

# Hilary Ginther is on stage across the country

Hilary Ginther, mezzo-soprano, has a busy schedule coming up, but she's prepared for times when she is between roles.

"In April 2019, I'll be reprising the role of Carmen with Fargo-Moorhead Opera in North Dakota, followed by a world premiere called 'Companionship' by Rachel Peters at Fort Worth Opera in Texas in May," she says.

She began planning a way to pay the bills when she wasn't performing, while she was still in graduate school.

"During finals week of graduate school at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, I went to bartending school. I knew I would need other skills to help pay the bills while pursuing a career in music, so it seemed like a smart move. I learned the basics and got my first job bartending at the Cincinnati Country Club. Several months later I moved to New York City and had a few restaurant jobs (where I met my husband) during my first couple of years here.

"I have now been working at an insurance agency in New York City on and off between singing gigs since 2013, and it is the perfect way to stay afloat between operas. I also have a job as a church choir singer, which I enjoy immensely; there are several people in the choir who had major opera careers, and it's incredible to hear their stories. The ultimate goal is to not have to have a supplementary job outside of singing, but it is necessary in a country whose government does not fund the arts. Hopefully, I can make that a reality in the next couple of years since my management is not just in the United States but worldwide," she says.

Some of the performances she's been a part of include a cast album of Bernstein's "Mass" with The Philadelphia Orchestra, which was released by Deutsche Grammophon. She made her Carnegie Hall debut on a program of Haydn and Forrester, followed by a New York City Opera debut in the U.S. premiere of "Brokeback Mountain" and a third debut with Los Angeles Opera in June in Gordon Getty's "The Canterville Ghost."

"My favorite roles that I've sung so far are Carmen, Rosina in Rossini's 'The Barber of Seville,' Sesto in Mozart's 'La clemenza di Tito' and Hansel in Humperdinck's 'Hansel and



Hilary Ginther as Lureen in the world premiere of "Brokeback Mountain" with the New York City Opera.

Gretel.' I recently got to wear a bright red polyester bell-bottom suit with red cowgirl boots and a bolo tie for 'Brokeback Mountain' when I played Jack's wife Lureen, a cowgirl from Texas. It is my favorite costume to date.

"One of the most impactful stage experiences I had was in an opera called 'The Passenger' with Florida Grand Opera. It was based on the experiences of the prisoners and SS officers in Auschwitz, and the costumes and staging were so real we all left the stage shaking and bawling every night. I played one of the prisoners," she says.

Ginther decided in high school that she wanted to pursue a career in opera, but she began to sing as a child.

"I began singing in the children's choir at St. Anne Church in Bristol when I was 9. I joined because a lot of my classmates were in the choir, and I wanted to be a part of it. After a few months the choir director, Richard

Davis, noticed I had some natural singing talent when I tried out for a solo. I started cantoring the Catholic Mass when I was 9 or 10, and then joined another group, the East Tennessee Children's Choir, where I met Beth McCoy who was their director at the time. After a year or so in ETCC, I started private piano and voice lessons with Beth.

"When I was in eighth grade, she mentioned there was a local music competition being held by the Lions Club, and we both wanted to see how I would feel performing an Italian song on stage. When I applied, I was told it was for high school students only, and that they didn't want my feelings to be hurt if I didn't win. I personally called them and asked to enter regardless; that I just wanted to try. I won that competition singing Stradella's 'Pieta Signore' and was instantly hooked. Later on in high school I began studying with Mark Owen Davis and his guidance kept me on track until I was ready for college.

"When I was taking voice lessons from Dr. Maryann Kyle at ETSU while I was in high school, she called me one day and said she was moving to Mississippi to teach at the University of Southern Mississippi, and that if I wanted to major in music I could get a lot of performing opportunities there. I remember thinking about it for about two minutes while crossing the lawn of my high school, University School in Johnson City, and making the choice right then that I would get my degree in vocal performance and pursue a career on the opera stage.

"Once I graduated from USM I was hired by Mississippi Opera to sing Maddalena in Verdi's 'Rigoletto.' That job was the first time I was a hired professional amongst others, not just a college student. I learned so much from the principal singers. They would often take me out for lunch or coffee to ask about my trajectory and give much appreciated advice. It was also the first time a