

Opera Las Vegas



Letters to Lily

Music by Emily Clements

Libretto by Emily Clements

Orchestration by Alex Clements

Friday, 30 September, 7:30 pm

Saturday, 1 October 7:30 pm

Sunday, 2 October, 3:00 pm

The Center

Las Vegas, NV

This performance is 1 hours and 15 minutes long and is performed with no intermission

Welcome Letter from our General Director, Jim Sohre



It is exhilarating to celebrate the beginning of Opera Las Vegas' Twenty-Fourth Season with the events that comprise our Women Composers Festival spanning three weekends, all of which are part of our award-winning Living Composers and Librettists Initiative as recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts.

We are still a bit breathless after last weekend's mesmerizing performances of Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Proving Up*, staged in an immersive manner in UNLV's Black Box Theatre.

And now we celebrate our very first World Premiere with Emily Clements' *Letters to Lily* (30 September – 2 October), an LGBTQ coming of age story that is a perfect fit for Pride celebrations, performed at The Center. Emily is a Las Vegas Academy and UNLV alum, and we are beyond excited to be staging a workshop version of (a very self-contained) Act I with orchestra. Audiences will get to participate in a post-show talk back.

Human interest item: The opera is superbly orchestrated by her dad, Alex. Awwww. .

Expertly heading up *Letters to Lily* are director Linda Lister and conductor Jennifer Bellor, both of whom are successful composers in their own right, and no stranger to their own World Premieres. Check out their bios and you'll see what I mean.

Rounding out the Festival next weekend is the West Coast premiere of *BelleSongs* (8 October), commissioned for soprano Kara Grover and composed by collaborative pianist Lois Henry. This song cycle will be part of the duo's recital at Southern Nevada Music, and will include other varied works by female composers, including the afore mentioned Dr. Linda Lister, head of UNLV's Opera Program.

We hope you'll also join us for *BelleSongs*, and we wish you hours of enjoyment and enrichment as we stage these distinguished musical works.

Best,

Jim Sohre, General Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jim Sohre'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cast & Company

Letters to Lily

Music by Emily Clements

Libretto by Emily Clements

Time: 1969

Place: Greenwich Village, New York

Running Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes with no intermission

Lily: Olivia Yokers

Sam: Claudia Affan

Jack: Joshua Hager

Frank: Norman Espinoza

Marie: Rabuel Aviles

Mae: Tyler Urbano

Chorus

Valentine Baron

Tiffany-Anne Calabro

Kurt Sedlmeir

Christian Shelton

Rachelle Sproul

Andrew Cassiel Williams

Pauline Tamale

Creative

Conductor: Jennifer Bellow

Stage Director: Linda Lister

Chorus Master: Stephanie Council

Stage Manager: Kristina Tullgren

Projection, and Lighting Design: Catherine Pratt

Costume Design: Candice Wynants

Costume Assistant: Summer Martin

Cast & Company

Orchestra Featuring Members of the Las Vegas Philharmonic

Violin I

Kevork Mikaelian, Concert Master

Violin II

Shakeh Ghoukasian

Cello

Matt Sermet

Bass

Paul Firak

Flute

Bonnie Buhler-Tanouye

Clarinet

Jonathan Cannon

Horn

Frank Joyce

Percussion

Patrick Bowen

Our Heartfelt Thanks

Opera Las Vegas is indebted to
Chris and Anita Murray
for major funding support

These dear friends and generous supporters
Will be honored for their invaluable service
At a National Trustees Awards Dinner produced by
Opera America, the National Center in
New York City on 21 October 2022.
Congratulations, Chris and Anita, we wouldn't be here without you!

We are deeply grateful to the Las Vegas Philharmonic for being such wonderful
collaborators during the 2022-2023 season and beyond!

With additional special thanks to our valued friends:

Patrick Bowen
Everyday Woman Las Vegas
Las Vegas Little Theatre
MAC Cosmetics
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The Center
Center Staff, Miguel Pineda and Brian Hosier
Las Vegas Men's Chorus

Summary

How far would you go to be your true self?

This LGBTQ coming of age story is dramatically crafted to be bookended by a flashback and then a real-time recollection of the watershed Stonewall riots. Lily has a secret from her narrow-minded parents, one that explodes musically into expressive song.

Opera Las Vegas chose to premiere a staging of Letters to Lily (Act One) not only to help encourage new compositions by women, but also to enhance local Pride celebrations by performing it in The Center. Significantly, Ms. Clements was a recent composition student at UNLV, a number of her peers are in the cast, and two of her mentors head the creative team, Stage Director Dr. Linda Lister and Conductor Jennifer Bellor. We couldn't be prouder than to shine a spotlight on Emily's musical talents and this compelling story that changed history.

