



THE TENDER LAND CAST



Soprano **Joanie Brittingham** will make her Chelsea Opera debut in the role of "Laurie". She was recently seen as Gretel (*Hänsel and Gretel*/Opera Lancaster). Previous engagements include La Fee (*Cendrillon*/New York Lyric Opera), Norina (*Don Pasquale*/GLOW Lyric Theatre), Lucy (*The Telephone*/Opera Lancaster), and Clara (*The Light in the Piazza*/Light Opera Oklahoma). She has also performed at New Works Festival with OPERA America, and with American Lyric Theater. Ms. Brittingham premiered the cycle *Songs of Robert Burns*, available on iTunes. She earned her B.M. in Voice Performance from West Virginia University and two M.M.s in Voice Performance and Music History from Baylor University.



Tenor **Chad Kranak** returns to Chelsea Opera as "Martin" having sung Joe to critical acclaim in the NY premiere of Richard Wargo's *Ballymore – Part One: Winners* and Scorpio in Seymour Barab's *La Pizza con Funghi*. In 2012, he covered Moradesh in Chelsea Opera's world premiere of *The Mark of Cain*. He has also been seen as Tamino (*The Magic Flute*/Regina Opera), Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), and the title role in *Albert Herring*. Other roles include Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Sam Kaplan (*Street Scene*), and Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*). Last summer he sang several roles in Paula Kimper's *Truth* at the New York International Fringe Festival.

Joanie and Chad will be joined by Chelsea Opera veterans Peter Kendall Clark as "Top", Leonarda Priore as "Ma Moss", and Steven Fredericks as "Grandpa Moss". Lynne Hayden-Findlay is the stage director and Samuel McCoy conducts the Chelsea Opera Chamber Orchestra.



Peter Kendall Clark



Leonarda Priore



Steven Fredericks

SPOTLIGHT – SPRING 2014

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 "... *the enterprising Chelsea Opera...*" – [The New York Times](#)



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Chelsea Opera Spotlight – Spring 2014
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10TH SEASON OPENER



The NY premiere of Richard Wargo's *Ballymore – Part One* (Steven M. Crawford, guest conductor) took place on October 11 & 12, paired with Seymour Barab's hilarious parody on Italian opera, *La Pizza con Funghi* (Samuel McCoy, guest conductor). Both composers attended the performances. Sung by Samantha Britt, Darcy Dunn, Chad Kranak and Robert Balonek with the Chelsea Opera Chamber Orchestra, it was a tour de force portraying completely different characters in two operas that were at opposite ends of the style spectrum! As noted by Arlo McKinnon in *Opera News*, "Our four singers jumped from the more subdued and serious demands of Wargo's *Winners* to a madcap, virtuoso performance of a perfect opera buffa. This charming and hilarious work ... had great appeal both to old opera hands and to first-time operagoers."



MEET SAMUEL MCCOY



Samuel McCoy first joined *Chelsea Opera* as assistant conductor for the world premiere of *The Mark of Cain* in 2012 and returned as assistant conductor for *Ballymore – Part One: Winners* and conductor for *La Pizza con Funghi*. He has served as Conductor for *Opera Moderne* and Associate Conductor for *dell'Arte Opera Ensemble* in NYC, as well as Guest Conductor for *Rogue Opera* in Ashland (OR). Maestro McCoy previously served as Principal Conductor for *Puget Sound Concert Opera* in Seattle (WA). He has served as Assistant Conductor for *North Carolina Opera* and two seasons of the *Prototype Festival* where he recently served as assistant conductor for the world premiere of *Kamala Sankaram's opera Thumbprint* and last year was the assistant conductor for the world stage premiere of *Mohammed Fairouz's Sumeida's Song*. He also served as Cover Conductor with the *Oklahoma City Philharmonic* and led the *Oklahoma City University Orchestra* in performances at home and abroad. He will lead *Chelsea Opera's June 2014 production of Copland's The Tender Land*.

