



ERZSÉBET

The Blood Countess Saga



An Operatic Monodrama in Three Acts
Words & Music by Dennis Bathory-Kitsz



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Erzsébet a monodrama

Original Vermont Production, October 28-30, 2011
Hyde Park Opera House, Hyde Park
Haybarn Theatre at Goddard College, Plainfield
Black Box Theater at Main Street Landing, Burlington

Lisa Jablow as Erzsébet

Ann Harvey, Director
Anne Decker, Conductor

The Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble,
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Words & Music by Dennis Báthory-Kitsz

Erzsetzt a monodrama

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The Real Countess Bathory

by Kim Craft

author of *Infamous Lady* and *The Private Letters of the Countess Erzsébet Báthory*

WHO WAS Countess Erzsébet Báthory? In the United States, she is known only to a handful of historians yet, ironically, is beloved by legions of horror, Goth, and vampire *aficionados*. Four hundred years of legends, superstitions and fictional tales have morphed her into the perfect “B” movie caricature: an evil yet seductively beautiful countess who is both vampire and lesbian. She tortures and murders equally beautiful, nubile girls so as to feast on their virgin blood as a magical elixir to forever preserve her youth. In the perfect ending to this perfect male fantasy, she is apprehended by powerful men who wall her alive in the tower of her own castle, forever taming the villainous beast. As brave and virtuous as these men may be, however, they cannot bring themselves to kill this beast, and she is instead held in captivity to be ogled by her captors. Indeed, in one account, on the last day of her life a jailer peeks into the window slit of her cell to gaze upon “the most beautiful woman in Europe,” only to find her slumped over in death.

And yet, the real Countess Báthory was quite a bit different: she was a respectable wife and mother, a lady of high society. Her deceased husband, Ferenc Nádasdy, was a national war hero and gracious benefactor of the Lutheran Church. Lady Báthory attended the king’s court and coronation, and she single-handedly managed and protected dozens of estates, hundreds of staff, and thousands of acres from rebellion, warfare, and treacherous politics—all for the benefit of her children. The Crown owed her a fortune in borrowed funds. When her husband died, the widowed and middle-aged countess found herself surrounded on all sides by powerful enemies who coveted her property.

Never formally tried, she was convicted without trial and sentenced to life imprisonment on the basis of testimony confessed only by her servants and the hearsay of neighboring citizenry. Her enemies counted on the fact that, were she convicted, her lands would cede to them. In the end, she outwitted them all. As the inquests proceeded against her, she quietly divested herself of all property—placing it in trust for her children—so that when the criminal conviction inevitably came, her enemies gained little satisfaction.

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Nevertheless, the confidantes closest to her swore on their lives that she was guilty of torturing and murdering dozens of young girls, and over three hundred witnesses testified to the very same rumors about her. The dead bodies were certainly real enough: local pastors eventually refused to bury so many girls who were dying of “strange and mysterious causes,” and their corpses were found on her property directly after the arrest. When confronted, Countess Báthory asserted her innocence and claimed, rather absurdly to authorities, that such misdeeds were solely the doing of her confidantes—three old women and a young man—and that even she “was afraid of them.”

In *Erzsébet: The Opera*, Dennis Bathory-Kitsz intricately weaves Lady Báthory's enigmatic personality and history into a masterpiece of both music and storytelling. Gone is Erzsébet the caricature: in her place is a very real and complex woman traumatized at an early age by the brutality of her time and the loss of her first child. She yearns to be a good wife and mother yet grapples with her own family history—a warrior clan with four centuries of medieval blood and conquest as its legacy. She struggles to be an enlightened noble, making treaties, trying to protect her people, but haunted by this blood lust. Blood is, perhaps, the only thing that ultimately comforts her. In the end, it finally conquers her as it has done to her family members for generations. In desperation, she seeks out not the Christian God of the Reformation but rather a comfortable pagan god of the “old” religion, caught between the last vestiges of the Middle Ages and the approaching Age of Enlightenment which, ultimately, she can never embrace. Angel or demon, innocent or guilty, she is the ultimate anti-heroine, perhaps better understood and embraced today than ever during her lifetime: ironically, perhaps, an odd commentary on our own Post-Enlightenment society.

In her own time, Countess Báthory is even said to have referred to herself as a “relic.” As the curtain falls for the final time, we are left with the image of a noble but now broken woman who might not have given offense or gotten into trouble had she been born a man in a different time—who might even have been remembered as a great leader and benefactor had the shackles of the former age, with its great lust for blood, been removed.

The Acts

Overture

Prologue

Recalling a scene from childhood, with horse, peasant and family

Act I Scene 1

“Love of Anna Darvulia”—Introducing herself in a conversation with Anna

Act I Scene 2

“Love of the Children”—Singing, dancing, horses, war, and her handmaidens

Act II Prelude

Act II Scene I

“Singing and Discovery of Blood”—Preparing for Kepler’s arrival; being dressed and stuck with a pin; a moment of rage

Act II Scene 2

“Singing the Lullaby”—Singing her children to sleep with tales of the family’s glorious history

Act III Prelude

Act III Scene 1

“Ilona, Thurzo and Paul”—After dinner with Kepler; the church singer Ilona; arrest by Thurzo; betrayal by Paul; ‘The Mirrors’

Act III Scene 2

“The Trial and the Prayer”—Under arrest; ‘Elizabeth’s Prayer’; Anna vanishes

Act III Scene 3

“Conviction (Thurzo’s Triumph)—Dismissal, reflection, curse.

