



College of Music  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Worthington Family Foundation Opera Theatre Season  
**MSU OPERA THEATRE**



Music by Benjamin Britten  
Libretto by Eric Crozier

Melanie Helton, stage director  
Katherine Kilburn, music director

Wednesday, March 23, 2022, 7:00 p.m.  
Friday, March 25, 2022, 7:00 p.m.  
Saturday, March 26, 2022, 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, March 27, 2022, 3:00 p.m.

Generously sponsored by  
James and Susan Bonfiglio

Fairchild Theatre, MSU Auditorium

# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Welcome to our spring opera production of Benjamin Britten's charming comedy, *Albert Herring*! This is the first opera by Britten that we have done in my tenure here at MSU Opera Theatre, and it has been a joy to rehearse and produce for you.

One of the most important missions of MSU Opera Theatre is to provide multiple opportunities for students at all levels. *Albert Herring* is perfect for that, as the roles demand different degrees of vocal maturity and ability. This music is not easy, although it is indeed beautiful. It is rhythmically and harmonically complex. Add in trying to sing it in a wonderful English accent, and it's a big job. We have all levels from sophomores to doctoral students, all pulling together to have the team succeed.

We were indeed fortunate to have Maestro Steven Mosteller's residency as guest coach sponsored by the Worthington Family Foundation. An opera coach is a very singular entity. A coach is someone who helps teach basic notes and rhythms, and then moves on to style and diction. This work is in addition to the technical work done with the students by their individual voice teachers. Dr. Elden Little is our faculty voice coach, and his contributions to the opera are always significant. We thank them both.

We'd like to warmly welcome Dr. Katherine Kilburn, both to our faculty and to the MSU Opera Theatre team. She has been an enthusiastic and highly musical leader, working with the students to make this a terrific operatic event. It is the first time we've had a female conductor, and it's about time! Welcome, Kiki!

I encourage you to look further in the program for a list of student and alumni accomplishments. I think you'll be amazed at the reach that MSU has in the professional opera and educational world.

Enjoy the show!

# CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

	<u>March 23 &amp; 26</u>	<u>March 25 &amp; 27</u>
Florence, amanuensis and companion to Lady Billows	Meagan Wozny	Fan Yu
Miss Wordsworth, a local teacher	MacKenzie Jacobs	Shannon Teixeira
Mr. Gedge, the Vicar	Jamie Eagle	Liang Zhao
Mr. Upfold, the Mayor	Troy Forbush	Kevon Thompson
Police Superintendent Budd	David Simmons	David Simmons
Lady Billows, a local aristocrat and doyenne of the town	Paige Heidrich	Jenny Ribeiro
Emmie, a local kid	Anna Jesko	Eliza Beutler
Cis, a local kid	Anna Hallwood	Phoenix Miranda
Harry, a local kid	Charlotte Plotzke	Divira Pahwa
Sid, assistant to the Butcher	Nic Bishop	Seth Burke
Albert Herring, the greengrocer's son	Cole Harvey	Tianchi Wang
Nancy, a local shopgirl	Natalie Sweeney	Xulei Zhao
Mrs. Herring, Albert's mum and the local greengrocer	Tyler Roberts	GeDeane Graham

# STAFF FOR MSU OPERA THEATRE

Music Director	Katherine Kilburn
Producer	Melanie Helton
Set Design	Kirk Domer*
Set Construction/Technical Director	Mark R. Willoughby
Lighting Design	Brent Wrobel*
Costume Designer	Howard Kaplan*
Costumes provided by	Sarasota Opera, John Tully, manager
Wig and Makeup Design	Martha Ruskai*
Guest Coach	Steven Mosteller*
Production Stage Manager	Jackson Hall
Assistant Stage Manager	Paula Duva-Rodriguez
Musical Preparation	Elden Little, Steven Mosteller*
Assistant Conductor	Asieh Mahyar
Rehearsal Accompanist	Genadi Zagor
Fairchild Theatre Operations Manager	Nick Raffaele
Recording Services	Jennifer Shangraw, Steve Boughton
Publicity, MSU College of Music	Michael Sundermann, Rick Seguin
Budget Officer	Tammy Hoebecke

\*Guest Artist

## Grateful Acknowledgments

James Forger, Dean, College of Music

MSU Vocal Arts Area Faculty:

Jane Bunnell, Marc Embree, Richard Fracker (chair), Melanie Helton, Harlan Jennings, Elden Little, Anne Nispel, David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Mark Rucker, Sadie Rucker, Sandra Snow