Buy your tickets to *The Tender Land* now. Use this special promotional code (SPOTLIGHT) to obtain discounted general admission seats. <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pr/923973>

2014 SEASON PREVIEW



June 13, 2014 at 7:00 pm
 June 14, 2014 at 4:00 pm
 St. Peter's Church in Chelsea

The Tender Land by Aaron Copland was originally commissioned for television but never produced there. When it finally debuted with New York City Opera in 1954, it was not well received by the critics. Even Copland himself in an NPR interview acknowledged the opera lacked the grandeur of most other operas and actually placed the blame on the librettist, Horace Everett (a.k.a., Eric Johns, who ironically was Copland's companion).

Despite a rough beginning, *The Tender Land* has entered the nation's standard repertory list and is a favorite among colleges and smaller companies. The reduced orchestration written by Murry Sidlin makes it possible for a company like Chelsea Opera to present this beautiful work. Several sections have become familiar to audiences, i.e., "The Promise of Living" and "Stomp Your Foot", often performed by choral groups.

The story centers on the first love experienced by Laurie, about to graduate from high school, and a farm hand, Martin, who is tired of wandering from job to job. The opera also has several other interesting characters: Ma Moss who gave up so much to raise her family, Grandpa Moss who dotes on Laurie and perhaps is a bit over protective, and Top, Martin's companion who has rambled through "five boarding houses and two jails!"

Asked about the work, new Music Director/Principal Conductor Samuel McCoy said, "One of the things I love about [this opera is Copland's] use of beautiful melodic motives supported by open-chord harmonies to create an aural image of the expansiveness of rural America. At the same time, he writes sweeping lyrical lines for the voice that create a marvelous tension between the thrust of the melodic line and the spaciousness of the supporting music. It poses a thrilling challenge for the singers, the orchestra and [the conductor] to find that perfect balance between tempo and dramatic expression." (continued on page 4)



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Matthew (bari-tenor)

What do you remember most about portraying Amahl with Chelsea Opera?

There are so many wonderful things to remember about Amahl that it's impossible to pick one. I had been involved in theatrical productions before, but I had never been in a production where everyone was so professional and where I was treated like a professional, which was an amazing and humbling experience. I think the most memorable moment on stage would be beating up The Page with the crutch when he threatens my Mother. It may have just been a boy wanting to smack someone with a stick, but that scene was enormously fun. Backstage, I remember playing and talking about video games with Eapen [Leubner, King Kaspar] and singing the "Queen of the Night" aria with Jorge [Ocasio, King Balthazar]...in the original key! Amahl has truly been the benchmark by which I will judge all future performances—I couldn't have asked for a better experience.

What are you doing now...especially musically?

I am singing every day and loving every minute of it! I am now a freshman at Yale University, and have thus far not declared a major. I am heavily involved in theater and musical theater on campus and will perhaps be starting to do more opera as the opera scene evolves. I am continuing classical voice training with a teacher affiliated with the Yale School of Music and singing all the time with an undergraduate a cappella singing group, "Redhot & Blue of Yale."

In celebration of its 10th Anniversary, Chelsea Opera sought out some past artists to see where they are and what they are doing now. Nicholas and Matthew Agar-Johnson appeared in the title role of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in 2005 and 2006 respectively. Even at such a young age, both were seasoned performers, having sung in school productions and with the Metropolitan Opera Children's Chorus. No longer treble voices, we found them still together, a sophomore and freshman at Yale University, and still singing!

Nick (now a bass-baritone)

What do you remember most about portraying Amahl with Chelsea Opera?

I have quite a few fond memories of my time as Amahl, starting from the first rehearsal. I was rather nervous and felt somewhat out of place being the title character with a whole collection of people who had performed a lot more than I had. Still, being relatively young, I had the inherent respect and reverence for adults, which hadn't yet been drilled out of me. One of the greatest parts of the show was that everyone was incredibly kind and patient with me. The other incredible part was getting to perform using my Dad's old crutch [made by Nick's Grandfather] from when he played Amahl. It was really wonderful to carry that piece of history along with me on stage. It helped me feel supported, literally and figuratively, while letting the character become my own. When I got my head around the fact that my Dad had played the role before me and over the fact that he would be sobbing uncontrollably from the audience, it was wonderful to lend my own personal spin to Amahl.