Epilogue

Where are the children? Sing to me.

The last Town Meeting was held there in 1952, and the Village of Hyde Park purchased the hall from the town in 1953 for \$1. Shortly afterward, in September 1952, *Mikado* was presented; the Lamoille County Players were formed the next year. For \$1 each year, the Players use and maintain the Hyde Park Opera House, which they continue to refurbish and update.

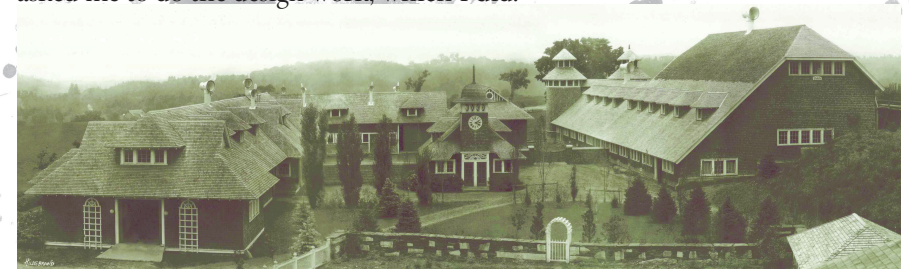


The Haybarn Theater has been a focus for the community at Goddard College since its move to the Greatwood Campus in Plainfield in 1938. The Haybarn Theater was built not long after Goddard College itself was founded as Green Mountain Central Institute in 1863. The actual haybarn dates from 1868, and was incorporated into the college’s activities after Goddard’s move, along with the Greatwood Gardens that were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted’s protégé



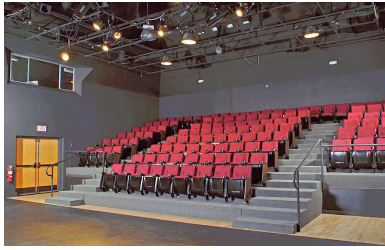
Arthur Shurcliff in the early 20th Century. Marjorie Martin Johnson Townsend recalls her father’s memories of the barn’s building, “They had a big barn-raising, and there were 60 yoke of oxen to help raise it. They would get the beams all laid out right and then hook the oxen on and everybody would yell and the oxen would move, and this would put the beams up. They would have boys ride up on the beams so as to clinch them when they got there. The boys would hammer the great big hand-hewn nails in and this would hold it until the men could finish it. Martin Johnson says, “I redesigned the truss work

here in this barn. It was being rebuilt by Harold Townsend, whose father and grandfather built the covered bridge up the road towards Marshfield. And Harold asked me to do the design work, which I did.”



The Venues

The Black Box Theater is an integral component of the Performing Arts Center at the Main Street Landing in Burlington. It is part of a low-scale, mixed-use project integrating retail, office and residential space. It also includes a train station. The development group strives to promote ecological integrity, economic security, empowerment and responsibility, and social well-being. The theater is a performance, presentation and lecture space with a state-of-the-art lighting, audio and computer system, and also is green and environmentally friendly, with no toxic materials allowed in the theater or on the grounds. The acoustics of the Black Box are clear and present enough to use without assistance, providing an intimacy to productions rarely available outside the Vermont churches that double as part-time performance spaces. Director Melinda Moulton lectures on sustainable development, and encourages cooperation between business and government to create a strong downtown and support and promote the local art and cultural fabric of Vermont.



The Hyde Park Opera House dates from 1781, when it was built to serve as the Town Hall for the Shire Town of Lamoille County. In 1910, an overheated stove began a fire that went unnoticed—until the building was consumed. That fall, the General Assembly voted \$30,000 in bonds to rebuild the county buildings in Hyde Park, and insurance companies settled the claims for nearly the total loss. On July 6, a contract was awarded to build the new Town Hall. The plans called for a 44x80-foot structure of concrete and wood with an assembly hall and other rooms for town use, including an inclined floor and gallery with seats for 450. The plans also called for stage accommodations including a drop curtain and electric lights. Also 'waiting rooms and toilets.' On March 7, 1912, the hall opened with 'Phil Ott and his Twenty-five Merry Singers, Dancers and Beauty Chorus'. Admission was 35 cents, 50 cents and 75 cents. The show was a huge success with over 500 people attending.



The Characters

Characters in the Drama

The organization of characters & their history has been altered for dramatic purposes.

Countess Erzsébet (Elizabeth) Báthory (1560-1614), cousin to King **Mátyás (Matthew)**, daughter of **György (George) VI** and **Anna Báthory**, part of the Ecsed line of the Báthory family, and mistress of Castle Cséjthe (in present-day Cachtice, Slovakia). She was reputed to have killed upwards of 600 servant girls.

Anna Darvulia, Erzsébet's mysterious lover.

Doratty (Dorothy) "Dorka" Szentes, **Ilona (Helen) Joo**, and **Katalin (Catherine) Beneczky**, Erzsébet's loyal handmaidens. They were executed after Erzsébet's first trial.

