

WORLD PREMIERE

A Dill

a chamber opera
by Matt Malsky
based on a short story by
Katherine Mansfield



Pickle



Featuring:
Caitlin Felsman, mezzo-soprano
Cailin Marcel Manson, baritone

Directed by:
Kirk Jackson

Sunday, October 10, 2021 | 3:30 PM

Jean McDonough Arts Center BrickBox | 20b Franklin Street, Worcester

WORCESTER CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

Tracy Kraus, Executive Director

Worcester Chamber Music Society is a non-profit arts organization that seeks to cultivate an appreciation for classical music and build a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse community through inspiring concerts and education.

Our vision is to create enriching and inspiring musical experiences that develop a community of listeners and musicians inclusive of all ages, traditions, and cultures. Our music education programs guide youth towards personal agency, reflection, and academic excellence. With music as our vehicle, we hope to open a pathway to a more profound connection to and understanding of those around us.

Our unique concert experiences appeal to diverse audiences and showcase both widely known and underrepresented composers. Through this approach, we strive to do our part to create balance and equity in the classical music world.

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World Premiere Chamber Opera
A DILL PICKLE BY MATT MALSKY

Directed by Kirk Jackson

Based on a short story by Katherine Mansfield

Caitlin Felsman, mezzo-soprano

Cailin Marcel Manson, baritone

Jae Cosmos Lee, violin

Mark Berger, viola

Ariana Falk, cello

Scenic Projection Designer: Stephen DiRado

Video Design: Soren Sorenson

Lighting: Kevin McGerigle

Costume Designer: Charles Schoonmaker

Audio/Livestreaming: John Freyermuth

**Performed on October 10, 2021 at the Jean McDonough
Arts Center BrickBox**



With gratitude for support from the George N. & Selma U. Jeppson fund and the Tina Sweeney '49 Endowed Chair fund, both of Clark University.

With thanks to Keelin Burke & D. Bradford Hunt (Newberry Library, Chicago), Zachary Borovay (Borovay Designs), Jessie Darrell-Jarbadan (Theater Program/Clark University), Irina Davydova & Savannah Plante (Department of Visual & Performing Arts/Clark University), Stephen & Donna DiRado, Gerri Kimber (The Katherine Mansfield Society), Cherie Jacobson (Katherine Mansfield House & Garden), Mark Mummert, Nancy Newman, Howard Sandroff, Mollie Sixsmith, Jeff Gillooly, Kevin Wesley & Jonathan Kappel (Advancement/Clark University), Charlie Slatkin (Wow Inc.), and Kate Walat for support and feedback throughout this project, in myriad of ways.

A DILL PICKLE - Story Synopsis

Vera and the unnamed male protagonist were once lovers. After a six-year hiatus they meet again in a café in Edwardian London. But we're not told if it's by chance or prior arrangement; the story seems almost to start in the middle. They reminisce fondly about the time they spent together—an outing at Kew Gardens where he was bothered by wasps, their plans to travel widely around the world, and an intimate Christmas together. But for Vera, their shared memories all have an edge, and reveal that everything wasn't completely satisfactory. And then, they move onto talking about their lives since.

With carefully chosen anecdotes, the Man parades before Vera his world of travel and the finer things of life he now enjoys. He has clearly prospered since the end of their relationship. We gain access to Vera's reactions, but only through asides that she doesn't share with him—her memories, interior musings, and monologues.

Things get more intense as he seeks to impress her with the wisdom and sophistication he has gained. He confesses he was 'such a kid' before, but now... Vera, on the other hand has gone down in the world since they parted. Her beloved piano has gone: 'sold, ages ago,' and she no longer has time for music. She is a woman alone in a male society, a woman with a past, struggling to make a living.

The conversation reaches its zenith as he makes a point of reminding her of a cruel letter she wrote to him at the end of their relationship. Both reach the same conclusion at the same time: that they had been alone together, "so wrapped up in ourselves that we hadn't a corner in our hearts for anybody else." At the close, she leaves swiftly and without a word, as if trying to hold onto some last remnant of her dignity. Left alone at the table and baffled by her actions—as always, He tries to get out of paying for the unused coffee creamer, and the story ends on an unsettled and unsettling note.

