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma.

**Emily Birsan** (MM in opera 2010) recently finished her third year as a member of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Birsan was most recently heard on the main stage of the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Servilia in the critically acclaimed Sir David McVicar production *La clemenza di Tito* and the 1st Flower Maiden in a new production of Wagner's *Parsifal*. In addition, Ms. Birsan has covered multiple roles including Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Violetta in *La traviata*, and Norina in *Don Pasquale* at the Lyric. The 2014-2015 season marked her return to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for their 60th anniversary season as the Italian Singer in Strauss' *Capriccio*. Additionally, she sang Leïla in *Les pêcheurs de perles* with Florida Grand Opera, Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, the cover of Violetta in *La traviata* with Fort Worth Opera, and Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* with the Edinburgh International Festival. This season, she will debut with Boston Lyric Opera and Madison Opera as Musetta in *La bohème* as well as joining the Dubuque Symphony for Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and Bangor Symphony as Mimi in *La bohème*. Emily was a recipient of the Collins Fellowship. <http://www.emilybirsan.com/>

**Matthew Tintes** (MM in opera 2008) tours and records as soloist and member of the vocal ensemble Cantus.

**Justin Smith** (DMA 2010) has engaged in a variety of artistic ventures as an administrator, performer, and teacher. He was Program Director for Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, and served as Coordinator/Assistant to the Artistic Director at Des Moines Metro Opera for two seasons, coordinating main-stage, apprentice, and various outreach activities. Justin participated in the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. There, he interned in National Partnerships and participated in arts management seminars. Although he is a classical musician through and through, promoting the art form through previous teaching appointments at UW-Madison and Beloit College, Justin has performed in a variety of genres throughout his career. During his degree at Madison, in addition to studies in voice performance and educational leadership, he managed marketing and operations for University Opera, served as Interim Graduate Admissions Coordinator in the School of Music and developed a student-led organization based around art song performance and advocacy. Justin is married to Christine M. Liu, D.Mus.A, a violist and MYSO alum. They live in Portland, and are engaged in development for arts organizations.

**Olivia Ferguson** (MM 2013) is teaching private voice and piano students in the Detroit area, accompanying for schools, and substitute teaching. She has worked the past two summers as a volunteer in a church mission program in Brazil, teaching voice classes and lessons. Learning Portuguese has been part of this mission, as well as leading to many songs little-known to American singers. She hopes to return to Brazil, and to work on a PhD that reflects her interests in this culture.