Anastasia (b. 1574), **Anna (b. 1585)** and **Katalina (b. 1594)**, Erzsébet's daughters (Anastasia was born out of wedlock), and **Paul Nádasdy (b. 1598)**, her son. Paul was killed as a young soldier, and two other children (one perhaps named Ursula) died in infancy.

Count Ferenc (Franz) Nádasdy (b. 1550), Erzsébet's husband (married 1575), who died at war in 1604, the year of Kepler's supernova.

Count György (George) Thurzó, Palatine of Hungary and rival member of the Báthory family.

Johannes Kepler, the astronomer.

Reverend Ponikenusz of the local church. The famous "Prayer of Erzsébet" was reputedly written down in Ponikenusz's memoirs.

Baroness Ilona (Helen) Harczy, a minor noblewoman who was also a singer at the church in Vienna (she has been relocated to Cséjthe for this story). Erzsébet killed Ilona, and the killing of a noblewoman gave Thurzó an opening to arrest the Countess and seize her lands and fortune.

Synopsis

THROUGHOUT THE OPERA, Countess Erzsébet Báthory finds herself on a passionate and reflective journey from youth to the end of her life, recalling events that led to her trial and imprisonment. Throughout she is singing to an offstage (or imagined) Anna Darvulia, children, servants, and others.

In the Prologue, a young Erzsébet is speaking about a peasant who was tortured and sewn into a horse's stomach by her father György as a lesson to other peasants who might steal or rebel (as they did against Vlad Dracul in the neighboring Roumania, and met a similar horrific fate). She is proud of her father's—and her family's—strength, its success in crushing rebellion, its swift action (“we are the wind”), their love for each other, their mercilessness to enemies, their negotiating skills, and the family's very symbol. Erzsébet speaks about the Báthory coat of arms, which is a serpent or dragon circled around itself and swallowing its own tail. “We are the wind,” she sings, “and the serpent.” (Ultimately the Báthory seal was simplified to a crest of three dragon's teeth.)

In Act I Scene 1, Erzsébet reveals the burdens of power to Anna. Her daughter Anastasia, born when the Countess was a young teenager, had been given up, and she still wonders about her. She thinks of her husband Ferenc Nádasdy, away at war for most of his life at arms with Count György Thurzó. She speaks of the languages she has learned to assure her ability to negotiate and stay in power over her lands. Her anger flashes over Count Thurzó, the Palatine and confidant of the King, who covets those lands.

She is also angry over the fate of the Mátyás-Templom (Matthias Cathedral), which was built by Matthias Corvinus (Mátyás Király) in Buda (the hill city overlooking Pest). Beatrice of Aragon was married to Mátyás in the cathedral. But it had been captured by the Turkish advance in 1541 (before the Countess's birth) and stripped of Christian imagery. It was not re-taken until 1686, more than seventy years after Erzsébet's death, when a statue of the Virgin Mary was found hidden in the walls.

The other side of the Countess is revealed in Act I Scene 2, where she laughs and plays with her children, reveling in horses (“day after day, the horses, horses, horses”) and recalling the births of her children. She speaks of Ferenc,

herself and everyone around her. Like an old Woody Allen movie without the humor, it is driven, almost blathering at times, with demands and high expectations of everyone. The rebato is a detail but very important, as it is in her only portrait, and drives both the visual and the first moment of crisis. The phrase is placed awkwardly on the vocal rhythm.

Erzsébet is thrilled about Kepler's arrival because she will have the opportunity to talk with someone about substantial topics ... the *Cosmographicum* especially. It is the Renaissance. And dour old Reverend Ponikenusz is going to be in the way (and Thurzó, with the reference to him reflecting the Clynes 'despair' interval—the suggestion that she would be framed and arrested). The language tumbles around. The constantly shifting accents in the English are intended to give an off-kilter feel — first-syllable-accented Hungarian, mixed-up accents in German and Slovak, the different reflexive character of each, the agglutinative Hungarian. Since English is complex natively, giving the cross-accents in threes, fours and fives changes the superior rhythm while the instrumental parts maintain the inferior one. The music asks the question: schizophrenia?

The historical Act II Scene 2 lullaby uses melodic elements from a cabaret the composer wrote in the 1980's, a smooth, major/minor-key 15/8, yet recast against an underscore of 4/4. The natural rocking rhythm of a lullaby phases in and out with the words, an unsettling character.

Agitated rhythms also drive Act III, where Erzsébet prepares for and meets Ilona Harcy. The thick harmonies and multiple stops in the strings create a moving wall of sound, devolving into percussion, parallel melody and a crushing end. The rhythms of the Prologue return to sing her out of the scene, when an unsettling simple pattern brings her to the pinnacle of her despair and self-restoration, Elizabeth's Prayer, in pure, open intervals and almost medieval melodic shape. Ultimately she is left with nothing but a skeletal modal melody that finishes with Erzsébet hanging on the innocent childhood interval of a minor third.

A hint of disintegration follows as she and the ensemble alternate words and rhythmic accents; the three descending notes turn into a motive of gratitude, sliding into the Epilogue and its simple, open, plaintive sounds.

