North Cambridge Family Opera Company presents a WORLD PREMIERE

Directed by David Bass and Kathy Lindsay
Choreography by Rachel Zimmerman
The Peabody School, Cambridge, MA
March 17, 18, 24, and 25, 2018

Words by BILL HARLEY
Music by PAUL PHILLIPS

WEEDPATCH

Directed by David Bass and Kathy Lindsay
Choreography by Rachel Zimmerman
The Peabody School, Cambridge, MA
March 17, 18, 24, and 25, 2018
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North Cambridge Family Opera Company presents

WEEDPATCH

Words by Bill Harley
Music by Paul Phillips
Directed by David Bass and Kathy Lindsay
Choreography by Rachel Zimmerman
Produced by Sue Hall

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Chris Edel

Mural Artwork
A.J. Liuba

Props
Abbe Cohen Dvornik

Orchestration
Tim Maurice

Stage Management
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March 17, 18, 24, and 25, 2018
The Peabody School, Cambridge, MA

Generous support for this commission was provided by the Robbins/de Beaumont Foundation.
Congratulations to the Weedpatch cast & crew!

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Feel free to talk to cast member Julie McKinney about this!
(Okie, Dance Teacher, and real-life mom of Willy)
# List of Songs

| Act I, Scene 1 | 1. All the Way From Oklahoma |
|               | 2. I Have Seen Enough |
| **Weedpatch Camp:** | 3. We’re Weedpatch |
|               | 4. We Built This School |
|               | 5. Poor Wayfaring Stranger |
| Act I, Scene 2 | 6. He Said That I Could Sing |
| **Rondell Tent** | 7. It Ain’t That Easy |
|               | 8. Someone I Can Count On |
| Act I, Scene 3 | 9. I Think I’ve Found a Way |
| **Weedpatch School** | 10. Our Promised Land |
|               | 11. Away Far Away |
| Act I, Scene 4 | 12. You Don’t Know |
| **Rondell Tent** | 13. There’s Got To Be More |
| Act I, Scene 5 | 14. The Talent Show (Bright Morning Stars) |
| **Town Hall Auditorium** | 15. Brawl |
| Act II, Scene 1 | 16. If I Had A Dime |
| **Weedpatch Camp** | 17. Big World |
| Act II, Scene 2 | 18. Nothing Wrong With Dreams |
| **Rondell Tent** | 19. Don’t Say ‘No,’ Miss Borden |
| Act II, Scene 3 | 20. We’re Gonna Be On the Radio |
| **Weedpatch School** | 21. Who Will Sing This Song |
| Act II, Scene 4 | 22. You Don’t Know (Reprise) |
| **Weedpatch School** | 23. I Want To Be Here When Something Happens |
| Act II, Scene 5 | 24. Best Laid Plans |
| **Weedpatch Dance Hall** | 25. Bright Morning Stars |
|               | 26. Our Promised Land (Reprise) |
WEEDPATCH SYNOPSIS

PAUL PHILLIPS AND BILL HARLEY

ACT I

Scene 1 – James Callahan arrives at the Arvin Federal Migrant Camp near Bakersfield, CA in 1940 to teach math and music to Oklahoma migrants at the Weedpatch School, which is viewed skeptically by the town denizens. Leo Hart, the Kern County School Superintendent, introduces James to Nora Borden, another teacher at the school. Nora has Sarah Rondell sing for James, and everyone joins in. James is impressed, but Cal, Sarah’s father, disapproves and orders her home.

Scene 2 – Back at her family’s tent, Sarah tells her grandmother Agnes how excited she is that James believes in her talent. Cal berates Sarah for not doing her chores. He is bitter that his wife Laura died during their journey to California and that he now faces so much hardship. Cal doesn’t like it when Sarah sings because she sounds just like Laura, and Sarah agrees not to. Sarah commiserates with her best friend, Patty.

Scene 3 – Leo tells James and Nora that he believes that featuring the new Weedpatch Chorus at the upcoming Kern County Talent Show will convince the community of the worth of the Okies. Nora is skeptical, but James tells Patty to get Sarah, and the chorus practices “Our Promised Land” by the celebrated Gus Monroe. Sarah arrives, very reluctant. When it’s her turn to sing, she becomes too emotional to continue and runs off. James and Nora share how committed they are to teaching.

Scene 4 – James goes to the Rondell tent to convince Cal to let Sarah develop her talent, but Cal is suspicious. Agnes intervenes, attempting to soften Cal’s animosity. Cal relents and agrees to let Sarah sing.

Scene 5 – At the Talent Show, Leo and another emcee introduce the performers; first ballet dancers, then jugglers. Willy (Sarah’s boyfriend) and other kids from Arvin and from town taunt the performers and each other. The Weedpatch Chorus sings “Bright Morning Stars,” and Sarah sings beautifully at first, but falters at the line, “Oh where are our dear mothers?” The town kids mock Sarah, and Willy begins a fight. The police arrest Willy and send the Okies back to Arvin. A furious Cal tells Sarah never to sing again.
ACT II

Scene 1 – Four children find a dime and dream of what they might spend it on.

Scene 2 – At the Rondell tent, Willy arrives and tells Sarah excitedly about his night in jail, after which he rambled around California. Willy asks Sarah to run off with him, but Sarah is ambivalent. Agnes tells Sarah to believe in herself and her dreams.

Scene 3 – James bursts in on Nora’s classroom, to her great consternation. Undeterred, James tells her about a letter he has just received from Professor Ruth Crawford, his former professor at Berkeley. The professor’s son Pete is coming to Weedpatch with Gus Monroe! Everyone is totally psyched. James tells Nora of his plan to feature Pete and Gus in a concert with the Weedpatch Chorus in three days. Nora is opposed, but James convinces her to agree to the concert.

Scene 4 – James prepares the excited Weedpatch Chorus for the upcoming concert. Sarah initially refuses to sing, but as the chorus rehearses, Sarah can’t help herself and joins in. Everyone praises Sarah, but Cal enters and furiously reminds Sarah that she must never again sing.

Scene 5 – The Weedpatch Dance Hall is abuzz. Pete and Gus are late, to the consternation of Leo and Ruth. The School Board members express their impatience and their disapproval of Gus Monroe. In desperation, Leo asks James to lead the chorus in a song. Sarah is torn, but finally decides to sing. The chorus again sings “Bright Morning Stars” and again Sarah falters at “Oh where are our dear mothers?” This time, Cal rises and sings from where she left off. Others stand and join in, one by one, until everyone is singing. Ruth offers Sarah a scholarship to Berkeley, and her family implores her to go. Meanwhile, the School Board tells Leo they will fund the Weedpatch School. Finally Pete and Gus arrive, and they lead everyone in a final rendition of “Our Promised Land.”
Weedpatch is the culmination of collaborative projects I’ve carried out with Bill Harley over the past 20 years or so, dating back to 1996, when he asked me to set his story *Come On Out and Play* for an family concert by the Norwalk Symphony in Connecticut. I’ve also orchestrated his songs “You’re In Trouble” and “There’s a Pea on my Plate”, and composed *Jack and the Beanstalk*, based on Bill’s version of the old English fairy tale, for the Allentown Symphony in Pennsylvania.

All of these projects used folk music to some degree, usually combined with “classical” orchestral music, for lack of a better term. When NCFO chose Bill and me as the winners of its first Commission Competition, we set out to create something much larger in scope than any of our previous pieces, but similarly combining folk and classical traditions. There are several traditional folk tunes in *Weedpatch* (most notably *Poor Wayfaring Stranger* and *Bright Morning Stars*), but most of the music is newly composed. Our intention was to honor the folk tradition that the Dust Bowl immigrants to California brought with them from Oklahoma and Texas. Although *Weedpatch* takes place around Bakersfield, which is associated with a well-known style of country music, typified by artists like Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, we didn’t employ that musical style in *Weedpatch*, since the opera takes place in 1940 and the “Bakersfield sound” dates from the mid-to-late 1950s. Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, however, were musical influences on *Weedpatch*. Guthrie, who was born in Okemah, Oklahoma, lived in Los Angeles from 1937-1940 and was the principal artistic voice of the 400,000 Okies who made their way to the west coast around the 1930s to seek a better life. Like *Weedpatch’s Gus Monroe*, Guthrie was well known as a singer on the radio (particularly KFVD in Los Angeles) and performed widely throughout California. His album *Dust Bowl Ballads*, a major influence on *Weedpatch*, represents the quintessential musical sound of that period.

In March 1940, Woody Guthrie was invited to play at a benefit concert hosted by the John Steinbeck Committee to Aid Farm Workers. That’s where he met Pete Seeger, the banjo-playing folk singer whose father was Professor Charles Seeger, a Harvard-trained musician who established the first musicology program in the US (at the University of California), helped found the American Musicological Society, and was one of the founders of the academic field of ethnomusicology. After divorcing his first wife Constance (Pete’s mother), Charles married his assistant Ruth Crawford, who became one of the leading American composers of the
mid-20th century. Two of her American folk songbooks, as well as numerous recordings of her music, are still widely available. Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger became close friends after that initial meeting, and shared a loft in NYC in the early 1940s. So while the character of Sarah Rondell and her story is made up, Gus Monroe and Pete Crawford are based on Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, respectively, with Professor Crawford based on Professor Charles Seeger. However, with Ruth Crawford Seeger having been such an important figure in her own right, there is a certain poetic justice in converting the role of Professor Crawford into a female character.

The one character in Weedpatch who bears the name of his historical namesake is Leo Hart, who was elected superintendent of the Kern County schools in 1939 and promptly built the school in the Weedpatch Camp that is celebrated in this opera. It’s an amazing story that deserves to be more widely known. Jerry Stanley’s book Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp tells the story of Leo Hart and the school, and was one of the main inspirations for the opera. When I traveled to Weedpatch in 2014 to see the actual location as I began composing the opera, I had the opportunity to talk to several people there who had been students at the school that Leo Hart built. Their stories also helped inspire my work on the opera.

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Bill Harley (Librettist) is a storyteller, songwriter and author best known for his work with children and families. He has produced thirty-five recordings and fifteen children’s books, which have won numerous awards, including two Grammys© for his spoken word recordings and recognition by the Bank Street School of Education for his middle grade novels. Member of the RI Music Hall of Fame, Bill is the recipient of Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities and the Children’s Music Network as well as an honorary degree from Hamilton College. He has toured nationally and internationally for forty years, appearing at festivals, conferences, schools and theaters and has shared the stage with Sting, Pete Seeger, and scores of elementary school choirs. For twenty years, he was a regular commentator on NPR’s “All Things Considered”. He makes his home with his wife Debbie in Seekonk, MA. His work on Weedpatch grew out of an initial collaboration with Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, RI under the guidance of Oskar Eustis, now artistic director of the Public Theater in New York. He is happy to be part of the artistic team, with Paul Phillips, that has produced this opera for families.

We are proud of our member performers!

Emma Adler
Eloise Botka
Marin Manoach

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Bright morning stars...
Paul Phillips (Composer), the Gretchen B. Kimball Director of Orchestral Studies and Associate Professor of Music at Stanford University, is an acclaimed conductor, composer, pianist, and author who has conducted over 60 orchestras worldwide and recorded 7 compact discs for Naxos and other labels. Educated at Eastman, Columbia, and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, he began his career as a coach/conductor in German opera houses (Frankfurt, Lüneburg). Upon his selection for the Exxon/Arts Endowment Conductors Program, he returned to the US, holding conducting posts in Greensboro and Savannah while guest conducting the Dallas Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and other many other orchestras. In 1989, Phillips was appointed Director of Orchestras and Chamber Music at Brown University, a post he held until joining the Stanford faculty last year. His compositions include orchestral works, a ballet, choral music, song cycles, chamber music, music for the stage, and several works for young audiences in collaboration with Bill Harley. Phillips’s reduced orchestration of Stravinsky’s opera Mavra, published by Boosey & Hawkes, has been performed internationally, while his book A Clockwork Counterpoint: The Music and Literature of Anthony Burgess, described in the press as “prodigiously researched, elegantly written” and “seamlessly fascinating”, has stimulated worldwide interest in Burgess’s music. For further information, visit www.paulsphillips.com.
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THE REAL HISTORY OF THE OKIES
AND THE WEEDEPATCH SCHOOL

Although the story of Sarah Rondell is fiction, it is set in a very real place and time in American history, which still has a great deal to say to us today.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many residents of the Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and surrounding states were “dry” farmers. They didn’t have irrigation equipment or reservoirs to store water, so if there was not enough rain one year, the crops might not grow and they wouldn’t make much money. Farmers generally have to borrow money to be able to plant, hoping to make enough by the end of the growing season to pay back their loans and maybe save a little bit for lean years in the future. These farmers lived very close to the line, barely scraping by even in good times.