A Dill Pickle is typical of Katherine Mansfield's thoroughly modernist observations of the world. Though not an overtly political writer, her stories reveal an appreciation of the decisive role of gender, and *A Dill Pickle* is rooted in the social, cultural and political upheavals of her time. These characters live in a world where options for women are limited. Women—in particular the middle-class women—could be daughters or wives, or perhaps left in the socially inferior state of spinsterhood. We see, through Vera, that women in this period were kept in an almost universally subordinate position to men, disempowered bystanders in a world of action they could only view from the sidelines.

This story also dwells on the importance of personal truth, on subjective truth based on female experience. The narrative shifts in and out of the mind of Vera, revealing her psychological states. Mansfield used symbolism as another technique to give us further insights. A glove and a dill pickle work in this way here. Many of Mansfield's short stories are organized around a signal moment of epiphany, a flashpoint at which the central character achieves a degree of self-realization. But this realization rarely leads to happiness. In *A Dill Pickle*, Vera is devastated when she suddenly realizes that her former lover, although he is clearly vain and self-absorbed, understands her far better than she understands herself.

This story explores big, important themes: the alienation of individuals in society and power relationships between men and women. Yet the characters of Vera and the Man are very human—colorfully and vividly drawn, on a graspable scale, and still accessible and relevant to us now.

[Adapted by the composer from an essay by freelance writer and psychogeographer, Bobby Seal]

GUEST ARTISTS



Caitlin Felsman, mezzo-soprano, has been praised for her “velvety low register” and “bright, ringing top” [Boston Music Intelligencer]. Caitlin made her professional opera debut in November 2011 with Austin Lyric Opera as Second Lady in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. Her recent performances have included the title role in Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* (NEMPAC), Stephano in Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* (Maryland Lyric Opera), Cousin Hebe in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore* (Natchez Festival of Music), and Dorabella in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* (NEMPAC, Opera del West).

Caitlin is a frequent soloist with ensembles in the Greater Boston Area such as the Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus, the Cambridge Community Chorus, and Tufts University Chorus. She has twice appeared as a soloist at the Monadnock Festival of Music in collaboration with the Harvard Summer Chorus and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project.

In the spring of 2012, she returned to her childhood home to perform as a recitalist and featured soloist at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in Zimbabwe. Caitlin received the Espacio Abierto grant from Villa Victoria Center for the Arts, which supported the recital tour *Canción/Canção: An Evening of Spanish and Portuguese Song*, featuring music from Cuba and Brazil. Caitlin is the Co-Director of Opera on Tap Boston, whose mission is to bring classical music to non-traditional performance spaces.



Cailin Marcel Manson, baritone and conductor, is currently Associate Professor of the Practice in Music and Director of Music Performance at Clark University, Music Director of the Bennington County Choral Society, The Keene Chorale, and Barn Opera. A Philadelphia native, Cailin has toured as a soloist and master teacher at major concert venues throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia with many organizations, including the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, SWR Sinfonieorchester, Taipei Philharmonic, Bayerische Staatsoper - Münchner Opernfestspiele, Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Teatro La Fenice, Teatro San Carlo, Konservatorium Oslo, and the Conservatoire de Luxembourg.

Cailin has held positions as Music Director of the Vorarlberger Musikfest, Music Director and Conductor Laureate of the Chamber Symphony of Atlantic City, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Montgomery County Youth Orchestra, Chair of Vocal Studies at the Hazleton Conservatory for the Performing Arts, and as Director of Music at The Putney School.

MUSICIANS OF WORCESTER CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY



Violist and composer **Mark Berger** has toured throughout the United States and internationally as a member of the Lydian String Quartet. Berger frequently performs with many of Boston's finest orchestras and chamber ensembles including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Emmanuel Music, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and Worcester Chamber Music Society. He has recently appeared as a guest artist with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, Boston Musica Viva, Chameleon Arts ensemble, and Radius Ensemble. Berger has performed with many of Boston's new music ensembles including Sound Icon, Dinosaur Annex, Ludovico Ensemble, and ALEA III. He has recorded solo and chamber works for Albany, Bridge and Innova records. An acclaimed composer, Berger's works have been presented by many of the leading contemporary ensembles in the Boston area. His compositions have received awards and recognition from the League of Composers/ISCM, ASCAP, and the Rapido! Composition Competition. Berger is currently chair of the music department at Brandeis University, where he is also Associate Professor of the Practice.