The Music for Erzsébet

ERZSÉBET IS A TRADITIONAL OPERA in design and sound. The musical material is thematic: the opening modal *csárdás* derived from a dance composed in 1989, simple tonalities, and an ending written for cable television in 2004.

The Overture follows a conventional formula, presenting the themes that will be heard: the *csárdás*, the ‘mirror’ chords, the cimbalom arpeggios. The Prologue introduces the essential harmonies, hanging dissonances and shifting modes plus, always intruding, the sliding cry in the clarinet. The first vocal rhythms and pitches are also heard that struggle against the regularity of the accompaniment. Throughout the opera is the suggestion of its English words bucking the Hungarian first-syllable accents, particularly in the recitatives.

Manfred Clynes researched universal sonic expressions, and found seven of them common to all cultures. The descending minor second, the same one Wagner uses for ‘woe’, forms both the Thurzó motive and the darkness of the Báthory family. Combined with this is an occasional foreshadowing of Erzsébet’s hopes when strains of the 19th century Hungarian national anthem are heard inside her arias, 300 years in the future.

Three descending notes—either a whole step and a half step or two whole steps—form the most ambiguous theme. It is the glory of her dominion, it is her name, it is her family name, it is the name of her victim, it is even the description of the dead horse. With each shifted version, more threads of her life are bound together.

Also woven into the music is a sinuous moving line, sometimes chromatic in the soprano sax, sometimes in the voice, and sometimes fully diatonic, as in Elizabeth’s Prayer. It is the shimmer of blood and of light, and the shimmer of the voice. Also heard are the rising and falling triple rhythms of horses, which mutate into the three descending notes that also encompass the crucial words “sing to me.”

One of the most perplexing sections is her preparation for dinner with the astronomer Kepler, in Act II. If she was such a strong woman, what is this nervousness about dinner? Was she excited or nervous or crazy? Perhaps all, at least on the surface. Below it, she is never out of control, just pushing

away at war, and her son Paul, who will someday follow him into battle. She converses with each before bed, calls her servants—and is interrupted by Thurzó with one of his incessant pleas for money.

As Act II Scene 1 begins, Erzsébet is found preparing for a court dinner with the astronomer Johannes Kepler as well as the local Pastor Ponikenusz. It has been suggested but not verified that Kepler visited the Báthory castles as a young scientist, both because he had known and later married a Hungarian woman and because Erzsébet’s table was enthusiastically open to masters of the Renaissance. So she is anxiously looking forward to a discussion of Kepler’s book *Mysterium Cosmographicum*—and what the astronomer’s science might do for her and her people. At the same time, she is annoyed by their foreign names that do not contain the sounds of Hungarian, a harmonic language that is the sole survivor in the west of the Ugric branch of an Asian tongue.

She is being dressed by her servants, asking them to hurry with her collar (the stiff *rebato* that appears in her sole portrait) yet also to sing calming songs. In this tense atmosphere, one of the girls accidentally sticks the Countess with a dressing pin, and the distraction from her focus on the upcoming dinner—also to be attended by the irritating Ponikenusz—throws her into a rage. She strikes the servant girl. In a flash, her childhood and adulthood mix: the dead horse, the bloody wars, her legendary beauty, her family’s power and, some say, her underlying madness. She strikes the girl down. In moments she recovers her composure and orders the servants to “clean this”—as if no human being had been injured much less killed.

The dinner with Kepler and Ponikenusz has taken place in the interim as Scene 2 begins. Erzsébet is now in the bedchamber with her children, hands and face still covered in blood but with a fresh set of clothes. She muses on the dinner and then begins to sing a rocking modal lullaby, a historical song of bravery and conquest. The “lullaby history” is in fact an accurate if abbreviated summary of the Báthory lineage up to the time of Erzsébet—the original nobles, how the vast land was acquired, the taking of the name Báthory with its meaning of strength, how their grandfather had built the castles in which they lived, and how only those very Báthory castles kept

the Turks from reaching Vienna. The lullaby lapses from history into a reiteration of the family's bloody past, reflecting what she said in the Prologue. Anna slips in as the scene ends.

As Act III opens, Erzsébet is older. Much time has passed. Kepler's supernova has happened in 1604 just as Ferenc died in battle that year. Kepler himself has distanced himself from the now-notorious Báthory court, with its rumors of tortures and deaths and dismemberments. Her son Paul has fallen out of her orbit as well, although her daughters remain loyal. The whereabouts of Anastasia still troubles her.

Erzsébet is seeking solace from the pressures of court and her growing age. She was excited to hear a young singer in the local church that Sunday; she muses as she looks into her mirrors, searching for lost youth and innocence. The singer, Ilona Harczy, is a minor noblewoman with a secure place in society, yet still she fears the Countess, whose reputation for cruelty has gripped the surrounding villages. Standing before the imperious Erzsébet, she chokes in terror and cannot sing. Using the metaphor of her family's power, Erzsébet threatens Ilona. In a frantic, raging aria, the Countess commands her to sing, shouting, striking and beating her until she expires.

Just as Ilona collapses, Thurzó appears—together with Paul—to arrest Erzsébet. Her son's betrayal pierces her, but she recovers, saying, "I am the Countess Báthory. Ilona is nothing. I am all." Taken into custody, she reiterates to Thurzó what the Bathory family can do to "fools such as you" who "raise weak arms to be cut off by a blade of wind."

