

Mezzo-soprano Dawn Pierce, originally from Olean, New York, currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Voice at Ithaca College. Recognized 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.”

With a growing reputation as a visionary leader in the US and Europe, Ms. Pierce has initiated and serves as the Artistic Director of the Opera Direction Certification program and IC Opera Studio at Ithaca College. She is also the creator and director of the Opera Company of Middlebury Young Artist Program, a published 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 Zemliauskas.

Beyond her accomplishments as a performer, Ms. Pierce has extensive experience as a private teacher, 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, Ms. Pierce invests in the mental well-being of her students as an integral part of their artistic education. Her students have gone on to study at top graduate programs including Juilliard, Indiana University, and CCM. She is committed to the goals of her diverse student population whether they are singing on Broadway, performing in top opera houses, serving in military ensembles, launching an album, or teaching the next generation.

In her unceasing efforts to best prepare students to be independent artists, 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,” 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 2021 she launched an industry changing program with the creation of the Opera Direction Certificate where artists can gain the skills and experience necessary to become a stage director of opera paired with the IC Opera Studio where opera singers can refine and refresh their skills on the stage. 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.