However, in 1931, a severe drought began: it barely rained at all for five years straight. On top of that, from 1936 to 1940, the drought was compounded by frequent strong winds which blew the once-fertile topsoil into the air, as thick clouds of red dust. Dust was everywhere. It got into everything. You’d have to keep a wet rag over your face, even when you slept, but dust got into your mouth and nose anyhow. Outside, you might walk backwards so less dust would get in your eyes. You had to sweep everything all the time, even cleaning out the nostrils of the livestock several times a day. When you set the table, you’d put the plates and cups upside down. Breathing all of that dust damaged people’s lungs, so many died of dust pneumonia.

Because the crops had failed so many times, nearly half of all families lost their farms, their possessions, and their homes. The unemployment rate was over 30% — no one had any money to spend, so storekeepers and other businesses couldn’t make money either. Folks were literally starving. They ate things like carrot stems, apple pits, and coffee grounds.

Big agricultural producers in California, meanwhile, needed laborers to harvest their many crops. They sent advertising leaflets to the Dustbowl, saying that there were lots of high-paying jobs in California. Families sold what remaining possessions they could, piled the rest onto whatever old jalopies they could afford, and set off to California with high hopes of making a decent living picking fruits, vegetables, and cotton. Over one million people made the journey, 375,000 from Oklahoma alone. They were called Okies. The term was intended as an insult, but came to be adopted as a term of pride in their courage, determination, and strength. The 1500-mile journey was long and hard; many people, like Sarah’s mother, died along the way from heat, starvation, and disease.
But when the Okies actually got to California, it turned out that there were far too many migrants for the available jobs. As Cal found, even when they could find work, they had to accept extremely low wages -- if the boss wasn’t offering enough money for you, there was always another Okie who was more desperate. They could not afford housing, creating squatter camps anywhere they could. And they continued to fall ill and die. Hospitals openly refused to treat them. The locals saw them as lazy, shiftless, even subhuman. They openly discriminated against the Okies, in some places forming vigilante Bum Brigades to force them out. The attitudes expressed by the Kern County Citizen’s Committee are sadly quite accurate. The Okies had come to the Promised Land, but the promise turned out to have been a lie.

To alleviate the worst of the problems in the squatter camps, the federal government built a dozen tent camps, including the Arvin Federal Migrant Camp, near the Weedpatch Highway, where our story takes place. Camp life was still pretty spartan, but at least there were tent platforms, tin shacks, running water, and even food for the children. The cost to live there was low, within the range of what an Okie might be able to make, and those who had no money could contribute by doing maintenance.

The Arvin camp was also made famous by a young journalist named John Steinbeck. After interviewing the Weedpatch Okies about their journey and their plight in California, he wrote the novel The Grapes of Wrath. As with our opera, Steinbeck created a fictional family to help crystallize the experiences of a whole community into an approachable story. When it was published in 1939, it quickly became very popular. Of course, the townies didn’t like it at all, and the book was widely burned and banned, including in all of the

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Although the Okie kids had the legal right to go to public school, as Willy and Waylona tell us, the town children were as nasty to the Okie children as the adults had been to their parents. The Okie kids did not talk, dress, or even act “properly,” and most had almost no formal education. They were thought to be not just “dumb,” but incapable of learning. Insults and brawls were frequent.

Leo Hart was a WWI veteran who had become a teacher and then a head school counselor in Kern County. He realized the injustice of the Okies’ situation and reached out to the families in Weedpatch Camp, treating the adults with respect and playing with the kids. The little girl he is holding in the photo was shy and afraid to go to school sometimes, but he would let her wear his hat, walk with her and help her come out of her shell. He became the migrants’ strongest ally, using his status and his political skills on their behalf. He carefully did not mention his positive ideas about the Okies when he ran for the office of school superintendent in 1939. Once elected, he first tried to place kids in the outlying rural schools where they might blend in better, but met with fierce resistance. So he came up with a more politically-acceptable plan: to solve the problem of the schools being overcrowded with “dumb Okie kids,” without costing the district any money, by declaring an “emergency” and building a separate school for them. The school board was only too happy to have a way to get rid of the Weedpatch kids.
In 1940, Leo leased a patch of land next to the Weedpatch camp and bought a flatbed truck. As he and the kids describe in We Built This School, they had to scrounge for building materials, teaching materials, and anything that could possibly be useful. All of the details in the song are accurate, and yes, orange crates featured heavily. Leo swapped his suit and tie for overalls, working alongside the Okies. The goal wasn’t just to use the kids for labor, but for the building of the school itself to be part of the “broader and richer” curriculum. This way, the kids learned practical skills such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electrical work.

Leo recruited skilled young teachers from around the country, like Nora and James, who shared his passion and his faith in the Okies. Teachers were expected to wear many hats, teaching both academic and practical subjects, all at whatever level the kids were actually ready for. The kids learned how to sew clothing, cobble shoes, repair and maintain engines, make cosmetics, type, and a host of other useful skills, enabling them to help their families and hopefully to earn a better living when they grew up. Many were the first members of their families to be able even to read and write.

They raised livestock and grew crops, enough to supply all of the school meals and even to sell to the markets. They really did buy an old airplane for $200. Some classes were held inside of it (see photo), and kids who got over 90% on their math papers were allowed to taxi it down the makeshift runway. Digging the swimming pool (see photo) was a treat for working hard in class; they ended up with the first public pool in Kern
History, continued

County. And yes, there was an idealistic music teacher who refused to take a salary.

The Weedpatch kids took justifiable pride in the school they had built with their own hands. There were few if any discipline problems. Ironically, the school was so successful that in 1944, the townies asked if their own children could attend. The Okies wanted to maintain the school as their own, but the once-hostile townies obtained a legal opinion that an “emergency” could only last for five years, forcing the school to open to everyone.

At the renamed Sunset School, the town kids quickly outnumbered the Okies, but the lessons of the school stayed for a lifetime. The hundreds of Okie children who had studied at Weedpatch grew up and were successful in a wide variety of professions, including construction, business, medicine, law, and yes, education. Leo took the show on the road, bringing a mobile version of the “broader and richer curriculum” to other migrant camps around the San Joaquin Valley. The original buildings were leveled in an earthquake in 1952, but the school rebuilt on the property still operates today. Most of its students now are the children of Latino migrant workers, who still live at the camp and work hard for low wages in the agricultural industry. The teachers still have faith in the ability of all kids to learn, to grow, and to be.

Thanks to our board:

Andy Adler, David Bass, Phil Budne, Chris Edel, Sue Hall, Tom Hamill, Mark Jaquith, Hope Kelley, Kathy Lindsay, Carla Procaskey, David Rabkin, David Sandberg, Aimee Yermish
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Sarah Rondell ................................................................. Tess Carney
Cal Rondell ........................................................................ Jeff Moore
Agnes Rondell ................................................................. Kathy Lindsay
Patty, Sarah’s best friend ................................................. Laura Bigler
Willy, Sarah’s suitor ........................................................... Ilan Balzac

KERN COUNTY LUMINARIES
Leo Hart, superintendent of schools............................Aimee Yermish

CITIZENS COMMITTEE:
Mrs. Rumpole ............................................................................ Jill Pelavin
Mrs. Havisham ......................................................................... Margery Meadow
Mr. Gilbert ................................................................................... Jeff Bigler
Mr. Rackstraw ............................................................................ Jason Merrill

OTHER WEEPATCH CAMPFOLK
Nora Borden, school principal ............................................. Emma Adler
James Callahan, math and music teacher ......................... Mark Bildman
Abby, an eager singer .......................................................... Katarina Dvornik
Dime Soloists ...Dina Gorelik, Kerry LaRose, Marin Manoach, Oriana McKanan

OTHER BAKERSFIELD TOWNFOLK
Talent Show MC ........................................................................... Beth Hocking
Policeman ................................................................................... Dan McKanan

OUT O’ TOWNERS
Professor Ruth Crawford ................................................... Emilija Baksys
Pete Crawford, Ruth’s son ..................................................... David Bass
Gus Monroe, folk hero ............................................................ Chris Edel

CHORUS
SUPPORTING SOLOISTS: Gal Agam, Hadar Agam, Maya Agam, Kate Berelowitch, Juli Berndt, Jessica Cashdan\(^\text{D}\), Abbe Cohen Dvornik, Chloe Duggan\(^\text{D}\), Chris Edel, Hannah Erickson, Esther Fu, Meredith Gast\(^\text{A}\), Lena Gorelik, Adam Gould, Tom Gould, Verity Gould, Birikti Kahsai\(^\text{B}\), Bill Laskin, Ella Lehrich, Alice Merrill Hunter, Anastasia Miller, Liz Morse\(^\text{D}\), Joanne Nicklas, Davide Pettenuzzo, Leo Pettenuzzo\(^\text{A}\), Yifei Sun, Sara Verrilli, Julie Viens\(^\text{D}\), Eliza Weinberger

OTHER CHORUS: Caitlin Anderson, Emilija Baksys, Heather Barney, Bert Dvornik, Katarina Dvornik, Luka Dvornik, Lorraine Erickson, Dina Gorelik\(^\text{B}\), Sue Hall, Beth Hocking, Kerry LaRose, Susan LaRose, Marin Manoach, Chanda McCreary, Dan McKanan, Oriana McKanan\(^\text{D}\), Tammy McKanan, David Gordon Mitten, Bereket Secunda, Sara Secunda

Name\(^\text{D}\) = Ballerina; Name\(^\text{B}\) = Sheet Dancer; Name\(^\text{A}\) = Juggling Act
Thanks to the North Cambridge Family Opera for helping these weeds, and so many others, find a place to sprout.

Opera really does count!

Craig Kelley
Cambridge City Council
www.CraigKelley.org
CAST, SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 7:00PM

RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Sarah Rondell ......................................................... Sophia Teller
Cal Rondell ............................................................... Tom Hamill
Agnes Rondell ........................................................... Laura Gill
Patty, Sarah’s best friend ................................................ Julia Teller
Willy, Sarah’s suitor ................................................... Riley McKinney

KERN COUNTY LUMINARIES
Leo Hart, superintendent of schools ...................................... Katie Hamill

CITIZENS COMMITTEE:
Mrs. Rumpole ................................................................ Emilija Baksys
Mrs. Havisham ................................................................ Leetka Katzenblickstein
Mrs. Gilbert .................................................................... Megan Morse
Mr. Rackstraw .................................................................. Craig Burket

OTHER WEEPATCH CAMPEFOLK
Nora Borden, school principal ........................................ Nicole McElhoe
James Callahan, math and music teacher .............................. Nate Burket
Abby, an eager singer ...................................................... Fiona O’Loughlin
Dime Soloists .......................... Eloise Botka, Addie Kelsey, Anya Miller, Nicci Stamos

OTHER BAKERSFIELD TOWNFOLK
Talent Show MC ................................................................. Glenn McElhoe
Policeman ........................................................................ Alec McKinney

OUT O’ TOWNERS
Professor Ruth Crawford ................................................ Sue Holcomb
Pete Crawford, Ruth’s son .................................................. David Bass
Gus Monroe, folk hero .........................................................

CHORUS


Name® = Ballerina; Name® = Sheet Dancer; Name® = Juggling Act
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The Committee meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every _______ (except during school holidays), starting at 6:00 p.m., in public meetings held in the School Committee Meeting Room at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. Every __________ starts with a PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, when ____________, _____________, and others can offer their opinion about issues (on the agenda) related to the Cambridge Public Schools.

You don’t have to leave ________ to be an informed __________. The meetings are __________ live on Ch. 99, livestreamed, and video-archived on the School Committee webpage. Excellent __________ can be found in the online Cambridge Day (cambridgeday.com) and in the Cambridge Chronicle (cambridge.wickedlocal.com).

You can also join the district-wide parent discussion group, CPSparents@yahoogroups.com, which has more than 1,300 members. Don’t be _______ out of the discussion! Join the listserve!

Current School Committee members for 2018 and 2019 are: Manikka Bowman, Emily Dexter, Fred Fantini, Kathleen Kelly, Laurance Kimbrough, Patty Nolan, and mayor Marc McGovern.

Thank you North Cambridge Family Opera for another fantastic show!