Ariana Falk, cello, serves as Education Director for the Worcester Chamber Music Society, and is a founding director of Neighborhood Strings, an intensive music and social justice program for youth from Worcester's underserved communities. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Germany, where she performed with the Heidelberg Symphoniker, and now serves as music director of the Massachusetts Fulbright Association. She appeared as a guest artist on the Marlboro College and Longy Faculty Artist series, live on WGBH Boston, and at Al Kamanjadt festival in the West Bank. She has appeared as soloist with the Columbia and Olympia Symphonies, and is an alumna Fellow at Community MusicWorks in Providence. Ariana has performed at the Juilliard, Norfolk, Banff, Great Lakes, and Deer Valley summer festivals, and collaborated with artists including Menahem Pressler and Paul Katz.



Peter Sulski, viola, has performed in over 30 countries as a member of the Apple Hill Chamber Players, London Symphony Orchestra, Academy of St.-Martin-in-the-Fields, Cyprus Chamber Orchestra, and Al Kamandjati Baroque Ensemble (Palestine). He returned to his native Worcester in 2002, after holding the position of Head of Strings of the Edward Said National Palestinian Conservatory. Mr. Sulski

is a co-founder of the Worcester Chamber Music Society and an educator with the society's Neighborhood Strings program. He currently appears as principal violist with Odyssey Opera, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and the Orchestra of Indian Hill. Mr. Sulski is a United States Cultural Envoy to Jerusalem for his work bringing music to young Palestinians living in refugee camps. He is also a solo recording artist for Parma Records.

PRODUCTION TEAM



Matt Malsky is a composer whose diverse body of musical works has been performed and acclaimed both locally and internationally. His compositional style is characterized by its rhythmic vitality and dramatically crafted gestures and has been described as eloquent, intellectually rigorous, and emotionally compelling. His virtuosic works for acoustic instruments with live computer processing have

been championed by outstanding soloists. He has released two commercial compact discs including one through the Centaur label with three string quartets, and a second with recent chamber music. *GEOGRAPHIES & GEOMETRIES*, an aural map of emotions, is available on PARMA Recordings with performances by the Boston-based Radius Ensemble and the Worcester Chamber Music Society (WCMS). One of these works, a duet for two violas, was called "astounding" by Gramophone Magazine. His film music runs the gamut from historically-informed scores for silent films through modern collaborations with contemporary filmmakers. *A Dill Pickle* is his first opera. But he's already at work on his second. *Leave Your Dignity Outside* is set in 1919 and imagines a scene between four historical figures around the anarchist Emma Goldman and the notorious Chicago bohemian Dil Pickle Club.

His work has been recognized with awards and grants from ASCAP, Brandeis University, Kurt Weill Gesellschaft, the Hillery Family Charitable Trust, NSF/Chicago Materials Research Center, Hultgren Solo Cello Works Biennial, American Composer's Forum, and others.

Matt has been at Clark University since 1994 where he has served as Associate Provost and Dean of the College, chair of the Department of

Visual & Performing Arts, director of the Music program, the interdisciplinary Communication & Culture program, and two terms as the George N. & Selma U. Jeppson Professor of Music. He is currently the Sweeney Professor of Music, the director of the Higgins School of Humanities, and the Media, Culture & the Arts program.



Kirk Jackson (Director) has performed on and off-Broadway and throughout the United States in nearly 200 productions, including the world premieres of Terrance McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (Broadway), Doug Wright's *Quills* (New York Theater Workshop) and *Interrogating the Nude* (Yale Rep.), David Lindsay-Abaire's **Wonder of the World** (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, DC), Samuel Beckett's one-man *Stirrings Still* (Center Stage, Baltimore), and the United States premiere of Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Three Birds Alighting on a Field* (Manhattan Theater Club).

He directed the United States premiere of Howard Barker's *Uncle Vanya* and has assisted Belgian director Ivo van Hove on groundbreaking productions at New York Theater Workshop: *Scenes from a Marriage*, *The Little Foxes*, *The Misanthrope*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *More Stately Mansions*. Jackson's other directing credits include *Rigoletto* and *Gianni Schicchi* for Hubbard Hall Opera Theater; *Legends!*, *The Internationalist*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and *Take Me Out* (2005 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Production) at Studio Theatre, Washington, DC; *The Busy World Is Hushed*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Nickel and Dime*, and *Gray's Anatomy* at Actorstheatre, Phoenix, Arizona (multiple Zoni Awards); *Strange Interlude* at Washington Shakespeare Co; *Take Me Out* and *ART* at Capital Rep. in New York, and *The English American* (Best of Fringe, Edinburgh Fringe Festival).