Deborah Moriarty, Chair, Piano Area; Zhihua Tang, Collaborative Piano

MSU Department of Theatre

Ann-Marie Lindley, Director of Development, College of Music

College of Music Staff: Lynne Funk, Katie Bethel, Shawn Mahorney, Amy Rivard, Chuck Roberts

# SYNOPSIS

## Act I, Scene 1: the morning room of Lady Billows' home

Florence is clearing the breakfast dishes for her employer, Lady Billows. We hear the voice of Lady Billows from upstairs, barking out orders for Florence as far as community order concerns. Florence bemoans that there are not enough hours in the day to please Lady B. Miss Wordsworth (a teacher), Mr. Gedge (the Vicar), Mr. Upfold (the Mayor) and Police Superintendent Budd arrive. Their purpose is a meeting to choose the "May Queen" for the annual festival. They proclaim that they are ready to serve to make this very important choice. Lady Billows arrives, greeting them a courteous "good morning." Half in awe and half in fear, they get down to business. Florence takes out her notebook, full of the results of her snooping around the town for "evildoing." As each of the others suggest a possible May Queen, Florence checks her book and knocks them off the list. After all, the May Queen is supposed to be pure and virginal, and it seems that none of the young girls in the town are such. Lady Billows is enraged that the town "reeks of sensual shame." The others are ashamed and dismayed. Superintendent Budd makes a suggestion: have they ever thought of a May King? They scoff at the idea, but then begin thinking about it. Budd proposes a local lad, Albert Herring. He extols his virtue and purity, saying that he would be ideal. The others know him as a bit simple, but a good youth. Lady Billows makes a decision: "Right! We'll have him! That'll teach the girls a lesson!"

## Act I, Scene 2: Herring & Son Greengrocer shop

Emmie, Cis and Harry, three local kids, are playing ball outside the Herring greengrocer shop. Harry tosses the ball into the apparently empty shop and goes in after it. He discovers a basket of apples and is in the process of pinching a few when Sid, the butcher's assistant, enters. Sid chases them off and Albert enters the shop from within, carrying a huge bag of turnips. Sid has come for some herbs and asks Albert if he wants to toss double or nothing from them. Albert explains that his Mum doesn't approve of any bad behavior, such as gambling or drinking. Sid teases Albert, asking if he never wanted to have a drink, toss some dice or go with a girl. Albert is embarrassed. Nancy, a lovely local girl, enters the shop on an errand. Sid has been seeing Nancy, and the two flirt while Albert looks on. Albert secretly likes Nancy and is jealous of Sid's ease with her. Sid and Nancy make a date for that night in secret, and leave together. Florence enters the shop, ready for the big announcement of Albert as May King. Mrs. Herring ("Mum") invites her in, saying that she's not really ready for visitors. Lady Billows, Miss Wordsworth, the Mayor, the Vicar and Superintendent Budd all traipse in and they declare that Albert will be May King and win a prize of 25 sovereigns in gold. Mum is overjoyed as the team leaves, but Albert wants nothing to do with it. They argue, with Albert saying he won't do it and Mum insisting that he is an ingrate.

## **SYNOPSIS (cont.)**

### **Act II, Scene 1: an outside pavilion for the May Festival**

Nancy and Florence are putting the final touches on the luncheon for the Festival. Florence is complaining that Sid is late with the final boxes. Sid arrives late because of a puncture in his bicycle tire. Florence yells at him, then stomps off to have her photograph taken with the others. Nancy can tell that Sid has something up his sleeve. He slyly tells her that he is planning to spike Albert's lemonade with a little rum, just to loosen him up. Nancy is worried but goes along with the plan. Lady Billows arrives with the others, and the children, who have been rehearsing their songs with Miss Wordsworth, present flowers to the luminaries present. Albert enters, miserable, dressed in a white suit and wearing an orange blossom wreath. The Vicar, acting as Master of Ceremonies, invites Lady Billows to speak. She goes off on flights of fancy about the past, and at some point drops her notecards, and tries to continue with platitudes. All applaud, and one by one they salute Albert. Albert is asked to speak, and can only stammer out, "thank you." He drinks some of the spiked lemonade, which gives him the courage to offer a toast to Lady Billows. He drinks some more and gets the hiccups. All offer suggestions as he drinks more and more. They sit down to luncheon.

### **Act II, Scene 2: back in the shop**

Albert, well in his cups, staggers back into the dark shop. He thinks over the events of the afternoon with some bemusement over the amount of food and over the top activity. He tries to light the gas, but it flares up and scares him. He starts to realize how much his mother has stifled him, and in a state of courage, he tosses a coin. "Heads," he says, and decides to take his prize money and go off on a tear. Mum comes in after he's left and assumes he's asleep upstairs.