From Emily Dexter
2nd Term School Committee Member
NCFOC Alumnus
CAST, SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 1:00PM

RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Sarah Rondell ................................................................. Tess Carney
Cal Rondell ........................................................................ Jeff Moore
Agnes Rondell ................................................................. Kathy Lindsay
Patty, Sarah’s best friend .................................................... Laura Bigler
Willy, Sarah’s suitor ........................................................... Ilan Balzac

KERN COUNTY LUMINARIES
Leo Hart, superintendent of schools ................................. Aimee Yermish

CITIZENS COMMITTEE:
Mrs. Rumpole .................................................................. Jill Pelavin
Mrs. Havisham ................................................................ Margery Meadow
Mr. Gilbert ......................................................................... Jeff Bigler
Mr. Rackstraw .................................................................. Jason Merrill

OTHER WEEPATCH CAMPFOLK
Nora Borden, school principal ........................................... Emma Adler
James Callahan, math and music teacher ............................ Mark Bildman
Abby, an eager singer ....................................................... Katarina Dvornik
Dime Soloists ...Dina Gorelik, Kerry LaRose, Marin Manoach, Oriana McKanan

OTHER BAKERSFIELD TOWNFOLK
Talent Show MC ................................................................ Beth Hocking
Policeman ......................................................................... Dan McKanan

OUT O’ TOWNERS
Professor Ruth Crawford .................................................... Emilija Baksys
Pete Crawford, Ruth’s son ................................................... David Bass
Gus Monroe, folk hero ........................................................ Chris Edel

CHORUS

OTHER CHORUS: Caitlin Anderson, Emilija Baksys, Heather Barney, Bert Dvornik, Katarina Dvornik, Luka Dvornik, Lorraine Erickson, Dina GorelikB, Sue Hall, Beth Hocking, Kerry LaRose, Susan LaRose, Marin Manoach, Chanda McCready, Dan McKanan, Oriana McKananB, Tammy McKanan, David Gordon Mitten, Bereket Secunda, Sara Secunda

NameB = Ballerina; NameD = Sheet Dancer; NameA = Juggling Act
Directed by Laura Backley and David Bass

A concert of songs about biodiversity sung by an inter-generational chorus with an accompanying slideshow of song lyrics and children’s artwork.

THREE FREE PERFORMANCES:
Sunday April 15, 5:30pm, Museum of Science
Saturday April 21, 3:00pm, Cambridge Main Library
Sunday April 22, 3:00pm, Peabody School

Visit www.familyopera.org for more information or email festival2018@familyopera.org
CAST, SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 5:00PM

RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Sarah Rondell ................................................................. Sophia Teller
Cal Rondell ........................................................................ Tom Hamill
Agnes Rondell .................................................................... Laura Gill
Patty, Sarah’s best friend .................................................. Julia Teller
Willy, Sarah’s suitor ...................................................... Riley McKinney

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Mr. Rackstraw ...................................................................... Craig Burket

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Abby, an eager singer ...................................................... Fiona O’Loughlin
Dime Soloists .................................................. Eloise Botka, Addie Kelsey, Anya Miller, Nicci Stamos

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Gus Monroe, folk hero ..................................................... Glenn McElhoe

CHORUS


Name⁹ = Ballerina; Name¹⁰ = Sheet Dancer; Name¹¹ = Juggling Act
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CAST, SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 3:00PM

RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Sarah Rondell ................................................................. Sophia Teller
Cal Rondell ....................................................................... Tom Hamill
Agnes Rondell ................................................................. Laura Gill
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CHORUS


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Agnes Rondell ........................................................................... Kathy Lindsay
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Proprietor

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617 945 2902
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walter@inmansquarewine.com
CAST, SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 1:00PM

RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Sarah Rondell ................................................................. Sophia Teller
Cal Rondell ........................................................................ Tom Hamill
Agnes Rondell ................................................................. Laura Gill
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Gus Monroe, folk hero ...............................................................

CHORUS


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RONDELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
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Name\(^B\) = Ballerina; Name\(^D\) = Sheet Dancer; Name\(^A\) = Juggling Act

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Producing a brand new world premiere (as we have only ever done before with the works of David Bass) has been a challenging, frustrating, and completely exhilarating experience. There are many people and organizations to thank, without whom this production would not have been possible.

First, thank you to Jennifer Ford and Julie Craven, the principals of the Peabody School and co-resident Rindge Avenue Upper School respectively. Thanks also to Josh, Summar, and Patrick, the teachers who so generously share their space with us; and to John, Todd, Bobby, and Joe, the always-cheerful custodians who make sure everything is cleaned and ready for use and all our needs are met.

A brand new show requires brand new sets and costumes. Many friends of NCFO contributed their efforts and resources to create what you see—Chris, in particular, whose original set design and construction was his first-ever (and we hope not his last). Thanks also to A.J. Liuba for leading the Weedpatch Painters Association (WPA) in the creation of the Works Progress Administration style mural, and to the Artists in Studio 12 at 6 Vernon St Studios, including Marcia Ahearn, Christine Edel, Maureen O’Keefe, Stephanie Snyder and Susan Wetherall for providing set construction space. In a couple of weeks, our new sets will take up residence in the barn of Dina Mardell and David Sandberg, whom we thank profusely for their ongoing generosity to NCFO. Finally, huge thanks to Carla who took on the daunting task of singlehandedly (almost) clothing about 130 Okies and Bakersfield denizens—boy do we look good!

We would like to thank all of our sponsors, including Iggy’s Bread of the World and Mark Bildman’s Cambridge Cookie Company who donate their baked goods for our rehearsals and performances. We are also sponsored by Whole Foods, who have made a generous donation to our performances. Our other sponsors include Porter Square Books, Exceptional Lives, and Thalia Tringo Real Estate: we are truly appreciative of your support. Funding has been made possible in part by the Puffin Foundation and by the Cambridge Arts Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. We are especially grateful to the Robbins/de Beaumont Foundation whose ongoing support made this commission possible. And of course we thank all of our members for their donations of funds, time, and effort on our behalf.

Our last performance this year is presented in loving memory of William C. Bigler who, when it was possible for him to do so, would come to see his son and granddaughters in every NCFO production in which they performed. He would have been delighted and amazed to see his family in this production.

Finally, we would like to thank Bill Harley and Paul Phillips, the creators of this extraordinary work. Special thanks to Bill for his generosity in coming to Cambridge to speak about the creation of Weedpatch. Bill’s and Paul’s painstaking crafting of this historical drama, replete with brilliant lyrics and beautiful music, has resulted in a work that has forced our company to stretch its performance limits in all dimensions. We sincerely hope you enjoy this relevant production based on a true story about migrant workers facing hatred and discrimination and ending up triumphant.
THANKS TO OUR PRODUCTION VOLUNTEERS!

Audio
David Bass
Sue Hall
Jamie Sabino
Davis Thurston
Cindy Woolworth

Costumes/Wardrobe
Laura Bigler
Donna Harris
Wendy Leiserson
Kathy Lindsay
Margery Meadow
Carla Procaskey
Aimee Yermish

Demo CD Recording
Ilan Balzac
David Bass
Lonnie Bass
Reina Bass
Molly Buis
Chris Edel
Lydia Hall
Sue Hall
John Kernochan
Kathy Lindsay
Sarah Miller
Jeff Moore
Leo Sampaio
Aimee Yermish

Front of House
Hadar Agam
Sue Hall
Mary Agam
Catherine Beith-Aharon
Jessica Cashdan
Abbe Cohen Dvornik
Julie Croston
Berit Dvornik
Katarina Dvornik
Lucia Dvornik
Will Erickson
Nancy Gilman
Lena Gurelik
Maura Gould
Katie Hamill

Front of House, cont’d.
Heather Hoffman
Donna Jones
Craig Kelley
Addie Kelsey
Margot Kelsey
Robin Kelsey
Pam Klein
Kerry LaRose
Susan LaRose
Charles Leiserson
Susan Luperfey
Vivian Luperfey
Zayaan Mamun
Dara Manoach
Chanda McCreary
Dan McKanan
Oriana McKanan
Tammy McKanan
Farzana Nipa
Sandra Nortier
Stephanie Sacharow
Hima Saini
Pasqua Scibelli
Bereket Secunda
Sara Secunda
Lili Silva
Sara St Antoine
Sara Vernilli

House Managers/Concessions
Catherine Beith-Aharon
Jessica Cashdan
Nancy Gilman
Maura Gould

Makeup
Adira Balzac
Ilan Balzac
Juli Berndt
Laura Bigler
Tess Carney
Robin Chen
Juli Croston
Christine Cuttita

Makeup, cont’d.
Polina Danielian
Chloe Duggan
Meredith Gast
Adam Gould
Aviva Gould
Katie Hamill
Nina Katz
Kerry LaRose
Susann Luperfey
Chanda McCreary
Dan McKanan
Tianna Mctaggart
Jason Merrill
Alice Merrill Hunter
Farzana Nipa
Fiona O’Loughlin
Vielle Roby
Jill Singer
Yongting Wang
Eliza Weinberger
Aimee Yermish

Program
Steve Balzac
Jeff Bigler
Melanie Cohn-Hopwood
Sue Hall
Beth Hocking
Dara Manoach
Margery Meadow
Valentina Perrissi
Pasqua Scibelli
Sara Secunda
Sara St Antoine
Sara Vernilli
Aimee Yermish

Props
Ilan Balzac
Abbe Cohen Dvornik
Katarina Dvornik
Linda Julian
Dianne Kessenich
Kathy Lindsay
Robin Parlee

Props, cont’d.
Jill Pelavin
Aimee Yermish

Publicity
Hadar Agam
Emilia Baksys
David Bass
Claudette Beith-Aharon
Jonathan Edel
Sue Hall

Rehearsal/Performance Support
Sue Hall
Tom Hamill
Heather Hoffman

Sets/Painting/Lights
David Bass
Mieke Citroen
Abbe Cohen Dvornik
Meghan Dorian
Katarina Dvornik
Chris Edel
Rich Gill
Adam Gould
Tom Gould
Sue Hall
Beth Hocking
Heather Hoffman
Mark Jaquith
Ben Jerome
Leetka Katzenblickstein
Craig Kelley
John Kernochan
Peter Laskin
Kathy Lindsay
A.J. Liuba

Thanks to our Production Volunteers!
Thanks to our Production Volunteers!

Sets/Painting/Stage Crew
Lights, cont’d.
David Silber
Nici Stamos
Ellen Sun
Yifei Sun
Yongting Wang
Harry Ames
Eleanor Aminoff
Kayla Bennett
Polina Danielyan
Mark Jaquith
Nina Katz
Peter Laskin
Stage Crew, cont’d.
Kathy Lindsay
Rosemary Lindsay
Alexander Luperfoy
Susann Luperfoy
Jack Ramde
Isabel Ros
Andromeda Yelton
Video
Lynn Weissman
of Weissman Productions

NORTH CAMBRIDGE FAMILY OPERA MISSION

The North Cambridge Family Opera (NCFO) provides an opportunity for children and adults to experience and enjoy telling a story through song by performing original, high-quality, fully-sung operas and choral works for audiences of all ages. Our casts of children and adults come from Cambridge and other communities in the greater Boston area. We encourage participation by multiple family members. Solo and chorus roles varying widely in difficulty are assigned to both children and adults, so that everyone is both challenged and given an opportunity to succeed. To the extent possible, productions are financed through donations and volunteerism.

NCFO began as participants in the second North Cambridge (NoCa) All Arts Open Studios weekend in May 1999, and has since incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit and produced a family opera every spring. Since 2007, NCFO has also presented a concert of science songs every year as part of the Cambridge Science Festival.

www.familyopera.org
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Funding has been made possible in part by The Puffin Foundation.

Special thanks to the Robbins/de Beaumont Foundation for making this commission possible.

Our last performance of Weedpatch this year is presented in loving memory of William C. Bigler.
**STAR NOTES**

**Sue and David:** You made my first opera an amazing experience. I know there is a limit to what you can do with my talent, but thanks so much for trying. Craig

**Cast and crew** - you are amazing! So excited to be part of this with you all! - Tess Carney

**Glenn** - Thanks for joining the team on a moments notice - K

Hi **Verity**! We are Sirius-ly happy about all your hard work in putting on this show! (STAR PUN)

Love, your parents.

Congratulations, **Ella**! I’m very proud of you. (I even like your costume.)

**McKinneys**! You are the best!

Only wish we were in your cast! - Love the Carneys

Oh what a beautiful opera,
Oh what a beautiful show,
Everything’s goin so nicely,
Here’s hoping that it won’t blow!

**Heather**, thanks for being my right-hand woman and for being so calm and grounded in this whirlwind of a year. “You’re someone I can count on!” - Sue

**Jeff Bigler:** You are amazing! And so qualified for this part! - Anne and Alonzo

Way to go **Eloise**! Love, the Fam
Hey, Adira! Thanks so much for taking a break from the insane schedule at MIT to help with makeup. Perfectionism has its uses… love, Mom, Dad, and Ilan.

Rachel, Sophia, Julia, you are shining stars melting my heart with love. Thank you, Bonna

Agnes, old gal (aka Laura G): Can’t believe you’re a senior (!) with the wisdom of grandma Willow. Last I checked you were a mere shy (but cute) little peacock! What a terrific finish to your opera career in Cambridge! Love you, and am proud like a (mama) peacock!

The baby starts to cry cry cry, The science chorus sings why why why... And now he’s not a baby and on stage in his first opera! Yay, Luka! Love, Mom and Dad

Dear Sophie and Walter, BREAK A LEG! I am having so much fun performing with you! All the way from Cambridge... Love, mom

Tess Carney - We are so proud of you - Love Mom, Dad, and Hanna

“The talent in North Cambridge is grand, and that’s a fact. Next a group from Norris St will perform a juggling act!” Thanks, David and Sue!