How many years has it take for people to realize that we are all brothers and sisters and human beings in the human race?

- Marsha P. Johnson

My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you.

- Audre Lord

I started out with makeup in 1963 and 1964. In 1965, I was coming out more, and I was still wearing makeup, but I was still going to jail just for wearing makeup.

- Marsha P. Johnson

Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself.

- Harvey Fierstein

Love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love cannot be killed or swept aside.

- Lin-Manuel Miranda

We created an alternative family. This is what oppressed people do. To be told 'It's okay, you are loved,' that's part of Gay Liberation. I felt our goal was to transform the world.

- Stonewall Activist

Summary

Scene Breakout and Vocal Selections

Scene 1: Greenwich Village, New York. June 1969 Near the Stonewall Inn

Hand in Hand (Cast)

Scene 2: Lily's Home, Hastings-on-Hudson, Westchester County
Lily, This World is Cruel (Frank)

Scene 3: Lily's Bedroom
Sam's Aria (Sam)

Scene 4: Lily's Home
Will I Find My Place? (Lily)

Scene 5: The Graduation Party
Jack's Aria (Jack)

Scene 6: The Courtyard
What Does This Mean For Me? (Lily and Sam)

Scene 7: The Party Continues
Father's Reprise (Frank)

Scene 8: Marie's Moment
I Must Tell Her (Sam, Lily, Marie)

Scene 9: A Courtyard Moment
Suddenly, Everything Changes (Lily, Marie, Chorus)

Scene 10: Train Station Going North, Ending on 53rd Street at the Stonewall Inn
We Stand (Lily, Mae Chorus)

Biographies



Lily: Olivia Yokers

Praised for singing with “gorgeous vulnerability” (The Richmond Times). Olivia Yokers is well regarded for her thrilling voice and versatility onstage. Ms. Yokers has performed pieces spanning from Mozart to Rodgers and Hammerstein, as well as Philip Glass. Her most recent company engagements include Oklahoma Lyric Theater, Painted Sky Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Dayton Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Virginia Opera. Her most notable roles are Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Dayton Opera, Tulane Summer Lyric, Utah Festival Opera), Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (Dayton Opera, Chance Opera Theatre), and Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Virginia Opera). As an advocate for new music Ms. Yokers was a part of the debut of *Before the Night Sky* presented by Opera America New Opera Showcase. She also performed with the Indianapolis Opera with the first staged production of *Akhmaten*. She has performed as a soloist in various concerts and oratorios including Haydn’s *Creation*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Ralph Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and John Rutter’s *Mass of the Children*.

Biographies



Sam: Claudia Affan

Claudia Affan is a second-year master's student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she is pursuing an MM in vocal performance. She holds her BM in vocal performance from Auburn University, where she studied with Dr. Matthew Hoch. Her operatic roles and scenes include Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, L'Eternità in *La Calisto*, Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Zweite Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*, Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Carolina in *Il matrimonio segreto*, Lady Saphir in *Patience*, Ānanda in Sherry Woods's *MĀRA: A Chamber Opera on Good and Evil*, and Rosie in Frank Pesci's *Royal Flush*. Affan has received awards and recognition at Alabama NATS, Southeastern Regional NATS, Las Vegas NATS, Cal-Western Regional NATS, the Vann Vocal Institute, Alabama MTNA, Southern Division MTNA, Nevada MTNA, Southwest Division MTNA, National MTNA, and Alabama Federation of Music Clubs. She has performed in master classes with David Cangelosi, Dr. Loraine Sims, Dr. Melanie Williams, Dr. Feryal Qudourah, Jennifer Larmore, Michael Sturm, Oresta Cybriwsky, Lawrence Brownlee, Dolora Zajick, and Barbara Dever. She has also performed at the International Music Festival at the American University of Sharjah and the Music by Women Festival at Mississippi University for Women. She studies voice with Dr. Linda Lister.

Biographies



Jack: Joshua Hager

Joshua Hager, Tenor, is a first-year M.M. student at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas. A recent graduate from Mars Hill University in North Carolina (B.M. Music Education). Joshua plans on pursuing a career in music education and performance after his time at UNLV.

Joshua grew up in Statesville, NC where he developed a passion for music and theatre as he was cast in local and high school productions such as Footloose, The Wizard of Oz, and Singin' in the Rain. During his time at Mars Hill University, Joshua would perform repertoire from Britten and Haydn to Miles Goodman. He was regularly found singing with the Central United Methodist Chancel Choir in Asheville, NC in addition to the Civic Choral in Johnson City, TN under the direction of Dr. Rodney Caldwell. Joshua has also enjoyed his time serving with TEAMeffort Youth Missions, facilitating construction-based mission sites, directing, and leading in contemporary-style worship.