### **Act III: in the shop**

Albert has been missing for most of the day. Nancy is in the shop, taking care of things so that Mum can rest. The others are out looking for him. Both Emmie and the Superintendent stop by to report on the results of the search. Sid reports that so far all they've found is a dead sheep. Nancy tries to calm Mum, but she is inconsolable at the thought of Albert being gone. The Vicar and Miss Wordsworth also try to console Mum to no avail. Sid, the Mayor and Superintendent enter, carrying Albert's bedraggled orange wreath. They all join in singing a "threnody" of pain and grief for Albert's loss. As their voices rise almost in hysteria, Albert enters, somewhat disheveled and asks what's going on? They turn on him, yelling at him as to where he's been. He tries to tell them and after many interruptions, he spins the tale of a night of drunkenness that he's never experienced. They are all horrified, particularly at the fact that he spent three of the twenty-five sovereigns on drink. They leave, disappointed that their May King has fallen. Sid and Nancy congratulate Albert on his freedom, and Nancy rewards him with a kiss. As the kids come back into the shop, they sing their round-the-rosy as all is well.

# MSU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Katherine Kilburn, conductor

## Violin

Yuanmiao Li  
Alirna Korieva

## Viola

Ursula Glasmacher

## Cello

Sandro Sidamonidze

## Bass

Albert Daschle

## Flute

Elva Tang

## Oboe

Libby Ryan

## Clarinet

Jake Jaskolski

## Bassoon

Olivia Fletcher

## Horn

Emma Brown

## Percussion

Michael Giunta

## Harp

Belle Coty

## Piano

Yufan Li

# **MSU Opera Society Donors**

## **2021 – 2022 Season**

MSU Opera Society is the community support organization of the MSU Opera Theatre. We are grateful to our members for their generous contributions.

*The 2021-22 MSU Opera Theatre season is generously funded by the Worthington Family Foundation.*

### **Presenter (\$5,000+)**

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Become a member of the MSU Opera Society! Your contribution is tax deductible and will be used to assist with high production costs involving set design and construction, costumes and operations.

Please consider how much you enjoy the Opera Theatre productions and send your check or money order made payable to Michigan State University with "MSU Opera Society – AE0605" written on the memo line. Mail your contributions to:

**Opera Theatre**  
College of Music Advancement Office  
333 W Circle Drive, Room 105  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824

For information about the MSU Opera Society, please contact the College of Music Advancement Office at (517) 353-9872 or e-mail Ann-Marie Lindley at [alindley@msu.edu](mailto:alindley@msu.edu).

## STUDENT NEWS

**Bryan Allen** (BM2022, student of Marc Embree) will be entering the University of Michigan Business School in the fall and is working for University Musical Society in Ann Arbor. **Paula Duva-Rodriguez** (BM2023), **Xulei Zhang** (DMA2022), **Ruoxi Bian** (DMA2023) (students of Jane Bunnell) all have roles with the Chicago Summer Opera. **GeDeane Graham** (DMA2022, student of Jane Bunnell) will spend the summer at Des Moines Metro Opera and sing the role of Annie in *Porgy and Bess*. She was a finalist in the Detroit Aria Competition and audience favorite in the Premiere Opera Foundation Competition, as well as a soloist with Art Song Colorado *Voices of the Diaspora*. Cole Harvey (BM2022, student of Richard Fracker) won 1<sup>st</sup> place in Adult Men at the Michigan National Association of Teachers of Singing competition. **Sean Holland** (BM 2022, student of Richard Fracker) appeared in *Bounce, the Basketball Opera* in New York City, taking a role originated by alumnus **Johnathan Kirkland** (BM2008, student of Richard Fracker). **Elary Mede** (MM2023, student of Melanie Helton) won an encouragement award at the Michigan District auditions of the MET Laffont Competition and will be at Des Moines Metro Opera this summer as a young artist. **Tyler Roberts** (BM2023, student of Mark Rucker) was the soloist for *El Amor Brujo* with the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra. **Shannon Teixeira** (BM2022, student of Mark Rucker), won the Michigan District auditions of the MET Laffont Competition and competed in the Great Lakes

## STUDENT NEWS (cont.)

Regional auditions. **Gerardo de la Torre** (DMA2023, student of Mark Rucker) sang in *Don Giovanni* at Opera Grand Rapids. **Tianchi Wang** (DMA2023, student of Richard Fracker) will be an apprentice artist at the Santa Fe Opera this summer and is a finalist for the Washington National Opera young artists program. **Xulei Zhang** (DMA2022, student of Jane Bunnell) won second prize in the North International Music Competition and is a finalist for the Vienna Summer Music Festival.