Nicole McElhoe: To my Star Granddaughter. I have enjoyed watching you mature in spirit and song over the years. Now, on to your next undertaking. Love, Grandma

Robin—Thanks for holding down the fort (and the cat) every Sunday afternoon so we could rehearse! We relish your support and your cheers. SAM

Laura Bigler: You GO, GRRL! Sarah has a true friend. -- Fa-Fa & Mary-Jo

Dragi Luka, Katarina, Abbe i Alberte, Vrlo smo ponosni na vas i vaše glasove (i noge)! Žao nam je što vas ne možemo doći vidjeti i čuti. Pusa, baka i dida

David and Sue, we are so grateful for all your hard work year after year. You are a gift to our community!

Jeff Bigler--Thanks for helping making the world go round by sharing your musical talents in so many ways and for being an all-star dad. Xoxo, Grammy and Judy

Tatum Voice Studio
Renee Tatum

646-593-1539
rentat@msn.com
reeneetatum.com
19 Nathan Pratt Drive #209
Concord, MA 01742
**STAR NOTES**

**Okies and Townies** glare your hearts out! Don’t let the police see you fighting or you’ll go to jail!

**Claudette and Emilija**, it takes a mastermind to think things through. Thank you both for all you do to make this company function! - Sue and David

May **Luka** be a new opera star with the Dvornik family! Love, Grandma Ora

**Jonathan** - We are keeping your crayons hostage in hopes that you will return to leave more marks on the production. Miss you! - K

**El**, you crushed it again! Love, your proud Aunt Lizzy

Huge thanks to **Margery Meadow**, the best packrat ever! Her many items of vintage 30’s clothing have greatly spruced up the folks of Weedpatch and the townies of Bakersfield. Long live packrats! - Carla

**Robbie and Cooper**: Thanks for inspiring me to give the performing arts a try. You are great examples of what is good in life in so many ways. Much love, Dad.

**Dina** - If you enjoyed the class “working under hands-off management” you should look into the follow-up next year “taking charge scene by scene”. -K
Abbe, Bert, Luka, Katarina - Good luck all you Okies. Sing your hearts out and have fun! Love from all of your Florida family!

All the way from Old Virginia, cross the great Long Island Sound. Congratulations, Eliza! Uncle Rick, Uncle Chuck and Grandma.

Margot—Thanks for teaching me all the words, showing me all the moves, and giving me someone to spin, clap with, and lean on—on stage and off! xox Mom

We are so proud of our brown eyed family! Rock it Mom & Merilee... Love from the Blues XOXO

We love you Tess Carney - - Ryan and Abby

For Leetka — Vats of congrats to the brightest Star in our Constellation! Love, Momma, Poppa and Nana Nance

Near or far, you are always our star Tess Carney! Love Auntie Laurie and Uncle Mike

Best of luck to the cast and crew of Weedpatch!

FRED FANTINI
Cambridge School Committee

Sue - You’re my girl and I’m proud you’re mine! Cheering for my girl, you’re the pretty one! You belong to me! Come on with me, I’ve got my RV right around the corner. - Love, David

Jeff Bigler: Kern County should only be so lucky! -- Al & Mary-Jo

Theo, We are super proud of your singin’ and dancin’! Congratulations on your first opera! Love Mom, Dad, Bennett, Grace, Grandmom, and Max

Katie Leiserson, we hope your solos are as beautiful on stage as they have been in rehearsals. You can really sing!!!
To our favorite Okies Maya, Gal & Hadar: Good luck on your journey! Your fans Y & Y.

Here’s a big thank you to the many cast members who enthusiastically threw themselves into trying to look like folks from the 30’s. You’ve helped create a snazzy looking bunch of Okies and townies! -Carla

Dear Luka, You are a true bright morning star. Great job rising to your first show. Have fun! Love, Katarina

Nancy Gilman: Keeping the show going, as usual! We love you! -Anne and Alonzo

Hima, I am proud of your dedication and enthusiasm, and I enjoy your singing... always. Love, Gramma Ann

Congrats to Tom Gould for recognizing the beauty of the weeds in our garden. And to Aviva and Adam for making them bloom. Love, Maura, Scooby-doo & Shaggy

Carla, they treat you like dirt if you wear a torn skirt, but that’s not a problem for the folks of Bakersfield and Weedpatch who all look great! Thank you! D&S

Sophia, you have to sing! I love you. Mom
To all the production folks we never thank enough - David S, Davis, Elizabeth, David R, Columbine, Kayla, Aimee, Glenn, Dina, Jonathan, Julia, Liz, Katie, Anya, Jamie, Cindy, and Abbe (welcome!), your generosity of time and spirit makes Family Opera possible! - Sue and David

From a little girl in the chorus, I have watched with great pride, as my granddaughter Emma advanced thorough the ranks of performers in the North Cambridge Family Opera. Now, she has reached a pinnacle, performing the role of Nora Borden, principal of the school! I love hearing Emma sing. Her voice has grown stronger and sweeter, as she has matured. I don’t want to forget my son, Andy, who is happy working behind the scenes and singing in the chorus. Good luck to David Bass and the entire opera family. Esther Adler

David & Sue, You are amazing, as always! You’ve survived the many travails of a world premiere opera with imagination, grace, and lots of hard work. And your sanity is intact! It’s a great show. -Carla

To Charles Leiserson, thank you for encouraging us to give up some of our football Sundays to join NCFO. Your friends and fellow Patriots fans.

To Sue, David, Lonnie, Robert & Reina - Thank you for being our second home: over the fence, and thru the weed patch... to Lucas & Navi we go. Scooby-Doo & Shaggy

Laura Bigler: You are always a star to us! With love from Auntie Anne and Alonzo

Julia, you’re someone I can count on, and you can count on me. Always. Love, Mom

Good job Elo! Love, Imogene

Alec, Julie and Riley: You really put the “Family” in North Cambridge Family Opera. I am glad I know you and proud to share the stage with such talent. Craig

Little Eliza, you are definitely NOT taller than me! But you are a star. Congratulations on your 5th opera season, and to 7th graders Chloe, Juli and Birikti.
Kathy, thanks for the chance to handle costuming. And for help with decision overload in the process of doing that. It’s been a lot of fun. And once is enough! —C

If we had a dime, we’d be a belt for your dress AND some purple socks! Have a great show, Oriana! Love, Mama & Papa

Kerry, Best wishes and fond memories of Family Opera. We will be thinking of you! Love, Uncle Mark, Auntie Heather, William, Matthew, and Carolyn

Katie Leiserson, We have so enjoyed learning and rehearsing Weedpatch with you. Let’s have a great performance! Vivian and Alexander

Hooray for Bill Laskin! Good luck on the Dad Line, we can’t wait to see you! Love from Lisa, Peter, and Izzy

David B - I think we’re actually going to make it! Thanks for sharing the ride (and keep up that politics and strummin’!) Love, Sue

Katie, thank you so much for being my partner-in-crime and tap-dance instructor! And Jeff M, it’s, um, terrific getting chewed out by you! —Aimee

Sing your heart out, Emilija, we’re really proud of you. Love, M, D, and Roland
Carla - I never noticed the lack of squeaky wheels until the cart was miles ahead. If you fear what this leads to, I am always willing to hold the oil! -K

Bereket - Thank you for doing this opera with me. It’s been fun practicing and performing with you! And thanks to the NCFO for this experience! Love, Mom

Walter and Sophie - your light shines bright as the stars! We are so proud of all your hard work. Love, Papa and Mama

Kathy and Rachel, you’ve made this show flow, move and dance in a way that brings it to life with emotional truth. With your own hearts you built this school! Let’s stay together. - David and Sue

To Katie and Charles, I love seeing you up on stage enjoying yourselves and entertaining all of us! You are shining stars. Love, Mama/Wendy

Use your cheerleader voice and sing to the back row Vivian! Love Mom and Dad

Rosemary - Nice to be sharing a show with you again - mom & dad

AJ, what a wealth of wonderful talent we have here before us. Thank you so much for the beautiful backdrop to this brand new show! - David and Sue

David, Sue, Kathy, and Carla: may all your best laid plans work out great, and break a leg (but not a banjo string)! From Emilija

Glenn McElhoe: To my Son who is always a star. You have done yourself proud by joining your daughters in this operatic adventure. Now, on to another chapter of life. Love ya’, Mom

Your hard work will pay off with a strong performance, Alexander. We are so proud of your effort! Dad and Mom

To the amazing cast of Weedpatch, break a leg! We love you, Anastasia! XOXO Mom, Dad, and Guen

The OPENAIR Circus congratulates North Cambridge Family Opera and all involved on another great show!

www.openaircircus.org
Chris, amazing job building your first full set! Orange crates, orange crates, orange crates everywhere! Congratulations on a gorgeous product! - David and Sue

Congratulations Tess Carney - break a leg! Love Abuela, Papa, and Uncle Derek

Mark, Carla, Heather and all the rest of the behind the scenes folks- we wouldn’t be here without you. Thanks so much! Craig

Esther EnochKW - All of you do a great job. Wish Esther be a star and your dream comes true in the near future. Thanks David, Sue, NCFO.

Ilan, we are so proud of you! Congratulations on getting to play a character who gets to whittle while he works. Great to see you growing as a singer and actor! Love, Mom & Dad

Hope: You make a great Weedpatch gal! Thanks for guiding me through the complicated life of an opera singer. Love Craig

Laura Bigler -- Grammy and I are delighted to have an opera star in the family! Thanks for the joy you bring to the world. Xoxo Oma

So proud of Miss Merilee. - Grammy and Grampa Bob
David, Kathy, Sue, everyone, everyone, I can’t even list you all... whew! Such a long journey, all the way from Oklahoma. This is truly a *family* opera... But by the time you read this, I think we’ll actually be (almost) all the way here! So happy to share it with you all! —Aimee

To my awesome, amazing Marin, how fun it is to watch you grow as a person and performer year after year. You are my sunshine and the sun is a star. Love, Mom

Kerry, Wishing you a fun time with your family and cast mates! “Break a leg!” Wish I could be there! Love you lots! Nana

Addie—Thanks for leading the way with your amazing musicality, grace, and good cheer. We couldn’t do it without you! Love, Margot and Mom

Tess - Granddaughter you are so grown up, I still have fond memories of you as my tiny rebel second-in-command -K

To David, Sue and Kathy -- for caring so much. And to Seth, who had a great idea for an outing one Saturday afternoon long, long ago: an opera performance for kids. With deep love, Rachel

KCCC: Keep up the great work! We’re counting on you to save us from those dumb Okies! From the Society for the Protection of Ignorant Townies (S.P.I.T.)
Andy Adler (Chorus) returns to the NCFO stage after a four-year hiatus, mostly to hang with his opera bros. Once again he seeks to neither be seen or heard. Andy is very proud of his daughter, Emma, who has become a school principal before graduating high school.

Emma Adler (Nora Borden) is a senior in high school. She enjoys reading, eating chocolate, making puns, and participating in theater productions at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, where she does set and lighting design. This is Emma’s twelfth year performing with the North Cambridge Family Opera. She would like to thank her dog for being awesome, and her parents for tolerating her teen angst.

Gal Agam (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is making his eighth appearance with the NCFO, after playing a beggar in last year’s production of Springtime for Haman, a Myna bird in Weaver’s Wedding, a kid in Kids Court, a Zebra in Rain Dance, a Worker Ant in Antiphony, Film Crew member in Flying High (2012), and a Jawa/Rebel/Alien in Space Opera (2011). Gal is 14 years old and attends Brown Middle School in Newton. He loves skiing, ice-skating, swimming, legos and puzzles. Gal is looking forward to a great season with the NCFO.

Hadar Agam (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is delighted to share the stage again with two of her kids (and some wonderful friends). When not singing, Hadar works for Mathworks as a technical writer, and is a full-time mom. Looking forward to another great season with NCFO!

Maya Agam (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is enjoying her fourth season with NCFO after having enjoyed it from the audience for many years prior to that. Maya is 10 years old and she attends Countryside Elementary School in Newton. Maya loves reading, art, ballet, and her friends.

Caitlin Anderson (Chorus) By day, Caitlin is a business development manager at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. By morning/early evening, she is Suzuki/Chorus Mom. By night she prefers to be asleep by 9pm, 9:30 tops. She has sung with the Cambridge University Music Society, the Radcliffe Choral Society, and the Grace Cathedral choir. This is her third NCFO performance.

Emilija Baksys (Citizens Committee Quartet, Professor Ruth Crawford, Chorus, Assistant General Manager) is in her 9th year performing with NCFO. She started her opera journey as a Sky Jig Soloist in The Puzzle Jigs (2008), and recently has sung the roles of Mordechai (2017), the Queen (2016), and evil diva Barbara Strother (2015). A recent college graduate, Emilija also enjoys experimental photography and video editing. She is very excited to play a cruel, ruthless townie in cast Y. But without her, cast X would be Ruthless.