Thurzó, determined to end the Báthory murders and thus acquire her land, has had her tried *in absentia*. In Scene 2, Erzsébet begins to feel alone, abandoned and with her beauty and her powers leached away by betrayal—as well as by her own lifetime of cruelty. Her handmaidens were tried and executed, her children spirited away. She sings "Elizabeth's Prayer," on the words reputed to have been set down by Reverend Ponikenusz. She prays to all the religions in turn, calling especially upon the "Lord of Cats," a pagan symbol from the middle ages (also called the "Lord of Lions"). Even her beloved Anna seems to have vanished.

of Countess fans who had written via the website over the years vanished. Friends helped and the budget slowly grew.

In the midst of fundraising, though, there was *still no opera*. The score had to be set down. It was completed during the summer of 2010—composed while Dennis's studio roof was being replaced in hot and humid weather. The heat and the pounding above the composer's head drove the music forward, as he could almost imagine the relentlessness of the Countess.



The project nearly derailed again when directors were changed—twice—and venues slipped through the calendar. Finally, at long last, the production team was in place. Sites were secured, the costume was in progress, and the rehearsals about to begin.

The story of *Erzsébet*, the Blood Countess, would finally be told.

The future of the opera is still in flux. The sketches for a chamber version with multiple characters exist. The sketches for a grand opera with full orchestra and a colorful cast exist. Ties to Cachtice have not broken, and permission to mount the opera at the castle itself are approved. The European team is waiting for the go-ahead. With the Vermont performance, the foundation will finally be in place for the opera to move to the international stage.

There is also a small stage waiting. Bob Hobbs, involved with the project for nearly a decade, has been working on a virtual version based on three-dimensional images of the Cséjthe castle and the town it overlooks. Hobbs is also sketching a graphic novel based on the libretto. Music algorithms developed by Clarence Barlow will find their way into a computer version where players take on the characters.

In what form will the Blood Countess opera appear next?

massive film “Bathory,” reconsidering the entire Erzsébet story as a conspiracy against the Hungarian Countess. The vampire craze now made Báthory a hot topic, and in Montréal, a composer with not a whit of knowledge about Erzsébet was commissioned to create an opera there. It was time for Dennis to get down to work on his Countess opera.

Yet development was put off further because 2007 was the year of the composer’s *We Are All Mozart* project: 100 compositions in 52 weeks, all on commission. The intensity of the project, together with a month-long residency in Portugal and the writing of the book *Country Stores of Vermont* in the first months of 2008 pushed the opera almost entirely aside. Yes, more magazines wanted interviews and he appeared on the wildly popular



“Martina Cole’s *Ladykillers*” in the U.K., but it was not until late in the year that the opera *Erzsébet* became a renewed focus—though, with Codrescu’s departure, still lacking a librettist.

Already a published author with several books and hundreds of articles in print, Dennis decided to write the libretto himself. The challenge was getting the complex story—and especially the complex psychology—of Erzsébet Báthory onto the page in the form of a monodrama, an opera for a single character. Most of the original grand-opera plot was minimized, leaving a few key elements: her childhood and family influences, her lover Anna Darvulia, her precision and brilliance, her children, the killing of singer Ilona Harcy, and her arrest, trial and imprisonment. She was treated as a human character and not a Gothic vampire.



The libretto was complete by January. It was time to begin fundraising, first through Kickstarter, an online funding source. It failed. The thousands



Erzsébet has re-asserted mental strength as Scene 3 opens, and she sums up the events, all the while cursing Ponikenusz, whom she now believes has set up the whole show trial by arranging Ilona Harcy’s visit and Thurzó’s surprise appearance to arrest her in the act of murder. She bids her dead handmaidens adieu: “For I am the Countess Báthory—valiant and brave—who thanks you in your bloody death.” She looks around and realizes she will spend the last two years of her life in her own filthy and gruesome torture chamber, “Alone. The walls unwashed.”

The Epilogue is an unhappy mirror of the Prologue, set in a sweet major key. Ilona cannot sing to her, Erzsébet cannot sing herself, the children are long gone, her linguistic proficiency has ultimately served no purpose. Everything has been lost, and with one last cry to the Lord of Cats, she is sung silently into history.



The Story of Erzsébet Báthory

The personal scenes in this opera have been fictionalized, but all the characters were real people of Renaissance Hungary.

COUNTESS ERZSÉBET BÁTHORY (1564-1614), cousin to István Báthory, King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania, was said to have been a serial killer, indeed, the worst in history. In all, 612 women died—and in her diary, it was said, she documented their deaths. Though the diary itself has proven illusory, she nevertheless became known as “Hungary’s national monster,” and was (along with Vlad Dracul) the supposed model for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*—a claim that is itself often disputed.

Erzsébet was married to the warrior Count Ferenc Nádasdy, and she is said to have taken Anna Darvulia—a mysterious woman—as a lover during his frequent absences. The Countess had at least four children: Anna, Ursula, Katarina and Paul. In the course of her life, servants Dorattya Szentes, Ilona Joo and Katalin Beneczky reportedly became procurers of hundreds of servants girls who were tortured and died by Erzsébet’s hand. Defending her throughout was deformed servant Janos Ujvary.