What are you doing now...especially musically?

I've just completed the first semester of my sophomore year at Yale. I'm majoring in Neuropsychology and Pre-Medical Studies with the goal of becoming some kind of doctor. I was in the Yale Glee Club last year, but am currently on hiatus to focus more on my studies and my a cappella group, "The Spizzwinks(?)", which is celebrating 100 years this year. I'm the group's Assistant Business Manager and the Summer Tour Manager for our trip to Europe. I've arranged 3 songs for them so far, one of which is in the repertoire and the other two of which will enter the repertoire early next year.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Soprano Rachel Rincione sang 1st Cercatrice in the Fifth Anniversary production of Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. She impressed us from the first note she sang in her audition, "I want magic" from Previn's *A Street Car Named Desire*. Not long after, Rachel packed her bags and headed out of town with *The Broadway National 25th Anniversary production of Les Miserables*. This spring she returns to NYC and will make her Broadway debut in the revival production.

Before going on tour with Les Miserables, you were pursuing an opera career? What made you switch to musical theater?

The honest answer is that it was much easier for me to find work in musical theater! Opera is an incredibly difficult field to find steady work in and it takes so much dedication and consistent study. It is my first love because I find the art form itself to be so elevated and demanding. I love opera and I want to be doing that as well but I have found that it's easier as a classically trained artist to get hired in musicals! In my experience, having strong, classically trained singers in a musical is something that casting directors are passionate about.

You've been on the road for 3+ years. What has that experience been like?

It has been an incredible adventure! I definitely have gypsy blood in my veins and traveling with *The Broadway National 25th Anniversary production of Les Miserables* has been a dream come true! I was able to experience almost every major city in America doing what I love most. Bringing our show to the millions of fans across the U.S. was a HUGE thrill and I would go on tour again in a minute! I am currently in Toronto working on the Pre-Broadway run of *Les Miserables* and it has been a stunning experience.

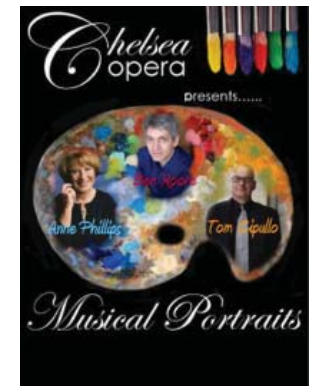
You are about to return to NYC to make your Broadway debut in the revival. What are you looking forward to the most?

First and foremost I am looking forward to bringing this spectacular show back to its original home at The Imperial Theater! *Les Miserables* has been such a huge part of the musical theater canon and the fact that I get to make my Broadway debut with a show I cherish and love so much is a dream come true. I am so incredibly blessed to be able to work as a professional artist! I am also really looking forward to being back in New York because there is no place like it. I love the energy and the thriving cultural scene in the city. As an artist there is no place else I would rather be!

I just want to add that working with Chelsea Opera was one of my most cherished experiences and I would love to continue to be a part of it! I will never forget that you guys took a chance on me and gave me my first professional operatic gig in the big bad city! I am forever grateful.



CHELSEA OPERA PRESENTS



Musical Portraits – songs by composers Anne Phillips, Tom Cipullo and Ben Moore
 Featured guest artist Carol Wilson, soprano
 March 14, 2014 at 8:00 pm
 Christ and St. Stephen's Church
 120 West 69th Street, NYC



The Tender Land –
 Music by Aaron Copland
 Libretto by Horace Everett
 June 13, 2014 at 7:00 PM
 June 14, 2014 at 4:00 PM
 St. Peter's Church in Chelsea,
 346 West 20th Street, NYC

**CELEBRATING
 SEASON TEN!**