

BARN OPERA

THE LETTERS OF CHARLOTTE

February 24 & 25, 2023



barnopera.com

THE LETTERS OF CHARLOTTE

**An adaptation by Joshua
Collier after “Werther” by
Jules Massenet**

Older Charlotte - Brenda Scott

Charlotte - JoAnna Pope

Werther - David Rivera Bozòn

Albert - Bryan Murray

Sophie - Hannah Madeleine Goodman

Director/Concept - Joshua Collier

Piano/Music Director - Liya Nigmati

Lighting Operation - Nicholas Tocci

House Manager - Tricia Welch

Technical Director - Russ McColman

Supertitles - Christopher Szczerba

THE LETTERS OF CHARLOTTE

Act I:

Charlotte's private study - Current time.

Charlotte is alone in her house on Christmas Eve. Ritualistically paying homage to a former lover, Werther, she listens to a record that he gave her in their youth. The sound of his beautiful voice, and the depth of his poetry transports Charlotte back to happier times, and she begins to dream about the past. Suddenly, her memories take tangible form before her, and she watches in awe as the scene unfolds before her very eyes.

Her fiance, Albert has returned from his time away and finds Charlotte's sister, Sophie, who is excited to see her new brother-in-law. Albert sings about how lucky he is to be loved by such a wonderful woman. Meanwhile, Charlotte is being entertained by the poet, Werther, who is madly in love with her, and uses every method of poetic enchantment available to woo her. She is enamoured, but maintains her integrity and her faithfulness to Albert. Werther is crushed, but hides his pain, insisting that she remain true, but inwardly is destroyed.

Charlotte and Albert, three months after their wedding, are sitting on a park bench in ultimate joy and marital bliss, when Charlotte sees a distressed Werther at the top of the hill, watching them. She feigns sickness, and leaves Albert alone.

Albert, noticing Werther and identifying with the pain that he is feeling, offers him advice, suggesting that he can understand the love he has for Charlotte - as Albert has it too. Werther rejects the suggestion, and prepares for a confrontation.

Just then, Sophie arrives to invite Werther to a dance, as the whole world is happy, and he should be also. He summarily rejects her offer and vows to never be happy again. Albert consoles Sophie and they both leave Werther to his own feelings. He confronts God, and asks him to save him from his misery by calling him home. Sophie returns, to insist that he go to the dance with her. He bids her Adieu forever, and Sophie is dispondent. Charlotte arrives, to the news of Werther's departure, and is upset. Albert sees, and realizes that Charlotte loves Werther back.

Act II

Same as previous Act

Present-day Charlotte, having recovered from her cardiac scare, remembers the time when both Albert and Werther were gone, and she was left alone, not knowing when (or if) either of them would return. She received letters, daily, from Werther, and kept them all safe, reading about their constant and parallel loneliness.

Sophie arrives, and doesn't understand why her sister is always moping about. She innocently mentions that she just hasn't been herself since Werther left. This is too much for Charlotte to bear, and she pushes Sophie away, but immediately apologises for the violent gesture towards her. Sophie insists that Charlotte go to her house, so she can have a break from the loneliness she feels. Charlotte agrees, and Sophie leaves to prepare the house.

Finally succumbing to her desires, she begs Werther to return so that she can kiss him. Miraculously, he arrives, but is sullen, angry, dangerous, not the Werther that she knew. He reads her the poem he wrote to her, and expresses the tremendous anguish he had experienced. He, knowing she loves him, forces her to say so, and in a violent gesture causes her to reconsider her love for him.

She tells him to leave her house forever, and she locks herself in her bedroom, waiting for him to leave. Werther takes a pistol from on the mantle, and runs away from the house, condemning Charlotte, and blaming her for what was going to happen.

Albert arrives, to find his wife distraught. He puts the pieces together, and understands what has happened, and tells Charlotte to go to Werther.

She does, and arrives to find that he had shot himself. As a dying profession, Werther returns back to the romantic poet she once knew, and they share an intimate moment, as Werther passes away in the arms of his loved one.