The death of Viennese singer Ilona Harcy led to her downfall. For dramatic purposes, the character of Harcy has been relocated from Augustinianstraße in Vienna, where Erzsébet heard her sing and later murdered her, to Cséjthe Castle (in present-day Cachtice, Slovakia), where most of her evil work was done over her 40 adult years. Erzsébet also maintained castles in Ecsed, Sárvár, Bicse (Bytca), Kéresztur, and Leka (Lockenhaus) during the turbulent political times that pitted the Habsburgs against the Ottomans. The line from Budapest to Pozsony (also known as Bratislava or Pressburg) to near Vienna was a constantly shifting battleground for more than a century.

Countess. The crew was young and had done almost no research; they couldn’t pronounce the names, and had little idea what they were filming. It promised to be a disaster—though the trip back to Cachtice was an encouragement to revive the opera’s development. The program eventually ran as “World’s Bloodiest Dungeons” on the Travel Channel.

Uden Television—now gone—interviewed the composer in 2002, but the show was too controversial to be aired. About the same time, artist Bob Hobbs was in touch about creating a ‘virtual opera’—and Raymond McNally died. The change of millennium was an operatic nexus.



A new chapter opened as the Discovery Channel sent an Australian team to Vermont in 2004 to record interviews and an opera scene written for them. It was the first part of the opera written for voice, sung by Lisa Jablow and with a small ensemble of the composer’s musician friends. Discovery also

produced a pair of tickets to Germany, where Dennis and Stevie met them for another trek to Slovakia and Cséjthe Castle, this time in a newly vibrant Slovakia restoring itself with European Union funds. The well-briefed crew set up interviews with townspeople, and two new opera team members signed up—European producer Martin Cikánek (first met with Pavel Kraus) and marketing coordinator Vit Sirek. The Discovery production aired for the next seven years as “Deadly Women.”

With the bathory.org website buzzing, media requests continued to flood in: *Weekly World News*, the *Globe*, *Requiem*, *Bloodcult*, *Horror Punks*, SME television ... even though at this point there was actually *no opera*—just one prototype scene and one piano dance existed, along with numerous outlines. By 2006, the composer had formalized the complete project and it became his PhD dissertation. The next year Cradle of Filth were in touch about a joint project, and Czech director Juraj Jakubisko released his



Dennis was confounded in what to say, as he felt the book was dreadful. Eventually he admitted this to Codrescu; their relationship soured and Codrescu went on to other topics, though still open to writing the libretto.



The opera was abandoned until 1997, when Dennis placed his collection of opera plans, photos and music online. Soon arts administrator Lynne DeBeer introduced the composer to Czech sculptor Pavel Kraus with his own dark-side interests. Pavel developed *Sex and Death: Offerings*

to be exhibited in Burlington, Vermont; Dennis created *Detritus of Mating*, a six-channel sound installation to accompany it. The success had the pair and their families traveling to Prague in 1999 for a revised version that included a new, hour-long piece for string quartet and electronic playback called *Zonule Glaes II*, premiered at Prague's legendary Mánes Museum, newly restored after the dreary Communist years.



When he returned from Prague—now in the Czech Republic—Dennis moved the website to its own domain, bathory.org, where visits grew by the thousands. Traffic spiked when it was recommended on MSN during



women's history month. Contributions of essays and photos and even novellas arrived, and were posted on the site. Writers emailed for copies of his castle photos. Bathory.org became an information hub, and the opera idea felt alive. Pavel agreed to be the opera's visual designer. Singer Lisa Jablow, an

aficionado of new music, was interested in the Báthory story and agreed to do the lead. The composer collected books, recordings, magazine articles and papers, and read endless speculative websites.

In 2001 the Discovery Channel found bathory.org and called with an offer: they would send Dennis to Slovakia for a cable special on the Blood

Latter-day research (including that done by Juraj Jakubisko for his epic movie "Bathory") suggests that Erzsébet was framed and defamed for political and economic reasons. She was arrested by Count György Thurzó and his compatriots after she was caught in the act of dispatching a servant girl. Or so it was reported. The aging Countess—at 53, quite old for those times of ill health and early death—had become an embarrassment, particularly since she had begun to kill members of the royalty, and despite (and perhaps because of) her high placement in the Báthory family as cousin to the revered King István and holder of vast amounts of royal land and a vast personal fortune of gold and jewels.

Anna Darvulia had gone blind and died sometime earlier, probably of tuberculosis. Ferenc Nádasdy had been killed in battle several years before.

That opened the door to two trials brought by Thurzó, held in 1611, one in Hungarian and one in Latin. A later tribunal with more than 200 witnesses was convened by King Matthias II. Erzsébet and her servants were found guilty and had their punishments set by the Bicske judge. Ilona Joo and Dorattyá Szentes were tortured and burned at the stake in 1611. Janos Ujvary was beheaded. Katalin Beneczky was spared death, and her fate remains unknown.