Ilan Balzac (Willy) is in 7th grade at the Hale Middle School in Stow. This is his fifth year in NCFO. In the past, he has been typecast as a variety of annoying children: a meerkat in Rain Dance (2014), a jury kid in Kids Court
(2015), and one of the kids hearing the story of the *Weaver’s Wedding* (2016). Last year, in *Springtime for Haman*, he was cast against type, as a soporific servant. Having transitioned to adolescence, he has now returned to being typecast as the free-spirited boyfriend with a heart of gold. In school district productions, he has also played the lead surfer dude in *Hang Ten* and Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast*. In his spare time, he likes to read, write fiction, do woodworking (he made the spoon he whittles during the show), play complicated board and card games, and spend time with his friends.

**Heather Barney (Chorus)** returns to NCFO in her tenth performance. Heather also sings with the Revels Singers and has had roles in past Revels productions: a Québécois village matron in *Christmas Revels* (2004) and a festive celebrant with *Spring Revels* (2012, 2013) at Perkins School in Watertown. She is very happy to be performing once again with her partner David Mitten. Since the 2016 election, Heather has decided to work daily for the Resistance and the future of democratic process across our country.

**David Bass (Pete Crawford, Founder and Music Director)** As a teenager, David was a prolific composer of pretentious music, but during his college studies, he became discouraged with pursuing music professionally. Instead, he received a BS in chemistry from Yale and a doctorate in chemical engineering from MIT, during which time he arranged dozens of songs for the a cappella groups at these institutions. After a 20-year hiatus from musical composition, David wrote the distinctly unpretentious *Space Opera* for the enjoyment of his three young children, their friends, and their families. He directed productions of *Space Opera* in the spring of 1999, 2000, 2005, and 2011. His second opera, *The Coronation of Esther*, was performed in 2001; its sequel, *Springtime for Haman*, in 2004, 2010, and 2017; and *Kids Court* (in collaboration with

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**Congratulations**

**on a Wonderful Performance!**

Mayor Marc McGovern
Cambridge, Massachusetts
John Kane) in 2007 and 2015. *Weedpatch* is the sixth opera David has adapted and directed for NCFO. The others include *Antiphony*, *The Puzzle Jigs*, *The Weaver's Wedding*, *Flying High*, and *Rain Dance*. In 2007, he founded the Science Festival Chorus, which performs a concert of songs about science annually at the Cambridge Science Festival. He plans to continue writing and directing music for as long as he can avoid taking himself too seriously.

Claudette Beit-Aharon (General Manager) is enjoying her second year as GM. She hovered on the periphery of NCFO for many years. Her children took on many roles as stormtroopers in *Space Opera* (2000), Darth Vader in *Space Opera* (2005), and the Red Queen in *Antiphony* (2006), while she was concessions captain or frolicked backstage on stage crew. Her passion for NCFO remains, despite her entire family (sons, daughter, AND husband) being turned into eunuchs for *The Coronation of Esther* (2001)!

Kayla Bennett (Stage Manager) is enjoying her first year with NCFO as Stage Manager. She did a lot of tech work with the theater department at her high school, so this is a natural fit for her. Thanks to Nate for introducing her and future cast member Autumn to NCFO.

Kate Berelowitch (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus), a 5th-grader at the Peabody School, loves to sing, dance, draw, write, swim, and play piano. This is her third NCFO show. Kate also performs at school music concerts and with the Early Bird Singers. This year she has joined Beyond the Fourth Wall, which will be performing *Into the Woods*.

Juli Berndt (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) This is Juli Berndt's third year with NCFO and she is very happy to be an insider now with the troupe. Juli is in the 7th grade at Vassal Lane Upper School. In her spare time she loves to draw, sing and play the violin.

Jeff Bigler (Citizens Committee Quartet) has been involved with the performing arts for half a century in various capacities, including singing, acting, morris dancing, instrumental, tech direction, set construction, lighting, and audience member. He has been performing with NCFO since *Springtime for Haman* in 2010. Offstage, Jeff is a physics teacher, nerd, and proud parent. He would like to thank his wife and greatest supporter, Nancy Gilman.

Laura Bigler (Patty) is a theater & gamer nerd. She loves performing in any capacity, including singing, acting, dancing, and instrumental. She has been with NCFO since *Springtime for Haman* in 2010. Besides NCFO, Laura also enjoys morris dancing, aerial silks, playing the violin, and acting her age.

Mark Bildman (James Callahan) "Family" is why he and his kids joined NCFO eight years ago; "Opera" is what has kept him coming back. He has long outlasted his kids at NCFO, but he hopes that some day the planets will align and all three will join him for a show. One can always have their dreams.

year and all of her friends at opera who made the long rehearsals fun.

Craig Burket (Citizens Committee Quartet) has been a software developer for more decades than he cares to remember. He has been a fervent opera zealot since he was 15-years-old. This will be his 12th season with NCFO, with previous roles spanning life-forms both animal and mineral. He lives in the Laniakea (formerly Virgo) Supercluster and works in cyberspace.

Nate Burket (James Callahan) began performing in NCFO when he was 8 years old, in The Puzzle Jigs (2003). In the 15 years since then, he has happily remained involved, both on stage and behind the scenes. He most recently portrayed the King in Weaver’s Wedding (2016). He served as Floor Manager in Kids Court (2015). He would like to thank his parents, Craig Burket and Sue Holcomb, who are in the production this year; his fiance Kayla Bennett, who is serving as stage manager; and his one-year-old daughter Autumn, who has been learning to sing and dance very loudly throughout rehearsals.

Tess Carney (Sarah Rondell) likes singing, writing, reading, overthinking astrobiology, and hitting drums really hard. She has been a part of NCFO since she was 7 years old. She would like to thank her family, the Basses, and Jennifer Dhanjee for making everything possible, and for supporting her singing every step of the way.

Jessica Cashdan (Dancer, Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is happily surprised to find herself in her third NCFO show, alongside her daughter, Kate. Though she studied dance as a child, and was active in high school plays and musicals as a teen, she took many years off from the stage (secretly practicing singing for years in the privacy of her car), until this community theater drew her back in.

Robin Chen (Chorus) is new to NCFO this year, but she is glad to have found an outlet for her interest in choral singing that welcomes whole families to participate together, because she is rarely without the company of at
least one of her three young children. When strangers note that she “has her hands full,” as they do often, she agrees, but adds, “My heart full, too.” In the spirit of Weedpatch, our rehearsals have “built a place where we can learn, where we can grow, where we can be.” Thank you to Sue and David for creating and nurturing this productive cultural community!

Abbe Cohen Dvornik (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus, Props Designer) has performed in several NCFO operas (Antiphony 2013, Kids Court 2015, Weaver’s Wedding 2016, Springtime for Haman 2017) and many NCFO science festival choruses. She likes singing, cooking, and creating and building things such as robots, stage sets, and stage props, but she prefers to use things other than orange crates for tools. She is excited that everyone in her family finally gets to stick together and sing this year!

Melanie Cohn-Hopwood (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) used to perform a long time ago in another lifetime. She is proud to be in her second NCFO performance with her twins, Walter and Sophie. By day, Melanie is a social worker but she still dreams of one day becoming a Muppeteer. She would like to thank Ruben for his undying support of all her dreams, both realistic and not.

Lynn Colletti (Chorus) is the mom of three children, ages 21, 17, and 12. Although not currently in the workforce, Lynn keeps busy on the Nashoba Regional School District School Committee and is the Skipper of Sea Scout Ship 5 based in Gloucester, MA. Lynn sings with the a cappella chorus, Women of Note, out of Hudson, MA. This is her third year of being involved in NCFO, where she and her daughter participate in both choruses, acting in one and operating the lighting in the other. Thank you to everyone in the chorus, especially Sue and Dave. The logistics involved in organizing NCFO are mind-boggling.
Rachel Cooper (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is an ESL Teacher at Cambridge Public Schools. Her other passions are reading and swimming. She is excited to be part of this stunning world premiere. She joined NCFO in 2002, when kids from the current cast were mere figments of their parents’ imagination! She appeared as the Worker Queen in Antiphony (2002), a puzzle piece in The Puzzle Jigs (2003), and a Concubine in Springtime for Haman (2004). She returned when her son Jack was old enough to join the fun, as (alas) the Old Zebra in Rain Dance (2014). She was Haman’s friend in Springtime for Haman (2017).

Chris Cuttitta (Chorus), along with various combinations of her three kids, has performed in NCFO’s Space Opera, Antiphony, Rain Dance, and Weedpatch. When not singing as a rebel, worker ant, giraffe, or Okie, Chris is an Architect/teacher, and driver/personal assistant to her wonderful family! She would like to thank Theo, Grace, Bennett, Bob, and Max the dog, for listening and singing along.

Polina Danielyan (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 17-year-old homeschool student who has been doing NCFO since 2013 (Antiphony). She helped as stage crew for 2015 (Kids Court). Besides singing, she enjoys drawing, painting, photography and many other creative subjects. She sings mostly in chorus, but she has had a solo or two in the past. She really enjoys being a part of the NCFO community and is happy to be back year after year.

Chloe Duggan (Ballerina, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 13-year-old. She attends Vassal Lane Upper School. She has been in Weaver’s Wedding (2016) and Springtime For Haman (2017). She likes to sleep, eat, and write bios.

Albert (Bert) Dvornik (Chorus) returns to his roots in this production: he started out on stage as an oppressed laborer (a Water Buffalo in NCFO’s Rain Dance (2014), followed by some attempts to move up in the world. By day, he writes software that makes a surgical robot work. By night... sometimes the same thing.

Katarina Dvornik (Abby, Chorus) is 12 years old, meaning that she has been singing in various NCFO productions for more than half her life. She performed as a worker ant in 2013’s Antiphony, in Rain Dance 2014 a meerkat, in 2015’s Kids Court a Jury Kid, a Prime Minister in Weaver’s Wedding 2016, and Harbona in Springtime for Haman 2017. She has also sung in the NCFO Science chorus since 2011. Katarina is in 6th grade at the Healey School. When she is not singing or acting—and sometimes even when she is—she enjoys reading, writing, doodling, STEAM, and listening to Hamilton. She would like to thank the NCFO team for their hard work, and her family for being seriously amazing. She hopes that you will enjoy the singin’.

Luka Dvornik (Chorus) is a 1st-grader at the Healey School in Somerville. This is his first year in the opera! He wants to be a pilot. He has been coming to the NCFO Science Chorus...
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

since he was a baby and singing in it for a few years.

Chris Edel (Weedpatch Soloist, Gus Monroe, Chorus, Set Designer) In this, my eleventh year with NCFO, I am excited to play the small but really tasty role of Gus on the first full set of my own design. Many of the skills I am using to do this come from past productions with this company and I am very grateful to the wonderful people I have learned from. In my life outside the Opera, I am a restorer of fine violins.

Hannah Erickson (Bakersfield and Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 10 years old and attends the Peabody School. She plays the piano and sings with the Peabody School Early Bird Singers, the Cambridge Children’s Chorus (a division of the Boston City Singers), the Tanglewood Children’s Chorus, and has performed in children’s choruses with the Christmas Revels, Boston Camerata, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and other local ensembles. This is her third NCFO performance.

Lorraine Erickson (Chorus) is 6 years old and attends the Peabody School. She sings with the Cambridge Children’s Chorus (a division of the Boston City Singers) and plays the violin. This is her first NCFO performance.

Esther Fu (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 12 years old and a 7th grader at the Rindge Avenue Upper Campus in Cambridge. This is her second year in NCFO. She enjoys chorus at her school and the Cambridge All-City Chorus. She performed since she was 4 years old, including The Princess in Distress, The Legend of the White Snake, My Wife is a Princess, Romance in the West Lake, Music Man Junior and Turandot. As an ambassador of Hong Kong artists of Cantonese opera she performed in Auckland, Sydney, and Melbourne in July 2017. She plays the violin and yangqin.

CONGRATULATIONS
for another great show!

State Senator
Will Brownsberger
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

She would like to thank her incredible mother Constance, father King Wa, and brother Enoch for supporting her on the stage, and the cast, the crew and the vocal teachers, and David and Sue for putting it all together and for making this year so special.

Meredith Gast (Juggler, Bakersfield and Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 13 years old. I go to the Ottoson Middle School. This is my fifth year with NCFO. I love to read and I do circus. I would like to thank my parents.

Laura Gill (Agnes Rondell) is 18 and a senior at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. She is excited to be performing her final show with NCFO before she goes to college after a ten-year run (skipping a couple years in-between). Some notable roles were A Usual Suspect in Flying High (2012), the talent agent in Kids Court (2015), and Hatach in Springtime for Haman (2017). She also performed in Beyond the Fourth Wall’s production of Sweeney Todd in 2016.