MEMORIES OF A LIFE WELL-LIVED

Director's Note

If you have ever been in the world of opera production, you will know that considering the number of people involved, and the intricacy of the logistics required to put on a show is tremendous. When one happens, and the stars align, it is nothing short of a miracle. As you likely know, this production was postponed, but the team was determined to give it life, and against all odds, with the audacity of thinking that we can perform live opera during the time of Covid, this weekend this ideal cast will give breath to a work that I have been dreaming about for years.

I am endlessly amazed at the responses that I get when I float producing an opera that is not in the canon. Usually it is a mixture of excitement, and also occasional apprehension and concern that the music could be inaccessible. As for Massenet's Werther, I have loved this opera for a long time - the sweeping romanticism, the abject passion, and the inexpressible tragedy that unfolds are just a few of the reasons why I am swept away by this opera. However, I have encountered hesitation about this piece as lacking excitement and energy.

I believe that any opera has the potential to lack energy and direction with unimaginative staging, and a cast that is not invested in telling the story. At the risk of immodesty, and said with great pleasure, this production has neither of these things. This cast is tremendous, and willing to go into places and theatrical circumstances that are somewhat out of their comfort zones, and tell a story using this construct that has never been told. Similarly, I have taken quite a while to sort out just why someone might find the story lacking. The only thing I can consider is that the traditional staging of the opera has the potential to be stagnant, and somewhat misogynistic: That is simply not the case here.

In the original telling, one experiences the story being told through the flawed lens of Werther, with very little importance placed on Charlotte's perspective. This was one thing that I knew I could psychologically alter, to great effect.

I devised the character of Older Charlotte to explore the concept of unrealized potential, and the infinite directions that one's life could unfold: Every decision affects subsequent ones. Remember that job that you didn't apply for, or that lover that got away that still gnaws at you? This is part of the human experience that I am looking to explore in this piece. The decidedly human qualities, and decisions that they each have to make, is something terrifically interesting for me, and I just know that you will relate to the pain, romance, memories, and nostalgia that this piece brings.

Finally, while I will not give anything away considering the specifics of the production or the surprises that are waiting for you, I can tell you that I was in Rutland at a coffee shop alone, and writing the final scene, and I, sitting at my iPad, had tears streaming down my cheeks. Isn't that the point of art though? To create something that connects us to our humanity? I can imagine no more noble ambition, and only hope that your experience with this work is as meaningful to you as it has been to me. At our own end, may we all have lived our lives without regret, and be our own, best version of Charlotte.



Joshua Collier, Artistic Director

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "John Collier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

JOANNA POPE

Young Charlotte



American mezzo-soprano JoAnna Pope (she/her/hers) has been praised as an “authoritative mezzo” by OperaWire and is quickly gaining acclaim on stages across the United States. Some operatic roles Ms. Pope has performed include Siébel (Faust) with the Savannah VOICE Festival; Mrs. Nolan (The Medium) and La Ciesca (Gianni Schicchi) with Opera Mississippi;

the Second Witch and Spirit of Mercury (Dido and Aeneas) with Sarasota Opera; Proserpina and the Nymph in Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo with Ozarks Lyric Opera; Carmen (Carmen) and Hansel (Hansel and Gretel) with Opera51; Prince Charmant (Cendrillon) with Opera del West; she originated the role of D-Do in the world premiere of Michael Ching’s The Birthday Clown in collaboration with Savannah Opera; Prince Orlofsky (Die Fledermaus) with Vox New England; and Mrs. Bass (Emmeline) with the Boston University Opera Institute. Professional cover roles include La Marquise de Berkenfield (La fille du régiment) with Sarasota Opera and Rosina (Il barbiere di Siviglia) with Opera on the James. Ms. Pope is originally from Jackson, Mississippi and she currently resides in New York City.

Tenor DAVID RIVERA BOZÓN is an international Colombian tenor based in Boston, with more than sixteen years of experience in music performing. The core of his career has been to share his love of the joy of singing; bringing his outstanding voice and heart on different latitudes and communities: from from major opera companies and big theaters, to flash mobs in bakeries and shopping malls.