Biographies



Mae: Tyler Urbano

Tyler Urbano, soprano, is a Las Vegas native currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at UNLV under the direction of Dr. Kimberly James. Her operatic roles and scenes include Don Ettore in *La Canterina*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, and the First Witch in *Dido and Aeneas*. She was recently a soprano soloist for UNLV's performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria*. She has also been a chorus member in Puccini's *Tosca*, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, and Offenbach's

Orpheus in the Underworld. Tyler recently attended the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria where she continued her studies in opera under the direction of Dr. Alfonse Anderson. During her time at AIMS, Tyler was selected to perform with the AIMS Festival Orchestra in their concert "O mia bella Napoli." Her upcoming roles include Alida in Robert Ward's *Roman Fever*.

Biographies



Frank (Lily's Father): Norman Espinoza

Norman Espinoza, a Bass originally from San José California, has performed internationally and with numerous opera companies in California. He is a graduate from San José State University where he obtained both his M.M. and B.M. in Vocal Performance.

Recognized for his powerful low notes, he has sung for the Berlin Opera Academy, Montefeltro Music Festival in Italy, Opera San José, Lyric Opera Orange County, Vegas City Opera and Opera Santa Barbara. Roles

include: Colline, Alidoro, Reverend Hale, Il Commendatore, Sparafucile, Leporello, Bartolo, Seneca and Sarastro to name a few.

Norman is currently a Christmas Studio Artist for the 2021-2022 season with Opera Santa Barbara and recently won 3rd place for the 2021 Classical Singer Competition's Classical Young Artist/Emerging Professional category.

Norman now resides in Las Vegas, Nevada with his wife and off stage they run a small business in financial services. They are a great team and have a passion for educating others about financial literacy/helping others reach their goals and dreams.

Biographies



RABUEL AVILES

Marie (Lily's Mother): Rabuel Aviles

Rabuel Aviles is a Mexican American Mezzo Soprano from Las Vegas Nevada. She has studied at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and has performed the role of The Chinese Tea Cup in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, covered Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze Di Figaro*, performed Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Mother Marie of the Incarnation in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Apart from UNLV, she has performed with Opera Las Vegas in the choruses of *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, and *The Elixir of love*. She was the Page in *Rigoletto*, performed at the *Liberace Gala* and sang in their inaugural Latin Fiesta concert. Rabuel has also been a part of Vegas City Opera. She performed as the Father in their all women production of Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and has been a continuous artist in their seasonal concerts. In addition, she was a young artist with Vegas City Opera for their 2019-2020 season. As part of their outreach program she was Hansel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Ruth in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Madame Girya in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*. Being a part of the LGBTQ+ community, Rabuel holds this new work close to her heart and she is excited and honored to be part of this debut.

Biographies



Conductor: Jennifer Bellor

Las Vegas-based composer **Jennifer Bellor** has been described as “that rare composer whose music manages to be instantly listenable and emotionally resonant without any compromise to its sophistication.” (textura) Bellor’s music has been presented by Washington National Opera, American Composers Orchestra, Seattle Women’s Jazz Orchestra, Las Vegas Philharmonic, Clocks in Motion, Transient Canvas, Eastman New Jazz Ensemble, UNLV Wind Orchestra, DCINY Series at Carnegie Hall, Eastman Saxophone Project, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and many other soloists and ensembles in the US and abroad. She

was the resident Clock Shop Composer for the percussion quartet Clocks in Motion from 2018-2022, culminating in a new album released by Aerocade Music August 19, 2022, which features percussion quartet music written during her residency with C locks.

Bellor’s music draws on a variety of influences, evidenced in her self-released debut album *Stay* (2016), which is a melting pot of different music styles largely based on poetry. *Stay* was featured on NewMusicBox’s 2016 Staff picks, and was praised as having the ability to “maintain a highly individual identity without needing to take refuge in pre-post-genre musical silos.” Her composition *Chase the Stars* featured on *Stay* received acclaim not only for its “dazzling eclecticism” combining opera, hip hop, and jazz, but also for her singing. It was awarded The American Prize (2016) in the orchestral category.

Born and raised in Northern NY, Bellor earned a PhD in music composition at Eastman School of Music, a Master of Music degree in composition at Syracuse University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in music at Cornell University. Her primary composition teachers included David Liptak, Bob Morris, Andrew Waggoner, Sally Lamb-McCune, and Steven Stucky. She is on the music composition faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and artistic director of the new music series, Nexttet. Emily Clements was her composition student, and she is thrilled to see this beautiful work by Emily come to life by Opera Las Vegas.

For more information, please visit www.jenniferbellor.com.