Theo Gillig (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 10-year-old student at the Baldwin School. Weedpatch is his first NCFO opera appearance. Theo plays piano, cello, swims, does Kung-Fu, baseball, Minecraft, and always, always, does the math. Theo would like to thank his brother and sister for singing with him!

Dina Gorelik (Ballerina, Dime Soloist, Chorus) is a 16-year-old sophomore at Newton North High School. Dina enjoys biking, dancing and singing musicals with her friends. She would like to thank her friends at opera for always being there as well as David for not getting mad at her for doing her homework during rehearsal. Dina would also like to thank Kathy for giving her an amazing opportunity in Dina’s tenth year with NCFO!

Lena Gorelik (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) has been performing with her daughter Dina in NCFO for the last ten years. Lena thanks David and Sue for their continuous effort in bringing joy to the Opera families.
Adam Gould (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is in 7th grade, and after working tech for the past three NCFO productions, he is now going on stage in Weedpatch. While not at NCFO he enjoys skateboarding, making things and annoying his long-suffering older sister Aviva.

Tom Gould (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is singing for the ninth time in an NCFO production, seven of them with his daughter Aviva (go Falcons Crew!). He thanks his son and agent, Adam, for getting him a solo. Tom dedicates his performance to his wife Maura for her support and encouragement.

Verity Eleanor Gould (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a student at Parts and Crafts. Verity enjoys singing and food.

Sue Hall (Chorus, Producer) is happy and excited to be producing and performing in another brand new Family Opera show. She sincerely hopes she lives through the last performance. Thanks to all the folks who make this production and this company possible (you know who you are).

Aytan Hamill (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) can name that tune in one note. Aytan is enjoying his last year of high school at Westwood High as well his eleventh year in the Family Opera. He is an avid cross-country skier who also enjoys skating, swimming and basketball.

Katie Hamill (Leo Hart) swears she is a soprano. She is nonetheless excited to be performing her first pants role with NCFO and looks forward to a brilliant new career singing all the great tenor roles. This is her ninth year performing with NCFO, along with her daughter Anya Miller, her brother Tom Hamill, and her nephew Aytan. Her favorite previous roles include Meidan in Springtime for Haman (2017), the Storyteller in The Weaver’s Wedding (2016), Lamia the Lioness in Rain Dance (2014), and a pointy-eared alien in Space Opera (2011). When she is not singing and dancing onstage, she can usually be found singing and dancing offstage, often while solving a puzzle and/or practicing law.

Tom Hamill (Cal Rondell) is the son Robert Hamill, who was born in January 1935 in eastern Oklahoma. Though he missed the Dust Bowl by a few hundred miles, Dad was always proud of his Okie roots. I’d like to think I’d make him proud as I bring a little bit of both him and Grandpa Rudi to stage.

Elizabeth Hocking (Talent Show MC, Chorus) is pleased to be performing for the first time with NCFO. She would like to thank Jeff Bigler for getting her into this.

Heather Hoffman (Rehearsal Manager) has been happily anonymous since Antiphony (2006), basking in the glow of her daughter, Erica Jaquith’s, performances on stage and her husband, Mark Jaquith’s, stage crewing, while keeping an eye on her knitting and the pizza order. She enjoys being serenaded at rehearsals and telling people where to go. Thanks to everyone who makes this possible, on stage and off.

Sue Holcomb (Professor Ruth Crawford, Chorus) is a violin teacher and longtime participant in NCFO. Right now she lives in Watertown with her cat and her good boy Scout.

Sophie Hopwood (Juggler, Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is 10 years old and in the 4th grade at King Open School. She performed in last year’s production of Springtime for Haman with NCFO, and has sung in the chorus at her school and at First Parish UU in Arlington where she also played a Cratchit child in A Christmas Carol. Sophie loves science and reading.
Cast Biographies

Walter Hopwood (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 10 years old and in the 4th grade at King Open School. Last year was his first NCFO performance in Springtime for Haman. At First Parish UU in Arlington, he sang in the children’s chorus and was Tiny Tim in A Christmas Carol. Walter especially enjoys sports and math.

Keiara Hunter (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 11 years old, a 5th-grader at Kennedy-Longfellow School, and is making her theatrical and operatic debut this year in Weedpatch! She loves synchronized swimming, reading, choreographing dances with her sister, and snuggling with her puppy.

Ben Jerome (Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is a father to two wonderful children, He comes from a family that loves singing, Growing up in Haiti, he sang in his church choir and played a violin.

Kostas Jerome (Juggler, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 4th-grader at Shady Hill School. He loves reading, playing video games and spending time with his friends.

Laima Jerome (Ballerina, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 1st-grader at Shady Hill School in Cambridge. She loves reading, dancing and singing. Laima also loves to cook for her family.

Merilee Jewett (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 7th-grader in Wakefield. She loves school and has a lot of fun with her great friends. She absolutely loves her little sister, Jacey. Fun fact about Merilee, if she had to choose someone to live on a desert island with, it would definitely be her!

Julianna Jones Tandon (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 2nd-grade homeschool student. For as long as she can remember, she has been curious about the world around her, and is intrigued by the connection of people, animals, plants, and nature. Julianna also enjoys writing poetry, and studying the lyrics to classic and contemporary musicals. One of her favorite films, from her earliest memories is The Sound of Music.
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Kevonna Jones-Tandon (Chorus) is a Homeschool and Community Based Educator. In her early years, Kevonna studied dance and acting at the renowned Freedom Theater in Philadelphia, PA. As a youngster, her most memorable performance in theater was having a lead role as Willy Wonka in Charlie and The Chocolate Factory. In her 20’s, her most thought-provoking role was Lady in Red in For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When The Rainbow Is Enuf. Today, Kevonna is delighted to perform alongside her three children Julianna, Vivianna and Louis in the Weedpatch Family Opera.

Louis Jones Tandon (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 9th-grade Homeschool student who has great interest in math, biology, writing, and origami. In his younger years, he was in the performance Oliver Twist playing the main role and singing the part of Oliver. This year, he participated in Mock Trial, and looks forward to sailing in the summer. “If All the World’s a Stage Louis would love to be sailing its Oceans.”

Vivianna Jones Tandon (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 6th-grade Homeschool student who looks forward to every opportunity to express her creativity through the arts, music, and writing. She has performed in various plays, and danced in the Nutcracker ballet. This year she received the level of Gold in The American Ballet Association’s Performance Awards. Inspired by great actresses of the past, Vivianna even personified the legendary Lena Horne for Halloween.

Birikti Kahsai (Ballerina, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 13-year-old girl who attends Vassell Lane Upper School in Cambridge. This is her second year performing with the NCFO, which she enjoys immensely. Some of her hobbies include baking, running, gymnastics and acting.

Margaleet Katzenblickstein (Citizens Committee Quartet) has been performing in Family Opera since 2013, when she played the DescAnt in Antiphony. Previous roles have also included one of the Five Kids in The Weaver’s Wedding, a Meerkat in Rain Dance, Hathach in Springtime for Haman, and the Jury Foreperson in Kids Court. Margaleet is a 14-year-old homeschooler and is dual-enrolled at Middlesex Community College.

Craig Kelley (Chorus) is a first-time Opera singer with the Weedpatch Community Chorus but has long held the position of Poet Emeritus for Chateau Saint Gerard in North Cambridge. He enjoys reading, bicycling, Dungeons & Dragon and spending time with his family. He regularly expresses amazement at being lucky enough to live in a place where something like the North Cambridge Family Opera brings so much joy to so many lives.

Hope Kelley (Chorus) has been in the annual Cambridge Science Festival Choruses and NCFO operas since 2007, enjoying a variety of roles (Earth Jig, Child, Mosquito, Villager, Stormtrooper, Red Ant, Cameraman, Water Buffalo, Security Guard, Weaver, Jackal, and Haman’s Friend) and happily performing with Morse Computer Consulting and Repair, LLC

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Addie Kelsey (Dime Soloist, Chorus) is a 9th-grader at Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, where she enjoys singing, dancing, running, and bumping into friends from NCFO. This is her fifth NCFO production; in past years she has played parts ranging from a bouncy baby rabbit (Rain Dance, 2014) to a despairing 40-year-old Jewish man (Springtime for Haman, 2017).

Margot Kelsey (Chorus) is a 5th-grader at Graham and Parks School. She enjoys reading, writing, and cuddling with her kitten, Alexander Hamilton (when he’s not in a dueling sort of mood). This is her second NCFO show and her first one with her fabulous friend Zayaan.

John Kernochan (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) Born on a mountaintop in Tennessee / Went to a bar when he was only three / Came to Cambridge in ’63 / Still living in the Land of the Free!

Julie Keysor (Chorus) This is my first time on stage and I’m so happy to share this time with my oldest daughter, Merilee. I’m so proud of how well Merilee is doing with all her singing and stage performance! I’m not quite the ham she is but I love being in the show with her. Many thanks to Matthew and Jacey for supporting Merilee and me in this fun activity, and thanks to our NCFO family. It’s a great group; a great community!

Kerry LaRose (Dime Soloist, Chorus) is a 13-year-old homeschooler and theater lover. When she isn’t dreaming about candy (mostly dark chocolate) and pink satin ribbons, you can find her performing in youth theater, snuggling with her dog Jamie, and competing and captaining for the Century Mill Equestrian Team. With NCFO, she has appeared in Kids Court, Weaver’s Wedding, and Springtime for Haman. She wants to thank the fabulous NCFO cast and crew, and also her family, who (mostly) sing in tune, and her wonderful vocal teacher Susan Davies, for helping her achieve her dreams.

Susan LaRose (Chorus) enjoys being a part of the Family Opera Community with her daughter Kerry, and spouse Chanda. She is the General Manager for Plus One at Harvard Business School. She is excited for her third production with NCFO. “GO SOX!”

Bill Laskin (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) It turns out I haven’t been in NCFO productions for the past five years just because my daughter, Izzy, was in them. Her weekends are filled with hockey games now, so it was up to me to keep the NCFO tradition alive in our household... and I’m glad I have. Thanks to everyone in the cast, crew (including son, Peter), and especially David, Sue, Kathy, and
Congratulations, Shining Stars!

Katie and Charles Leiserson

Break a leg!

Love You to the moon and back...Sue Sue

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Rachel for all your hard work to put on another great show. I can’t wait to see the other cast do the whole thing so that I finally understand how the whole story fits together!

Ella Lehrich (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) I am in 6th grade at Rindge Avenue Upper School, and this is my second time in NCFO. I love to sing, act, read, and draw. I play the cello and I am in All-City Orchestra. Outside of NCFO I have been singing since I was four.

Charles E. Leiserson (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is performing in the North Cambridge Family Opera for the third time. He played a Frog in Weaver’s Wedding (2016) and, presumably due to a lucky kiss, a Prince in Springtime for Haman (2017). Among his pastimes when not performing with NCFO or singing in the shower, Charles enjoys teaching algorithms and software performance engineering at MIT.

Katherine Hope (Katie) Leiserson (Ballerina, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus), age 10, is a 4th-grader at Shady Hill School and is performing with NCFO for the third time. She played a Frog in Weaver’s Wedding (2016) and Dara in Springtime for Haman (2017). In her school’s production of Theseus and the Minotaur: a Greek Myth (2018), she starred in the leading role of Ariadne, Princess of Crete. She loves her cat Tigger, her American Girl dolls, and cooking. She also likes to play piano, recorder, and cello. She would like to thank all her music teachers — Elizabeth Chladil, Carmen Denyes, Kabir Sen, Erika Pfammetter, Julie Rama Winslow, Jessica Trainor, and Jacques Wood — for teaching her wonderful musical things.

Kathy Lindsay (Agnes Rondell, Stage Director) It ain’t that easy, juggling a little song and dance with blocking scenes. But I have to sing, and there’s got to be room for something more so that when someone needs direction, I can help them find their way. A thought to the future... if I had a dime I could open up a candy store. A gift shop deep in the woods selling homemade sweets and hand-made souvenirs. The idea just sends shivers up my spine!

Alexander Duff Luperfoy (Chorus) is performing in this NCFO production of Weedpatch with his twin sister Vivian, as his first time on stage outside of compulsory school assemblies or piano recitals, and his favorite song to sing is “Pink fluffy Unicorns Dancing on Rainbows!” He enjoys playing Minecraft, programming robots, and riding his hover board, and he attends 3rd grade at Fiske Elementary in Lexington, Massachusetts. Alexander would like to thank the NCFO vocal coaches Jessica and Carmen who, along with David Bass, introduced him to vocal techniques and terminology. He would also like to thank his father, David Duff, who has had to do all of the smart home maintenance work alone while Alexander was rehearsing for Weedpatch.