### Alumni News:

**Justine Alexander** (BM2020, student of Melanie Helton), **Christine Boddicker** and **Grace Reberg** (BM2020, students of Jane Bunnell) were all featured in major roles in the University of Houston Moores Opera Center season. Justine and Grace were also featured artists at the Seagle Music Festival and will return to Seagle, singing leading roles in *Gianni Schicchi* and *Hello Dolly*, while Christine will be at Brevard Opera Center. **Leah Bryzski** (BM2014, student of Anne Nispel) is a young artist with Minnesota Opera, where she will be singing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. **Katherine DeYoung** (BM2015, student of Melanie Helton) continues as a Ryan Center Fellow at the Chicago Lyric Opera. Katherine will return to MSU along with fellow alumni **Steven Martin** (DMA2019, student of Richard Fracker), **Anna Montgomery** (MM2019, student of Melanie Helton) and **Zaikuan Song** (DMA2020, student of Richard Fracker) for the Verdi Requiem with the MSU Symphony in the spring. **Isaac Frishman** (MM2017, student of Richard Fracker) sang the role of Almaviva in Pacific Northwest Opera's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* alongside fellow alumnus **Mark Davies** (BM, 2009, student of Melanie Helton) as Figaro. **Catherine Goode** (MM2017, student of Melanie Helton) will be a young artist at Central City Opera this summer. She has sung roles recently at Virginia Opera and Kentucky Opera after having been a Merola artist at the San Francisco Opera Center. **Savannah Hegyi** (BM2020, student of Jane Bunnell) has a role with the Chicago Summer Opera. **Nick Hudak** (DMA2020, student of Richard Fracker) is singing with the Sarasota Opera. **Will Johnson** (BM2020) participated in the Houston Grand Opera Young Artists Summer Program and was an Encouragement Award winner in the MET Laffont Competition. **Lindsay Kesselman** (BM2005, student of Melanie Helton) was nominated for a Grammy award for her recording of *The Arching Path* and continues an acclaimed career specializing in contemporary music. **Michaela Larsen** (BM2019, student of Marc Embree) is singing the role of Venus in John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* at SUNY Stonybrook under the baton of the

## STUDENT NEWS (cont.)

many times MSU Opera guest artist Maestro Daniel Beckwith. **Angela Lee** (BM2017, student of Jane Bunnell) is a finalist at the Kurt Weill-Lotte Lenya Competition. **Brian Major** (DMA2019, student of Mark Rucker) is also singing at the Sarasota Opera and will be sharing performances of Amonasro in *Aida* with his teacher, Mark Rucker, at Opera Carolina. He has an active calendar both in opera and symphonic work. **John Riesen** (MM2014, student of Richard Fracker) is singing at Utah Opera, Nashville Opera, On Site Opera and making his Carnegie Hall debut this season. He also recently released two singles “You came into my life” and “Autumn Leaves” that have reached over a million streams on Spotify and Apple. **Matt Scollin** (BM2008, student of Richard Fracker) continues to sing with the US Air Force Singing Sergeants and was featured on the Boston Pops July 4 celebration at Tanglewood this past summer. **Rachel Shaughnessy** (BM2014, student of Jane Bunnell) is singing Donna Anna in Rice University’s *Don Giovanni*. **Schylar Sheltrown** (BM2014, student of Melanie Helton) was a participant in Grand Rapids Opera’s world premiere of *Stinney*, along with **Darius Gillard** (MM2014, student of the late Peter Lightfoot). **Zaikuan Song** (DMA2020, student of Richard Fracker) sang leading roles with Grand Rapids Opera and Opera Carolina and has signed with Encompass Management in New York City. He will be at St. Louis Opera this spring. **Alina Tamborini** (BM2017, student of Anne Nispel) continues to sing leading roles with Teatro Nuovo in New York and is an active soloist in contemporary music venues. **Jadrian Tarver** (DMA2019, student of Mark Rucker) sang Ping in the Grand Rapids Opera production of *Turandot*. **Johnathan Walker-Vankuren** (MM2018, student of Richard Fracker) performed the role of Ali Baba for Opera Southwest. **Kyle White** (BM 2017, student of Marc Embree) is singing in the Young Artists Program at Palm Beach Opera. He was the Florida district winner at the MET Laffont Competition. He will be appearing with Virginia Opera, Kentucky Opera and the Hungarian State Opera in the season to come.