Erzsébet herself was then walled into her torture chamber, where she died after three years of imprisonment in 1614. Around her grew the reputation—and legend—of the Tiger of Cséjthe, the Blood Countess of horrific tortures and killings. By the 19th Century, this legend expanded to include a penchant for admiring herself in the castle mirrors—and for bathing in blood. All records of Erzsébet were sealed for more than a century, and her name was forbidden to be spoken in Hungarian society.

In this monodrama, Erzsébet speaks to the characters who were real and of the intimate actions which she may—or may not—have taken.



The People of Erzsébet



Lisa Jablow holds a D.M.A. in Choral Conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with additional study in conducting and voice at the Aspen School of Music, Tanglewood Festival, Westminster Choir College, Carnegie Hall Conductors' Workshops and Conductors Retreat at Medomak under the likes of Pierre Boulez, Robert Shaw, Joseph Flummerfelt and Kenneth Kiesler. As a vocal soloist she has

appeared onstage with such organizations as New York City Opera, Opera Orchestra of New York, Milwaukee Symphony, Boise Opera and Skylight Opera. She has recently performed Carlisle Floyd's monodrama *Flower and Hawk* with WordStage Vermont, Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with the Vermont Philharmonic, and DeFalla's *El Amor Brujo* and Poulenc's *La voix humaine* with the Windham Orchestra.

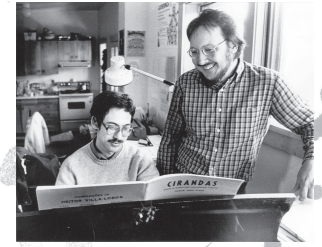
Dr. Jablow is also active as a conductor. She has been the music director of the Montpelier Chamber Orchestra and has guest-conducted numerous other groups. She has also served as Assistant Conductor for productions at Opera Illinois and the Green Mountain Opera Festival and is the former Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director of the Pioneer Valley Symphony in western Massachusetts. Her current positions include Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director of the Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director of the Vermont Symphonic Winds.



Ann Harvey is a Duxbury native whose wide-ranging career in music and theater spans classical choral singing to playing Patsy Cline in the sold-out run of *Always... Patsy Cline* at the Skinner Barn in Waitsfield. She has worked as a performer, director, producer and teacher from Michigan to New York and Vermont to Florida. Ann enjoyed a long association with Lost Nation Theater as the director of and performer in many of the Fall

Foliage Shakespeare productions. While living in New York City, Ann was

Also about the same time, Vermont pianist Michael Arnowitz was working on a recording of dance music, asking composers to write new pieces. The composition Dennis created was a csárdás, a Hungarian dance he named a wild & crazy csárdás, *Meggondolatlan Óriült Iramban Csárdás*, his broken Hungarian name for what would ultimately become the opera's overture.



The opera fell into the background for a few months until Dennis heard a commentary by poet Andrei Codrescu on National Public Radio in 1990. He was authoring a biography of Elizabeth. Dennis wrote to him; would Codrescu write the libretto? He might, but first he would finish the book.

When Dennis moved to Cologne in 1991 with his partner and future wife Stevie Balch, he started sketching an opera scenario—not much, but enough to make it, at last, a real project. He was also determined to locate Zoltán Radái in Budapest, long before the days of cell phones. Getting a call through was difficult, but he found Radái. The following spring, Zoltán, his wife Eva, Dennis, Stevie and her daughter Lila all piled into a tiny car and drove three hours on bumpy roads from Budapest to Cachtice to visit the castle that McNally had mentioned.

Just post-Communist, pre-Internet, and pre-European Union, Cachtice did not see many strangers. Zoltán spoke rudimentary Czech, and that got the five of them through lunch and to the town square where the castle was marked with a small, bent sign that led to a rutted road ending in a forest. A short walk up a hiking path brought them to the castle ruins where the Tigress of Cséjthe had once ruled. Photos were taken and the tower explored, but silence reigned. It was a powerful experience that stayed with the group as they wound their way back to Budapest.



After his return to the United States, Dennis worked on rebuilding his budget and was surprised to receive a draft copy of Codrescu's book. The biography had transmuted into a novel with time-traveling characters;

The Writing of Erzsébet

THE STORY BEGAN when Dennis was a child, listening to stories from his stepfather Zoltan Bathory. The Báthory family, Zoltan's own father Jozsef once said, had many secrets, dark ones. Occasionally, Zoltan would clip out articles that made mention of an Elizabeth Bathory, a Renaissance countess and known murderer, and mail them to Dennis. The odd clippings were read, set aside, and forgotten.



It was not until the mid-1980's that the idea of an opera was born. It began when the composer was running a small computer company. In 1982, a Vermont candidate named John McClaughry was visiting small businesses in the state. John was fascinated by Dennis's name—his adoptive father's now his own—and unbidden a year later sent a copy of a book penned by an old college buddy, Raymond McNally. The book was *Dracula Was a Woman: In Search of the Blood Countess of Transylvania*.



McNally's book was insubstantial—he had few facts to work with—but did include the first factual biography of Elizabeth Bathory (Báthory Erzsébet) and her family in English, and pages of stories about the Blood Countess myth. The dark secrets mentioned in Dennis's childhood became clear. Most important, *Dracula Was a Woman* printed a map of McNally's travels to Cachtice, a town then in Czechoslovakia nestled just below the Countess's castle.