This magnificent tenor's international career includes operatic roles such as B.F. Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly and Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi, Tamino in Die Zauberflöte and Le Marie in Poulenc's Les Mamelles de Tiresias.

As a concert soloist, Mr. Bozón has triumphed in works including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Stravinsky's Les Noces, and Einhorn's Voices of Light.

He has a special interest in Spanish repertoire and, as a result, has performed chamber works including Ramirez' La Misa Criolla, Falla's Siete Canciones Populares Españolas, Ginastera's Cantos del Tucumán and Cinco Canciones Populares Argentinas.

DAVID RIVERA BOZÓN

Werther



www.drbrtenor.com

HANNAH MADELEINE GOODMAN

Sophie



New York City-based soprano Hannah Madeleine Goodman is an emerging artist on the operatic stage, hailed for her "very adept coloratura" (Parterre), her "exquisite dynamics" (Voce di Meche), and reviewed as "outstanding," "with a radiant smile ... [she] delivered the aria beautifully" (CityWatchLA). After making her soloist debut in recital for LA Opera in 2018, Ms. Goodman enjoyed making her NYC debut as Constance in *The Sorcerer* with Utopia Opera in early 2019.

Operatic highlights include: Susanna, *Le nozze di Figaro* (Hawaii Performing Arts Festival and the Center for Jewish History); Amadeus Live (LA Opera); Emmie, *Albert Herring* (Utopia Opera); Pamina cover, *Die Zauberflöte* (Opera On Tap); LA Opera and Opera Saratoga outreach tours. Ms. Goodman was a Young Artist at the 2019 iSING! International Festival in China and a Resident Artist at Opera Saratoga in 2017.

www.hannahsopranah.com

BRYAN MURRAY

Albert



Forthcoming and recent engagements include Priest/Fisherman in Saariaho's *Only The Sound Remains* at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Venice Biennale, and Strasbourg Festival Musica, and Ben Upthegrove in Menotti's *The Telephone* for Pittsburgh Festival Opera. Bryan recently completed a one year contract with Deutsche Oper Berlin as a Stipendiat, performing comprimario roles during the 2018/19 season including Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Moralès in *Carmen*, and Marullo in *Rigoletto*.

He obtained a Master of Musical Arts degree in opera performance from Yale University's School of Music under the tutelage of Richard Cross and Doris Yarick-Cross. He received an Artist Diploma and a Master of Music degree from the Purchase College Conservatory of Music, and a Bachelor of the Arts degree from tony Brook University. In December 2019 Bryan won the first prize in the finals of the Talents of the World competition in New York, and a few days later took first prize in the Premiere Opera Foundation and NIYOP 2019 International Vocal Competition

. He is also the grand prize winner of Heida Hermann's International Voice Competition, the third prize winner in Mirjam Helin's International Singing Competition, the winner of the "Sachi Liebergesell" award from the Opera Index Competition, a finalist in the Eastern Region of the Met Council auditions, and the winner of an Encouragement Grant from the Premiere Opera International Voice Competition.

On the concert stage, Bryan has sung the baritone/bass solo in works such as John Rutter's *Mass of the Children* with the Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bernstein's *Opening Prayer* with Marin Alsop conducting the Yale Philharmonia, Fauré *Requiem* with the Jacksonville symphony, Handel's *Messiah* with the New Haven Symphony, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Yale Symphony, and in the world premiere of *Transfiguration* by Robert Kyr with the Yale Camerata.

In May 2020, Bryan sings the baritone solo in Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* with the Cathedral Choral Society in Washington DC.

BRENDA SCOTT

Older Charlotte



Brenda Scott, avid performer and lover of music is a recent transplant to Vermont after a lifetime in front of audiences.

A world-traveller, Brenda headlined in big-band concerts of cabaret music from the 1940s in New York City at Cafe Society, as well as touring throughout France, Italy, Monaco, and Japan.

A member of numerous community theatrical events, she has starred in original comedy plays, but BARN OPERA's THE LETTERS OF CHARLOTTE is her first foray into opera and this dramatic character.