Susann Duff Luperfoy (Chorus) is a first-time member of the NCFO cast, appearing with her daughter Vivian and son Alexander. She grew up singing hymns in church and has sung as
an adult in local choral groups but has only enjoyed opera—including NCFO opera—as a member of the audience. Susann is a research scientist and former professor in AI who has worked on several startups and even taught engineering street-smarts to sophomores at MIT. She is in awe of the magic that David, Sue and their troop of brilliant volunteers are able to perform and would also like to thank Don Picard, Charles Leiserson and other friends and former cast members for introducing her family to NCFO. She especially thanks her husband David Duff, who has shifted his Patriots viewing times to accommodate Weedpatch Sunday rehearsals.

Vivian Duff Luperfoy (Chorus) is 9 years old and is appearing in this NCFO production of Weedpatch as her first musical stage performance outside of piano recitals and school assemblies. She attends Fiske Elementary School in Lexington, Massachusetts, where she is in the 3rd grade. She enjoys reading, horseback riding, and running in grapevine step, when she is not drawing or playing Minecraft with her twin brother, Alexander. Vivian would like to thank the NCFO vocal coaches Carmen and Jessica for teaching her the fundamentals of voice performance, her friend Katie Leiserson (and family) for inviting her to audition for NCFO, and especially her father, David Duff, who has given up Sunday family time to support weekly Weedpatch rehearsals.

Zayaan Mamun (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 5th-grader at Graham & Parks in Cambridge. This is her second performance with NCFO! She is excited and really enthusiastic about the upcoming performances! She is fond of reading. She also likes drawing, making jokes, spending time with her family and friends, and BEING AWESOME! She is really proud to be part of NCFO and would like to thank David and Sue for giving her this wonderful opportunity.

Marin Manoach (Dime Soloist, Chorus) is 13 years old and is in the 7th grade at Rindge Avenue Upper Campus in Cambridge. It is her 6th year at NCFO. In past performances she was a Worker Ant on the Management Committee in Antiphony (2013), a Leveret in Rain Dance (2014), a Stagehand - the part, not an actual stagehand - in Kids Court (2015), a Kid in The Weaver’s Wedding (2016) and Bigtha in Springtime for Haman (2017). She enjoys art, sports, music and playing the piano.

Chanda McCreary (Chorus) enjoys being a part of the Family Opera community with her daughter Kerry and spouse Susan. She is a lover of berries, spicy food, singing, reading, writing, and family camping (along with their dog Jamie). This is her fourth production with NCFO.

Glenn McElhoe (Talent Show MC, Gus Monroe, Chorus) can’t believe this is his ninth year! It’s exciting to be a participant in delivering a brand-new show for NCFO. Besides opera singing, he sings barbershop
with the Vocal Revolution chorus and recently won Sing That Thing!, but NCFO is his favorite because he gets the opportunity to sing with his daughter Nicole. He works at VMware in Burlington, and thanks his family for all of their support.

Nicole McElhoe (Nora Borden) is a senior at Arlington High School. This is her tenth year performing with NCFO, and likely her last for a few years since she plans to attend college for pre-med next year. Over the years Nicole has enjoyed all of her roles, from her first one-word solo to her more recent lead roles. She started out as a baby peacock in Weaver's Wedding (2009), a child citizen in Springtime for Haman (2010), a rebel fighter in Space Opera (2011), a makeup diva in Flying High (2012), then the Wasp in Antiphony (2013), Mandisa in Rain Dance (2014), Britney Smears in Kids Court (2015), the Princess and the Dying Cow in Weaver’s Wedding (2016), and finally Zeresh in Springtime for Haman (2017).

Outside of opera, Nicole rows for Arlington Belmont Crew and is part of their varsity girls squad. She loves singing in the opera because it gives her an excuse to hang out with her lovely vocal coach, Marie McCarville. She would love to send a big thanks to David and Sue for all their hard work for this company, and special thanks to her dad, Glenn McElhoe, for taking part in this with her!

Dan McKanan (Policeman, Chorus) thanks NCFO for giving him a chance to do the police in different voices. If Dan asks you for your papers, feel free to sing a song or two.

Oriana McKanan (Dancer, Dime Soloist, Chorus) is a 14-year-old homeschooler. This is her sixth year in the opera. She likes (among other things) to read, bake, listen to music, doodle, sing, dance, argue with her friends about irrelevant things, and do nothing for long stretches of time. She is super excited because this year in addition to being in the opera — which is just inherently awesome — she gets a dime!

Tammy McKanan (Chorus) comes all the way from rural Iowa, all the way from milkman’s daughter, all the way from cult deprogrammer, all the way to homeschool mama. Like Sarah, she has travelled many miles and worked hard to find her voice. She hasn’t found any streets paved with gold, but she still hopes for that better day a’coming.

Alec McKinney (Policeman, Chorus) has been participating in stage shows and the Science Chorus with NCFO since 2006, and is excited to be back on stage with one of his sons (Riley McKinney). This year he plays the role of a policeman and is given the chance to fulfill a lifelong dream of being able to actually cart off and arrest one of his sons for their transgressions. He wants to thank his wonderful extended family and friends for all their support, and most importantly and sincerely the NCFO for all they have given to Cambridge and beyond over the past nearly 20 years.
**CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

**Julie McKinney** *(Dancer, Chorus)* has been singing and dancing with the NCFO for several years. Her favorite operas include *Space Opera, Rain Dance, Flying High* and *Springtime for Haman*. She’s thankful for the chance to be silly on stage with her family and friends.

**Riley McKinney** *(Willy)* is a 15-year-old human with two eyes and a nose. This is his sixth NCFO show, and he has had lots of fun over the years. He has participated in other theater programs around Cambridge and has had lots of fun with theater for a very long time. He is doing the show with his dad, Alec McKinney, and his mom, Julie McKinney. He hopes that everyone enjoys the show.

**Margery Meadow** *(Citizens Committee Quartet)* is pleased to be able to join NCFO again this season. In previous productions, she has been a frog (*Weaver’s Wedding*), jackal (*Rain Dance*), and ladybug (*Antiphony*). She is a member of the Boston Recorder Society and the Yiddish chorus of Boston Workmen’s Circle, A Besere Velt (A Better World), and has performed with Vermont’s Bread and Puppet Theater. Past artistic endeavors include classical flute, modern dance, and rock ’n roll bass guitar. She worked for many years as a technical writer. Margery likes to read, knit, and cuddle her guinea pigs. Love and thanks to John and Ruth for their support.

**Alice Merrill Hunter** *(Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus)* is excited to be back for her fourth NCFO show. Alice is in the fifth grade (with Anastasia Miller a.k.a. Pinkie Pie) at JFK Elementary in Somerville, studies piano and voice at Tufts Community Music, and taught herself to play the ukulele last summer. She recently performed in Theatre@First’s production of *The Magic Fire*.

**Anastasia Miller** *(Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus)* is a friendly, fun-loving, 11-year-old who is excited to be in her second year with NCFO. Along with that, she participates in the Drama Club at her school where they are doing a musical performance called *Giants in the Sky*. Anastasia enjoys playing violin and ukulele.

**Anya Miller** *(Dime Soloist, Chorus)* is enjoying her ninth year with NCFO. She played Abagtha in *Springtime for Haman* (2017), a Peacock and Courtier in The Weaver’s *Wedding* (2016), a Stagehand in *Kids Court* (2015), a Gazelle in *Rain Dance* (2014), a Worker Ant in *Antiphony* (2013), Stacie in *Flying High* (2012), a Jawa, Rebel, and Alien in *Space Opera* (2011), and a Chamberlain in *Springtime for Haman* (2010). She also loves ballet, K-pop, and cosplay. She is 15 years old and in the 10th grade at Arlington High School. Thanks to her uncle Tom Hamill, her cousin Aytan, and her mom and dad!

**Lindsey Miller** *(Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus)* is a 6th-grade student at Quinn Middle School in Hudson, Massachusetts. This is her second year performing in NCFO. Last year she was part of the Citizens Chorus in *Springtime for Haman*. She enjoys singing, playing the ukulele, cooking and crafts. She is also part of the Ski Ward Race Team in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. Lindsey also loves everything vintage and has an Etsy Store and Instagram called Lindsey Loo Vintage where she collects and sells vintage blankets.

**David Gordon Mitten** *(Chorus)* is pleased to return to NCFO after being a proud water buffalo in *Rain Dance* (2014), a grumpy security guard in *Kids Court* (2015), a weaver and jackal in *Weaver’s Wedding* (2016), and a

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Cast Biographies

courtly Chamberlain in Springtime for Haman (2017). Theatrically, he played Theodore Roosevelt in Arsenic and Old Lace in 1953. He sang with the Oberlin College Choir from 1954-57 and in community church choirs throughout his youth. David is presently the James Loeb Professor of Classical Art and Archeology Emeritus at Harvard University. He wants to thank his partner, Heather Barney, and David and Sue for the opportunity to sing with NCFO.

Jeff Moore (Cal Rondell) is singin’ in his seventeenth NCFO opera production, and they’re all starting to run together. Tau the Lion faces his sternest challenge yet, the fearsome Persian dust bowl. He’s aided by his daughter, whose previous father met with an unfortunate light saber “accident,” all captured on video. Can’t find work because a giant slug holds up the Fitchburg line train, which is then captured by pirates who drown the cow and knock down all the puzzle pieces. Finally everybody jumps in the water hole for a rap number. Jeff really loves his mother.

Liz Morse (Dancer, Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is a special education teacher and a dancer. She is so happy she can continue performing with NCFO, both in the opera, and in the science chorus for the first time this year. This is her seventh performance with NCFO, having previously been a Concubine (Springtime for Haman, 2017), a Peacock (Weaver’s Wedding, 2016), a Stagehand (Kids Court, 2015), Jackie the Jackal (Rain Dance, 2014), a Scorpion (Antiphony, 2013) and a Stage Parent (Flying High, 2012). She has loved spending this season with both new and old friends in the opera company. She would like to thank all of her family and friends for the love and support they have shown her all year long.

Megan Morse (Citizens Committee Quartet) is delighted to return for her ninth production with NCFO, having played various principal and supporting roles in the past. When not rehearsing and performing with NCFO, she owns and runs Morse Computer Consulting and Repair, a tech support company, and sings with various other groups. She’d like to thank her friends and family for all of their love and support over the years.

Joanne Nicklas (Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is happy to be in her fifth season with NCFO. While she may stay forever nostalgic about her first performance as a mama giraffe in Rain Dance, she is thrilled to be a part of this year’s world premiere. She would like to thank Sue, David, Kathy, Rachel, Carla, and all the others who do so much for us with these wonderful, chaotic, laborious productions. She would also like to thank Eliza. When she is not performing, Joanne spends her time teaching English grammar, conversation, writing, and literature to adult non-native English speakers at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

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Richard Nilsson (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is delighted to sing again with NCFO and to have the chance to sing and dance alongside his daughter, Sophia Nilsson! Long may these father-and-daughter days last! Richard is an architect in private practice at Nilsson Architects of Somerville. He is delighted to have very nearly mastered his songs, dances, harmonies and choruses and does hope that this year’s opera goers will have as much fun watching, as Richard is having in the show.

Sophia Nilsson (Ballerina, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus), a Boston native and life-long Somerville resident, is thrilled to sing again with NCFO, and delighted to be a Weedpatch Camp Soloist! She is an accomplished song-and-dance woman, having performed with Deborah Mason School of Dance at Hancock Hall and sung publicly for municipal dedications in Somerville. Sophia was a Frog Soloist in the NCFO production of Weaver’s Wedding in 2016 and an Edict soloist in Springtime for Haman 2017. Sophia enjoys soccer, futsal, climbing, and arts and crafts. She is a mathematics enthusiast currently enrolled in the fourth grade of Unidos, Somerville’s Spanish language immersion program.

Farzana Nipa (Chorus) is delighted that she is able to participate in Family Opera for the second year in a row. She is happy to perform together with her daughter. She loves helping out her family and friends. She works at BUSM. She is extremely proud to be a part of the NCFO family.

Fiona O’Loughlin (Abby, Chorus) is 17 years old and a junior at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. She is delighted to be participating in her seventh NCFO production this year, after various hilarious animal and human roles in Flying High, Antiphony, Rain Dance, Kids Court, Weaver’s Wedding, and Springtime for Haman. She has also loved performing in many fantastic Beyond the Fourth Wall musicals. When she isn’t acting and building sets, Fiona enjoys reading, writing, playing games, traveling, and playing with her puppy.

Jill Pelavin (Citizens Committee Quartet) is in her fourth NCFO production, and happy to sing with the KCCC quartet. She is thrilled to sing in a group and on the main stage (back from her exile to the stage extension). Last year she was Haman’s wife, and before that the Storyteller (Weaver’s Wedding), and finally in Kids Court, was a stagehand with strong pinkies. Previous to NCFO, she was in five musicals as part of the orchestra pit. She is a software engineer by day, making the web easier to use with better UIS, and by night is a knitter, sewer, sailor, swimmer, and flute player in the Red Herring Morris Dance Team. Jill has been singing ever since she can remember and is having fun up on the stage. She lives in Somerville with her 3 cats and her wonderful fiancé, Baruch.

