

Mezzo-soprano **Dawn Pierce** is a native of Olean, New York, and currently an Assistant Professor of Voice at Ithaca College. Praised as both an exceptional performer and an empowering teacher, Ms. Pierce is devoted to promoting a deep understanding of artistry and self-expression. Reviewers laud her as “vocally impressive and dramatically convincing,” while students describe her teaching as “innovative,” “energetic,” and “inspiring.” Through her work in the US and Europe, she has quickly been gaining recognition as a visionary leader. She is the creator and director of the Opera Company of Middlebury Young Artist Program, an upcoming teacher for *The Great Courses*, and a former voice teacher and current board member for the International Performing Arts Institute in Kiefersfelden, Germany.

Ms. Pierce abounds with experience in a wide variety of styles and venues. On the operatic stage, she recently performed the title role in *Carmen* with Opera Ithaca, Charlotte in *Werther* with Mobile Opera, Beatrice in *Beatrice et Benedict* with Asheville Lyric Opera, Olga in *Eugene Onegin* with Opera Carolina and Opera Company of Middlebury, and Madelon and Bersi in *Andrea Chenier* with Nashville Opera. Ms. Pierce is equally comfortable in musical theatre, where she portrayed Franca (*The Light in the Piazza*), The Grand Duchess (*The Student Prince*), and Anita (*West Side Story*). On the concert stage, she has earned rave reviews for her interpretation of the alto solos in Verdi's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. Recently, she delivered a moving performance as Maria von Wedermeyer in McElyea's *TENEBRAE: The Passion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. She has been a featured soloist with Asheville Symphony, Syracuse Symphony, York Symphony, Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Charleston Symphony, and with the Binghamton Downtown Singers, Hamilton Masterworks Chorale and Ithaca College Orchestra.

An innovative recital programmer, Ms. Pierce performs frequently in collaboration with renowned artists such as Charis Dimaras, Emily Newton, and Christopher Zemliausekas. Ms. Pierce most recently presented *The Four Types of Love*, a mixed-genre recital exploring four types of love through song. She was a featured recitalist at the 2018 Middlebury Song Festival, performing an American Art Song program titled "Wild and Wonderful." Other notable programs include *Written in My Heart*, an interactive recital exploring standard operatic literature in conjunction with technology, fine art, literature, and audience participation; *My Native Land*, a non-traditional, solo recital featuring five commissioned works and exploring American genres, including folk, art, opera, musical theatre, and spirituals; *The Soprano Sisters*, a humorous, narrated program exploring the mezzo-soprano relationship in opera and musical theatre, and *Your Opera in a Trunk*, a one-hour, improvised opera with plot and characters determined by audience suggestion.

Ms. Pierce has extensive experience as a private teacher, musical director, and master class presenter. At Ithaca College, her students describe her as an “extremely passionate, thorough, empathetic, and innovative professor, mentor, and technician.” Her teaching philosophy incorporates the prominent pillars of empowerment, individuality, community, and excellence as the foundation for inspired lifelong learning. In addition to teaching vocal technique, dramatic intention, musical interpretation, and body awareness to undergraduate level singers,

Ms. Pierce invests in the mental well-being of her students as an integral part of their artistic education. Over her nine years at Ithaca College, she has created a four-year series of written artist assignments designed to synthesize artistry, academia, and self-understanding. Recently, Ms. Pierce revised the instructional format for first-semester freshman, creating a course specifically designed to help give them the essential tools necessary to succeed academically over their four years. In her unceasing efforts to best prepare students to be independent artists, she established a course for students preparing recitals, in which they had additional weekly opportunities for performance, instruction, feedback, and support. Furthermore, she developed a curriculum for Opera Workshop, a collaborative and interdisciplinary performance course designed to improve the skill level, confidence, and self-awareness of the singing actor. As part of Ms. Pierce's mission to honor individuality within community, she designed, developed, and taught a first-year seminar called "Yes, and...realizing self through improvisation." She encourages her students to perform frequently and at a wide variety of venues, from professional establishments to local retirement communities. In 2017, Ms. Pierce designed and directed the inaugural Voice Intensive, a semesterly, week-long performance series for young singers. In Spring 2019, this expanded to the Arts Intensive, which incorporated the entire music school and included over 100 hours of workshops.

Not only is Ms. Pierce deeply committed to teaching healthy vocal technique as a balance of art and science, but she is equally invested in both the artistic and personal growth of young artists, ranging from the undergraduate to professional level. Ithaca College selected her to serve as one of three faculty members on the Strategic Planning Committee in 2018-2019 to rewrite the vision, mission, and goals for the college. She currently serves as a board member for the International Performing Arts Institute in Kiefersfelden, Germany, where she participates in value, vision, and strategy for the program; previously, she served as Director of Voice. Ms. Pierce consistently distinguishes herself as a visionary leader for lifelong learning. *The Great Courses* selected her from the top 1% of college professors in the world to write a twenty-four lesson course called "How To Sing," to be released in spring of 2020. For nearly 20 years, Ms. Pierce has designed numerous entrepreneurial workshops and programs examining a variety of issues related to artistry and technique. In 2014, she created the Opera Company of Middlebury Young Artist Program and currently resides as their director. In 2010, she founded the Ithaca Opera Studio in Ithaca, NY, and continues to present workshops designed to create well-rounded singers at the collegiate level. Recent topics include acting, score preparation, fitness, nutrition, mental well-being, effective practice skills, and recital preparation. She has also designed curriculum for and presented master classes on topics including audition techniques and improvisation for singers.

Ms. Pierce has training in a number of dance styles, stage combat, and opera improvisation. She earned a Performing Artist Certificate and a Master's in Opera Performance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and holds Bachelor's degrees in Vocal Performance and Music Education from Ithaca College.