She is thrilled to be a part of the production, and furthering BARN OPERA's mission of high quality yet accessible dramatic music for the entire Vermont community.

JOSHUA COLLIER

Director



American tenor, Joshua Collier, praised for his “thrilling high range” and “passionate commitment to character,” was hailed as “a great Italian tenor on the make” by Boston’s Classical Scene as Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette*.

A graduate of The University of North Carolina School of the Arts (Bachelor of Music - Vocal Performance) The New England Conservatory (Masters in Music - Vocal Performance), he has performed throughout New England and beyond in leading and title roles of the lyric and dramatic tenor repertoire.

As a director and producer, Mr. Collier founded the Bostonian opera company, Opera Brittenica, championing the vocal works of Benjamin Britten, in 2013, and is currently the founder and Artistic Director of BARN OPERA (www.barnopera.com) based in Brandon, Vermont. He has directed many acclaimed productions for both organizations such as the audience immersive *The Turn of the Screw*, the controversial retelling of *Carmen*, *Così fan Tutti...*, *The Magic Flute*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and among others the World Premiere of *The Cask of Amontillado* by Felix Jarrar. Mr. Collier spearheads the international opera training program “Castellopera al Mare” held in Italy in the summer, and is a professor of Voice at Castleton University. He also is a widely sought-after masterclass technician for both vocal and dramatic instruction.

LIYA NIGMATI

Piano/Music Director



Liya Nigmati is an accomplished solo and collaborative pianist, a vocal and instrumental coach, and a music educator. Winner of several international piano competitions, Liya has toured throughout Italy, Japan, France, the USA, China, Austria, the Czech Republic, Canada, Hungary, and beyond. She has been critically acclaimed for “stunning performance” (Global Times) in which she “...shined through” (The Boston Musical Intelligencer).

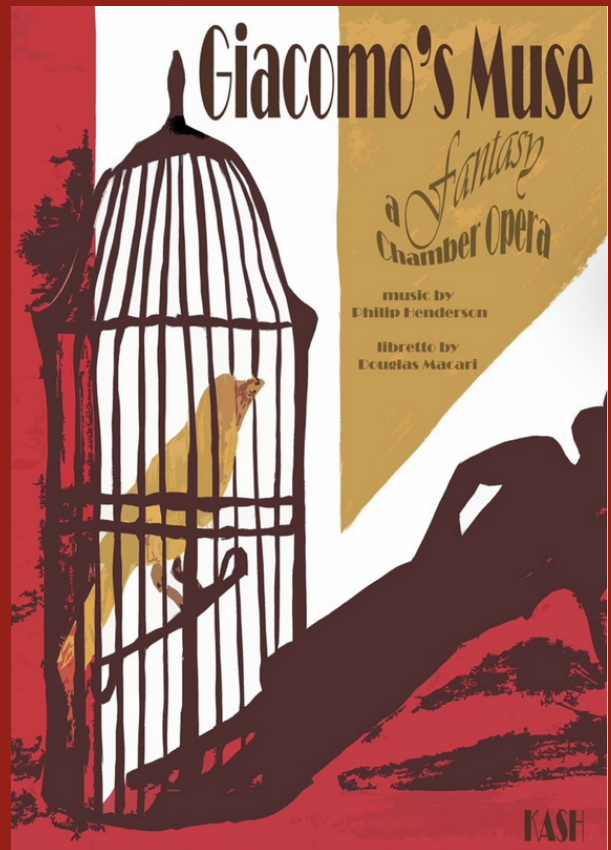
Heard in Palais de L'Europe (France), Vigado Concert Hall (Hungary), Tsunamachi Mitsui Club (Japan), and New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall (USA), Liya holds two Master's Degrees in Piano Performance: one from the New England Conservatory in Boston, and a Master's as well as Doctorate of Musical Arts from Kazan State Conservatory in Russia. In addition to her solo performances as a concert pianist, Liya works in studio workshops with renowned singers and instrumentalists who have included Kim Kashkashian (Violist; Grammy Award 2012, Edison Prize 1999), Jane Eaglen (Soprano; Grammy Award 2002), Michael Lewin (Pianist; Grammy Award 2014), Nicholas Cords (Violist; Grammy Award 2017), and many more. Liya established the international concert series Faces of Love and a charity project To Remember... for which she was a director, fundraiser, main artist, and narrator.

