

Update on voice and opera alumni, 2014

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), a member of the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt, has sung numerous major roles around the world. She made her debut with the Vienna State Opera in June 2012 in the role of Lucia (broadcast live over international radio) and debuted with Santa Fe Opera in 2013 as Violetta. Her 2011 debuts included Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Bordeaux and Armida in Handel's *Rinaldo* with the Glyndebourne Festival. Read more about Brenda in June 2014 Opera News: http://www.operanews.com/Opera_News_Magazine/2014/6/Departments/Sound_Bites_%E2%80%944%C2%A0Brenda_Rae.html
<http://www.brendarae.com/>

Nate Stampley (BM 2008) is starring as Porgy in the national tour of "The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess". He starred as Mufasa in "The Lion King" on Broadway, 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".

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 has sung with companies including New York City Opera, Opera Cleveland, and Opera Delaware. The winner of 2nd Grand Prize at the 2007 Montreal International Vocal Competition, he made his Covent Garden debut and joined the Royal Opera House Jette Parker Young Artist Programme in 2009. He is currently a member of the ensemble at the Baden State Theatre in Karlsruhe, made his debut in Chile in 2014, and is continuing to compose.

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.

Sam Handley (MM 2001) made his European debut in 2012 as Escamillo in a new production of *Carmen* with Theater Aachen. He returned to Lyric Opera of Chicago for their production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as Hans Foltz and debuted with the Canadian Opera Company in *Salome* before finishing the season with Seattle Opera in their acclaimed *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Sam made his Asian debut in Beijing at the National Centre for the Performing Arts as Basilio, 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. As a member of Lyric's Ryan Opera Center in Chicago, he performed more than a dozen roles, and covered many more. He still maintains a home in downtown Chicago (near the Opera House), and enjoys hosting fellow UW alumni and Madison friends! <http://www.cami.com/?webid=2176>

Tenor **Greg Schmidt** is on the roster of the Metropolitan Opera, where he has covered the roles of Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Tamino (*Magic Flute*) and Flamand (*Capriccio*). This season he will cover the role of Iopas in *Les Troyens*, as well as David in *Die Meistersinger* with Lyric Opera of Chicago. 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. He made his professional debut with Washington D. C. Opera in the role of Count Belfiore, returning to the Kennedy Center stage the following season as Tamino. He apprenticed with Santa Fe Opera and was a Metropolitan Opera Audition National Finalist. <http://gregoryschmidttenor.com/>

Countertenor **Gerrod Pagenkopf** (BM music ed, 2002) 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/>

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.

Hein Jung (DMA 2006) is on the faculty 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 will be released on Centaur Records in 2013. The recipient of a Collins Fellowship, she was a Fellow at Tanglewood, and an apprentice at Merola.

Caitlin Cisler (MM in opera 2009) 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.

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 has been artistic director of Madison Chamber Choir since 2007, chorus master of Madison Opera since 2010, and most importantly Daddy to Eloise and Sebastian.

Cooper Grodin played **The Prince** in the 2012 New York Public Theatre production of "Into the Woods". He sang the role of Combeferre in the 25th Anniversary National Tour of *Les Misérables*. In 2011, he starred in the title role in an international tour of *Zorro the Musical*. He has appeared in several off-Broadway productions, and can be seen in films including "Salt" (Columbia) and "Music and Lyrics" (Castle Rock/Warner Brothers). (www.coopergrodin.com)

Anne Seaton is a member of the Singing Sergeants in Washington D.C., and performs 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 Misérables" 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.

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

Randy Pagel is the principal of Morris Sunset East High School (Las Vegas). His book, "The Choral Director's Guide to Sanity... and Success!" was published in 2004.

Dr. Julia Foster (B.M. 2003) is Assistant Professor of Voice and Chair of the Voice Area at Rollins College.

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 ed 1996) has been the choral director at Badger Ridge Middle School in Verona, WI since 1997 where she is responsible for all choral activities. 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. Ms. Thorpe has been a guest clinician, conductor, and teacher at many honors festivals, workshops, and camps throughout Wisconsin. She was recognized as an outstanding teacher in the October 2000, National Publication 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 NextDirection committee.

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”.

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

Dan Plummer is general director of Opera for the Young.

News of **recent graduates** includes:

Tenor **James Kryshak** (MM in opera 2009) recently signed with the Vienna State Opera to be an Ensemble Member for 2013-2015. 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 joined the roster of the Lyric Opera of Chicago in spring 2010 as an Apprentice Artist. He was a recipient of the Voice Excellence Distinguished Graduate Fellowship.

Kristin Schwecke (MM in voice 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 joined the Fletcher Opera Institute in 2011. She is currently a Fellow with the AJ Fletcher Opera Institute.

<http://www.fletcheropera.com/people/fletcher-fellows/kristin-schwecke/>

Jamie Van Eyck (DMA 2012) made her Broadway debut in 2009 in the Encores! series at New York City Center. 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 will begin a position as a member of the voice faculty at Baylor University in fall, 2013. <http://www.jamievaneyck.com/live/>

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) won third place in the Upper Midwest regional auditions of the Metropolitan National Council in February 2011 in Minneapolis. She joined the ensemble of the Ryan Center of the Lyric Opera of Chicago in May 2011. Emily was a recipient of the Collins Fellowship.

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

Karen Bishop (MM in opera 2008, DMA 2011) has 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 will be 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.

Benjamin Schultz (DMA 2012) is writing a book for Scarecrow Press on Polish songs and diction, based on his doctoral research on this repertoire. Ben is Assistant Director of the School of Music at UW-Madison. Upcoming performances include the role of Figaro at Belmont University.

Justin Smith (DMA 2010) is Program Director for the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra. Justin has engaged in a variety of artistic ventures as an administrator, performer, teacher and student. Prior to his MYSO appointment, he served as Company Coordinator/Assistant to the Artistic Director at Des Moines Metro Opera for two seasons, coordinating main-stage, apprentice, and various outreach activities. In the spring of 2011, Justin was accepted into the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. There, he interned in National Partnerships and participated in arts management seminars taught by Kennedy Center staff. 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 UW-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.

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.

Jordan Wilson (DMA 2014) did 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 a TA for the voice area, winning the Campus-Wide Teaching Award. He will join the faculty at Missouri Southern State University in fall 2014 as an Assistant Professor.