Stephen DiRado (Scenery/Background Projection Design) has over 40 years of experience in the field of documentary photography, filmmaking and conceptual art. He is a recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship in 2012, Bob and Diane Fund grant in 2019, two fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and two fellowships from the Massachusetts Artist Foundation. DiRado's book

With Dad, published by Davis Publications in 2019, illustrates a loving and changing relationship between father and son as Stephen's father succumbs to Alzheimer's. Presently DiRado is documenting the societal effects of Covid-19. Stephen is currently a professor in the Studio Art Program at Clark University, Worcester, MA.



Soren Sorensen (Video Design) is an award-winning filmmaker specializing in documentary film and television with an emphasis on social and cultural issues. His first feature-length documentary, *My Father's Vietnam* (2016), combines interviews and never-before-seen photographs and 8mm footage of the era, to tell the story of three soldiers, only one of whom returned home

from the Vietnam War alive. The film premiered at the 2015 Rhode Island International Film Festival, where it won the Soldiers and Sacrifice Grand Prize. Sorensen's most recent film is the short documentary, *With Dad*. Soren is currently in post-production on his second feature-length documentary, on the life and music of the Cuban-born pianist and composer, Omar Sosa. He joined the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Clark University in Fall 2019.



John Freyermuth (Audio/Livestreaming) is a published, award-winning music educator, audio engineer, and computer musician. John comes to Clark University with eight years of college-level teaching experience. In 2014 he was appointed the Chair of Commercial Music, Visual, and Performing Arts at Lamar State College-Port Arthur, where he served as an academic and administrative leader

to over 200 students. He is the recipient of a 2017 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award, recognizing his outstanding commitment and contribution to students and colleagues. In 2017 he was awarded the Southeast Texas Arts Educator of the Year Award by the Southeast Texas Arts Council. John's current research focuses on the development of acoustic solutions for non-purpose-built spaces.



Charles Schoonmaker (Costume Designer) has extensive credits in television, theatre, and dance. He is the recipient of four Daytime Emmy Awards for his work in television. Theatre productions in New York include *Love, Sex and Death in the Amazon* (The Paradise Garage), *Limonade tous les Jours* (The Cell Theatre), *9/11 Portraits* (Union Square Theatre), and *Portrait of Jennie* (Henry Street Settlement).

His works on Boston area stages include *Venus in Fur*, *God of Carnage* and *A Long and Winding Road* at the Huntington; *Tarzan* (North Shore Music Theatre); *Nine*, *Reckless*, and *The Light in the Piazza* (SpeakEasy Stage Company); *Harriet Jacobs* (Underground Railway Theater); *33 Variations* and *Grey Gardens* (Lyric Stage Company); and *Speed the Plow*, *Long Days Journey into Night* and *The Clean House* (New Repertory Theatre).

In the field of concert dance his credits include Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, The Limon Company, The Atlanta Ballet, The Richmond Ballet, and The Julliard School.



Kevin McGerigle (Lighting Design) is Technical Director & Theater Designer in the Theater Program at Clark University. Kevin has been a part of over 150 productions throughout New England as a designer, director and producer. Kevin’s work includes ballet, opera, stage plays, musicals, and live concerts. Kevin studied at Clark University and went on to receive his MFA from Goddard

College. He is currently the Technical Director for the Majestic Theater and the Director of Production for the Albany Berkshire Ballet.

THOUGHTS ON A DILL PICKLE

To read the Mansfield short story is to enter the interior minutia of transient emotions: delicate images that emerge from the fog of memory, barely take shape, become startlingly clear for a second, and then fade again. Tiny gestures like “She was that glove in his hand” carry the psychic weight of life-changing choices. All of it seemingly not the stuff of opera with its fondness for heroes, villains, mythical figures, and fate writ large. Here fate is a simple off-chance encounter in a café, and the recollection of a life-changing letter, penned six years prior.

I love these characters; their contrasts and contradictions. We learn much about what has transpired for the man in six years, but not his name. We learn next to nothing about Vera, but witness her stark, almost existential, realization of loss.

Kirk Jackson August 2021



Worcester Chamber Music Society | 323 Main Street, Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA 01608
Tickets & info: 508-926-8624 | www.worcesterchambermusic.org