Boston-based, Liya appears frequently at key area music, art, and charitable events. She has appeared in Harvard's ARTS FIRST Festival and in Maestro Benjamin Zander's (Boston Philharmonic) popular series, and You-Tube sensation, Interpretations of Music: Lessons for Life.

Dr. Nigmati is a Steinway Educational Teaching Partner and a Piano Instructor at M.Steinert Piano Academy. She is a Staff Pianist at both the New England Conservatory and The Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

BARN OPERA 2023

*Join us
for one of our
next
productions!*



www.barnopera.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JEFF HAYLON, PRESIDENT

Tricia Welch

Russ McColman

Michael Shank

Frank Spezzano

Joshua Collier

Barbara White

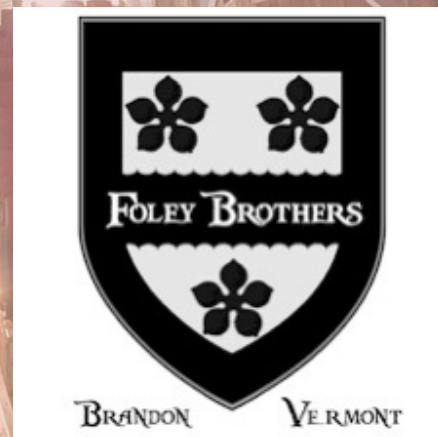
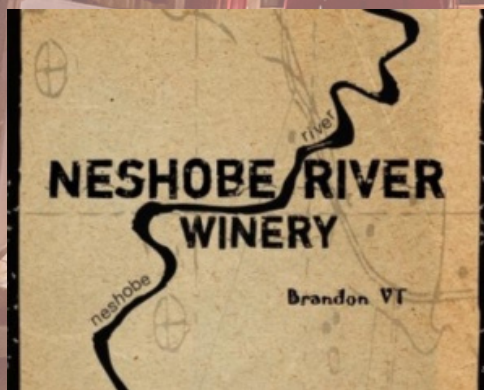
Chris Szczerba

Nicholas Tocci

BARN OPERA is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the state of Vermont. All donations to BARN OPERA are tax deductible by law. Please inquire about sponsorship opportunities for artists, productions, or seasons, with our team

EIN: 86-2778352

THE BARN OPERA CORPORATE SPONSORS



Please support the businesses
that support your BARN
OPERA!

Consider becoming a corporate sponsor today!

SPECIAL THANKS

Hilary Collier

Tricia Welch

Norm Welch

Jean Seeler-Gifford

Karen Farwell

Kathleen Van Horn

Russ McColman

Christopher Szczerba

Michael Shank

Bill & Cheryl Sanderson

Hallie Whitcomb

Frank Spezzano

Chad Graybill

Ettorina Spezzano

Kamuda's
Country Store

The Brandon Inn

The BARN OPERA Board of Directors



There are so many ways to support us

- Tax-Deductible Monetary Contributions
 - Host an artist while in Brandon
 - Donation of Time/Usher/Parking Attendant
 - Sponsor an Artist for an upcoming show
 - Sponsor an individual show
 - Sponsor a full season of BARN OPERA
 - Sustaining Donations with Naming Rights
 - Your suggestion of how you could help?
- Contact Us!

Thank you for all your support of your, Brandon's Opera company, BARN OPERA!



THE BARN OPERA

The BARN OPERA House - Address

1386 Pearl Street

Brandon, Vermont 05733

Website

www.barnopera.com

Joshua Collier, Artistic Director

info@barnopera.com





YOUR BARN OPERA TEAM

Joshua Collier, Artistic Director

Tricia Welch, Executive Director

Nicholas Tocci, Associate Director

Cailin Marcel Manson, Music Director

Russ McColman, Technical Director

Catharine Jai Orellana, Stage Manager

WWW.BARNOPERA.COM