Davide Pettenuzzo (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is excited to be back for his third opera after Weaver’s Wedding in 2016 and Springtime for Haman in 2017. When not rehearsing or performing with NCFO, Davide
teaches at Brandeis University and hangs out with his two wonderful boys, Leo and Tommaso. He would like to thank Leo for giving him the push he needed to get into singing and dancing and Tommaso for all the loud singing together in the car.

Leonardo (Leo) Pettenuzzo (Juggler, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is a 4th-grader at Williams School in Newton. This is Leo’s third year with NCFO: in past productions he was a colorful myna bird in Weaver’s Wedding (2016) and Sherban in Springtime for Haman (2017). His love for music and singing is quite eclectic: in addition to the opera, he plays trumpet in the school band and sings/plays electric guitar in a rock band with friends (Lights Out). Leo also loves reading, swimming and playing all kind of sports. He would like to thank his music teachers, Jocelyn Limmer and Jay Ryan at Parallel Sound Studio, for the support and great inspiration.

Columbine Phoenix (Makeup) is a master of disguise, masquerading as a mild-mannered Amazon data associate during the week but taking every opportunity to transform actors into their characters and fans into sparkly things. Now in her fifth year with NCFO, she would like to thank Elizabeth Stone for her generosity in sharing her wisdom about makeup, both theatrical and fantastical!

Carla Procaskey (Costume Design and Management) has greatly enjoyed seeing Weedpatch become a reality. As a board member, she was involved from the start; she found it interesting to see the steps involved in getting a production from an idea to a reality. She has had a grand time working on the costumes. She found it very gratifying to have her packrat tendencies actually be useful! She thanks her husband for graciously putting up with the dining room being a costume workshop for two months.

David Rabkin (Makeup, Photography) This season marks David’s eleventh year on NCFO’s makeup team. Both of his children have been in past operas, and his professional experience writing software, managing tech companies, and directing programs at the Museum of Science seems as good a background as any for his role coaching NCFO’s many makeup volunteers and painting a lot of faces himself.

Eoin Rogers (Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) is an 11th-grader at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. This is his fifth year performing in NCFO. Some of his past roles have included being a Soldier Ant in Antiphony and an evil Hyena in Rain Dance. Last year he was a Prince in Springtime for Haman. In his spare time Eoin enjoys playing ice hockey and singing with the Boston City Singers.

Ruth Rogers (Dancer, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) has been a Rebel, a Stage Mom, a Soldier Ant, a Hippo, a Stagehand, a Jackal, and a Concubine in past operas, and has also sung with the Science Festival Chorus. She is delighted to be performing again this year with her son Eoin. When not singing or with family (ideally both at once), Ruth works as an architect and practices kung fu. She would like to thank her husband Sean for his incredible patience during opera season, and the opera family for making it all so fun.

Hima Saini (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) is 11 years old and a 5th-grader at Tobin Montessori School. She has gone to many vacation camps at the Harwich Junior Theatre (Cape Cod Theatre Company). She participates in the Boston City Singers (Cambridge Training Chorus and Cantore), and is a former member of the Repertory Ambassadors of the New School of Music. She has a vocal coach,
Ángela Valenzuela. She enjoys reading and playing with her dog. She would like to thank her mom, Julie Croston, for driving her all these days for rehearsal.

**Carmen Savarino (Director of Vocal Instruction), soprano and voice teacher,** is pleased to be joining NCFO in her 6th production. Carmen has been teaching and performing for the last eleven years, and enjoys continuing to learn about the voice, and teaching students to have a lifelong love of music. In addition to teaching students of all ages in her private studio, she is a voice teacher at Lift Up Your Voice. Carmen enjoys teaching others about opera and has served as a teaching artist with the Boston Lyric Opera. Ms. Savarino holds a Masters in vocal performance from the Longy School of Music of Bard College, and received her Bachelors of Music from the Cleveland Institute of Music. She is a certified level III teacher in Somatic VoiceWork, The LoVetri Method, as well as an active member of The Voice Foundation and NATS.

**Tricia Saxler (Chorus)** is thrilled to be participating in her sixth NCFO opera. Since starting as camera crew in *Flying High*, she has found each opera as enjoyable as the last. Tricia would like to thank David and Sue for their amazingly clever talent and hard work in making NCFO the unique experience that it is. Thanks too to daughter Fiona for inspiring my song and tolerating my dance all these years, and to Keiara for jumping in so spiritedly.

**Daniel Scibelli (Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus)** is 14 years old and in his fifth performance with NCFO. In previous years, he performed in *Springtime for Haman, Rain Dance, Kids Court* and *Weaver’s Wedding*. He is in the 8th grade at the John D. O’Bryant School of Math and Science, a Boston Public School. Danny loves singing and performing. He also loves playing basketball and soccer. He enjoys all sports, theatre and drawing. He would like to thank everyone at NCFO for giving him this wonderful opportunity.

**Bereket Secunda (Chorus)** is 11 years old and a 6th-grader at Vassal Lane Upper School. She has performed in the past with the Acton theater company, Theater with a Twist, and in Beyond the Fourth Wall’s production of *Seussical*. This is Bereket’s first year performing with NCFO. She is excited for the opportunity to perform in a new production alongside her mother. In her spare time Bereket likes to play lacrosse, sing in the school chorus, and play with her two cats, Shadow and Izzy. She would like to thank her family and friends for their support.

**Sara Secunda (Chorus)** is performing for the first time musically since being in her junior high school’s chorus many, many years ago, though she has performed more recently, as an adult, in figure skating events. Her day job is working as a Geographer/GIS Specialist for the Volpe Center. Besides being Bereket’s mother, she also loves skiing, skating, movies and the Red Sox. She wants to thank the NCFO for this
opportunity to perform with her daughter, and for making the experience so much fun.

**David H. Silber (Lighting Designer)** has lit many shows for NCFO: *Flying High* (2012), *Antiphony* (2013), *Rain Dance* (2014), *Weaver’s Wedding* (2016), and *Springtime for Haman* (2017). He is interested in pursuing further theater and software projects and maintains a collection of theatrical gear (including lights, effects, practicals, and intercom) which can be made available to local productions. He can be contacted at davidhsilber@gmail.com.

Nicole (Nicci) Stamos (Dime Soloist, Chorus) is a 12-year-old 7th-grader at Hale Middle School in Stow, MA. She participates in all musical activities in her school, including band, jazz band, and chorus, plus the fall and spring plays. This spring Nicci was chosen to play Wendy in the school production of *Peter Pan*. Nicci is looking forward to softball in the spring and sailing with the Sea Scouts in the summer. She would like to thank her mom for braving the stage and participating in the NCFO with her each year.

**Sara St. Antoine (Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus)** is an environmental writer and children’s book author. This is her fifth year with NCFO, and she is grateful as ever to Sue and David, Kathy, Rachel, Carla, and the rest of the NCFO team for building this production with their own hands, hearts, hopes, and orange crates.

**Elizabeth R. Stone (Makeup Designer)** has been designing and applying makeup for NCFO since 2002, and has no intention of stopping anytime soon! She has worked with Theatre@First, the MIT Gilbert & Sullivan Players, the Post-Meridian Radio Players, the MIT Musical Theatre Guild, the Sudbury Savoyards, and other groups in the greater Boston area. She is also a professional facepainter (see Zing! Facepainting ad). She plays recorder and pennywhistle for Red Herring Morris, reads constantly, and is supervised by her cats Morticia and Greta Garbo. Her next theatrical makeup project is the Sudbury Savoyards’ *Iolanthe*, coming up in April. Heartfelt thanks to David Rabkin, Columbine Phoenix, and the makeup crew, for efforts above and beyond.

**Yifei Sun (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus)** is 14 years old and attends school at Cambridge Street Upper School. He has vocal experience performing with NCFO’s Science Festival Chorus in *Singin’ of the Rain*. He would like to thank his mom for finding him the opportunity to play a role in this opera. He enjoys movies and dreams of starting a movie company. He hopes to have a lot of fun in family opera.

**Julia Teller (Patty)** is 12 and in the 6th grade at Shady Hill School. *Weedpatch* is her sixth opera with NCFO. Previously, she has performed as Harbona and a Prince in *Springtime for Haman* (2017), a kid in *Weaver’s Wedding* (2016), the Production Assistant in *Kids Court* (2015), a Leveret in *Rain Dance* (2014) and Non-Exist Ant in *Antiphony* (2013). When she’s not on stage, Julia does gymnastics 24/7, reads, and watches movies. Julia is continuing her job as assistant choreographer. She would like to thank her sister, Sophia; her mom, Rachel; Jennifer; and David and Sue for all their hard work helping her get to the place she is now.

**Sophia Teller (Sarah Rondell)** is currently a 9th-grader at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School and this is her eighth year with NCFO. In previous years, Sophia has played many parts, including Esther in *Springtime for Haman* (2017), Hansel in *Kids Court* (2015), Cigale in *Antiphony* (2013), and a Rebel in *Space Opera* (2011). She loves singing, acting, running, and writing. She would like to give a huge thank you to the production team, her fellow cast-mates and friends, and above all, Julia and Mom, for making the NCFO experience truly magical.

**Jessica Trainor (Vocal Coach)** is an active vocalist, and performs opera regularly in the Metro Boston Area. She spent the summer of 2017 with Opera NEO in San Diego as a Studio Artist. She played the roles of Mélisse and Coryphe, and covered the role of Sidonie in Gluck’s *Armide*. In May 2017, Jessica brought
to life the role of Schaunard in MetroWest Opera’s production of La Femme Bohème – an all-female version of Puccini’s La Bohème. In MWO’s 2016 season, she sang in the featured quartet and covered the role of Alma March in Mark Adamo’s Little Women, and in their 2015 season she played the role of Seconda Cercatrice in Puccini’s Suor Angelica. Jessica teaches private voice lessons at The Music Academy of Chelmsford, and is growing her own private studio at her home in Somerville. Jessica is the vocal section leader at Christ Church Congregational, UCC in Brockton, MA. She received her Master of Music in Vocal Performance at The Longy School of Music, and her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Music from Boston College. You can learn more about her performing, teaching, and life/career coaching for artists and professionals at www.jessica-trainor.com. Jessica wants to thank David, Sue, and Jennifer for the wonderful opportunity to join NCFO as a vocal coach. It has truly been an amazing season - best of luck to the casts, and congratulations on your hard work (and big vocal growth!).

Sara Verrilli (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus) has been in several NCFO performances, and long, long ago, sang in various Gilbert & Sullivan productions (in the chorus). She works at MIT teaching game design and doing research related to games. Thank you to my husband, and my awesome daughter Erin, who have put up with many a Sunday disappearance, and to equally awesome daughter Meredith, who I get to sing with at NCFO!

Julie Viens (Dancer, Bakersfield Soloist, Chorus) This is Julie’s 8th NCFO performance, returning after a 3-year break. This year she plays a Weedpatch community member and, briefly, a hostile towns person. She thanks everyone involved in the opera for a wonderful community activity, and her family, who don’t mind her disappearing every Sunday afternoon and all those weekends in March!

Eliza Weinberger (Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus), who began her career with NCFO in 2014 as a young giraffe, is now as tall as mama giraffe, so it’s a good thing we started when we did. When she is not at Opera, convening with Cambridge friends, Eliza enjoys playing hockey, listening to music, and studying Spanish.

Aimee Yermish (Leo Hart) is delighted to be returning to the NCFO cast with her son, Ilan Balzac. She played a politically-active zebra in Rain Dance (2014), a busy stagehand in Kids Court (2015), a fiberista Weaver/Jackal in Weaver’s Wedding (2016), and a constantly-costume-changing member of the company in Springtime for Haman (2017). She has a long and varied history in music, including classical piano and singing in a wide variety of contexts. As a member of the NCFO Board, she has truly enjoyed the complexities of helping bring this first commission to life, and is honored to be playing a role so dear to her teacherly heart. In real life, she is a clinical psychologist specializing in work with people who are gifted or twice-exceptional. She enjoys a ridiculous variety of handcrafts (adding mens’ suit tailoring to her skill set for this production), endurance sports, photography, and being in the natural world. Spare time is what she keeps in the spice cabinet.

Rachel Zimmerman (Dancer, Weedpatch Soloist, Chorus, Choreographer) is performing in her eighth opera with NCFO. Previously, she’s been a Rebel (Space Opera, 2011); Stage Mom (Flying High, 2012); Ladybug (Antiphony, 2013); Gazelle (Rain Dance, 2014); Stagehand (Kids Court, 2015); Peacock (Weaver’s Wedding, 2016); and a Prince (Springtime for Haman, 2017). She would like to thank her lovely and amazing daughters, who, on some days, really are best friends, as well as the inspiring team that keeps her dancing, David, Sue, and Kathy.
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