Biographies



Director: Linda Lister

Linda Lister is Professor of Music and Director of Opera at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Winner of the 2014 American Prize for Directing, she is a graduate of Vassar College, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. She has led UNLV Opera to two first place wins in the 2015 National Opera Association Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition and a second place win in NOA's 2016 Opera Production Competition. She is author of *So*

You Want to Sing Light Opera and *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, and co-author of *So You Want to Sing Music by Women* and *Voice Secrets: 100 Performance Strategies for the Advanced Singer*. Also a composer, she has written three one-act operas: *Body of Art*, *State of Grace*, and *How Clear She Shines!* She sings her own compositions on the Albany Records release *Pleas to Famous Fairies*.

Biographies



Chorus Master: Stephanie Council

Conductor, educator, and singer Dr. Stephanie Council is Assistant Professor of Choral Music at the University of Nevada Las Vegas where she conducts the University Chorale and Chamber Consort and teaches Choral Conducting, Choral Literature, and Choral Methods. She is a sought-after lecturer in choral music education and conductor of collegiate, high school, and youth honor choirs around the United States, and she was a graduate finalist in the American Choral

Directors Association National Conducting Competition. A strong proponent of new music, Council is an active commissioner and performer of new works. She sings professionally with mirabai and the San Antonio Chamber Choir and has been engaged in the past to sing with the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir and at the Spoleto Festival USA. Council received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting and a graduate certificate in early music performance practice from Texas Tech University. She holds a Master of Music with distinction in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and Bachelor of Music degrees in vocal music education and vocal music performance from Oklahoma State University.

Biographies



Composer/Librettist: Emily Clements

Clements is a University of Nevada, Las Vegas Alumni, graduating with a Bachelors of Music in Vocal Performance and intensive compositional studies. Clements was born in Montreal, Quebec but has been a Las Vegas local for ten plus years. Clements began piano lessons at the age of five after watching her father, Alex Clements (award winning pianist and composer) growing up. She performed as a violinist in orchestras for eight years before switching to her true passion, voice. She began her studies in Opera and that led her to vocal writing, which she continued alongside performance throughout her second half of

undergraduate studies. Clements studied with Dr. Linda Lister for voice and Dr. Jennifer Bellor for composition. She began writing her first act of her opera *Letters to Lily* in 2018 after being inspired by new music and singers from around the world at two young artists programs that summer. Clements always had interests in writing, storytelling, and theater growing up. In 2019, she workshopped her first opera scene from *Letters* in UNLV's Opera Workshop's scenes program. She then continued to write two more scenes, *Sam's aria* and a love duet that were planned to be workshop premiered at UNLV before the pandemic hit.

Clements is currently pursuing a Masters of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Mississippi. Some of Clements' solo opera credits include Cupid in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Second Lady in *Dido and Aeneas*, and Constance (cover) in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at UNLV. Clements also performed in *Pirates of Penzance* with Vegas City Opera and Summer Super Theatre. Clements also originated the role 'Felicity' in Linda Lister's world premiere of *State of Grace* in the fall of 2018 as well as performed in Cynthia Wong's workshop premiere of *No Guarantees*. Additionally, Clements has performed at the National Opera Association conference in Salt Lake City for *State of Grace*, played Elizabeth Tabor in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, and was in the chorus in *Little Women* at Harrower's Young Artist Program in Atlanta, Georgia.

Biographies



Orchestrator: Alex Clements

Vibrant, rhythmic, captivating, and lyrical are just a few of the many adjectives that can be used to describe the many facets of this talented and creative Canadian jazz pianist and composer. Clements', who was a child prodigy at the age of four, won numerous piano competitions in Canada and quickly became an internationally recognized artist, performing in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Africa. One of Clements' highest accomplishments is an Alberta Achievement Award, which was presented to him by the Government of Canada. He is currently in his twelfth year teaching music at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. He also performs nightly in Cirque du Soleil's water show 'O'.

Clements holds a Doctorate in Musical Arts in Jazz Studies from the University of Southern California. Clements skills and versatility as a composer are recognized by a series of commissions for Canada's nationally known Montreal Jazz Big Band, including a 60-minute suite entitled "Jazz Images" portraying the history of jazz. His most recent work is a collaboration with award-winning choreographer Ana Cuellar featuring his music score for her work EnMi. His daughter Emily Clements performs in this work.

Save the Dates

BelleSongs: October 8, 2022

A Capacity for Evil by Evan Snyder and John Riesen: January
27-29, 2023

Approaching Ali by D.J. Sparr, Davis Miller, and Mark Campbell:
March 18-19, 2023

La traviata by Giuseppe Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave: June
9-11, 2023

Information and tickets available at www.operalasvegas.com

About Opera Las Vegas

Opera Las Vegas heads into 2022-23 — its 24th year — of enriching the cultural landscape of Southern Nevada by strengthening our Las Vegas communities' relationship to the art of opera through accessible, engaging, and high caliber performance experiences.

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