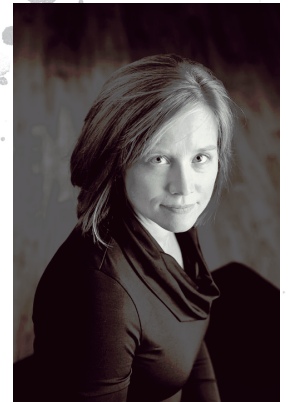


At the same time, Dennis's computer company Green Mountain Micro was mailed by a certain Zoltán Radái in Budapest, who was searching for information for his little cloth manufacturing technology company, Positron. It was the era of Ronald Reagan, whose administration had kept in place a ban on technology to Eastern Europe initiated during the Jimmy Carter years. Getting technology to the lovely gentleman in Budapest would be difficult. Dennis worked the bureaucracy, got permissions and rubber stamps, sent extra manuals and a handful of memory chips to Radái—and received in return a kilo of delicious paprika.

Executive Director of Riverside Shakespeare Company. She has performed in and produced dozens of cabaret shows and currently performs with her brother, jazz musician James Harvey. Recently she joined the Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra on this summer's Pops Concert.

Ann began her professional collaborations with Lisa Jablow at Johnson State College where she directed Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Lisa played Fabian. Ann and Lisa worked as director and music director, respectively on the JSC productions of *The Pajama Game* and *Cindy Reilly*, a musical fable based on the Cinderella story. Ann is delighted to be directing Lisa in *Erzsébet* and looks forward to being directed by her as the alto soloist in the coming Vermont Philharmonic's annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*.

Anne Decker joined the artistic staff of the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association in 1999. Ms. Decker has also conducted productions with the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, Middlebury Opera Company, Vermont Opera Theater, Amato Opera Company of New York City, and served as the Assistant Conductor of the Pioneer Valley Symphony. Ms. Decker has been active as conductor for Vermont district and regional festivals. She has memberships with the American String Teachers Association, Music Educators National Conference, and League of American Orchestras.



Ms. Decker's work has been distinguished by innovative programming and exciting direction. A new music enthusiast, she has worked with Augusta Reed Thomas and Joan Tower. In 2011, Ms. Decker premiered works by Erik Nielsen and Dennis Bathory-Kitsz. Ms. Decker holds a Bachelors in Music Education from Western Michigan University and a Masters of Music in Orchestral Conducting from Illinois State University. She has studied with Glenn Block, David Efron, Charles Peltz, and Frank Battisti. Ms. Decker directs the orchestra programs at U-32 Middle and High School in East Montpelier. She resides in Waterbury Center, Vermont, with her husband and two daughters.



Pavel Kraus is a New York City-based visual artist. He received his MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1975 and has been working as a painter and sculptor ever since. He has exhibited in Chicago, Washington DC, and New York, where his studio is located in DUMBO, Brooklyn. He has collaborated on international exhibits and projects in Prague, London, and Lisbon. Pavel's work has been reviewed several times in *Art in America* along with other international art publications. His most recent installation has been realized in southern California as part of a permanent collection, as well as two recent shows in The Proposition Gallery in New York City. He also continues to work on future large-scale public and private projects to be realized in the next three years. Information about Pavel's work can be found on his website, pavelkraus.com.



Meg Hammond designed and built the costumes for Anais Mitchell's folk opera, *Hadestown* (2006-7). She builds high fashion out of trash (bicycle tire tubes, shopping bags, flour bags, and various wholesale packaging) for her annual "Trashion Show" in Montpelier, Vermont. She is the founder of the Langdon Street Café in Montpelier.

Katy Knuth has been working with Meg Hammond at the Langdon Street Café and has been sewing for years.



Alex Vitzthum is a graphic designer, photographer, classical singer, and masseur based out of Montpelier, Vermont. He is studying voice with Rufus Müller at Bard College while pursuing graphic design and illustration on the side. Theater experience includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. This summer he performed the singing poet Grosvenor in *Patience*.

Composer's Timeline of *Erzsébet*

- 1958 Grandfather Jozsef reveals family shame Elizabeth Báthory
- 1983 Read Raymond McNally's biography, *Dracula Was a Woman*
- 1987 Decide on opera after discussion with father Zoltán
- 1988 Begin collecting books, articles, music, and films about Elizabeth
- 1989 Write first sketch, the piano dance *Csárdás*, for Michael Arnowitt
- 1990 Contact Andrei Codrescu, who is working on *The Blood Countess*
Meet with first of possible singers for a future opera
- 1991 Write scenario sketches while living in Cologne
- 1992 Visit Cséjthe Castle in Czechoslovakia with Zoltán and Eva Radái
- 1995 Codrescu publishes *The Blood Countess* as a novel, not a biography
- 1996 Collect extant materials and publish on MaltedMedia website
- 1997 Work with Pavel Kraus on *Detritus of Mating* (for *Sex and Death*)
- 1998 Set Pavel Kraus (designer) and Andrei Codrescu (interim librettist)
Articles, photographs appear in *Requiem: Archives du Vampirisme*
Set Lisa Jablow (title role of Elizabeth)
- 1999 Establish domain bathory.org, expand contents with contributions
Elizabeth photo appears on cover of novel, *Siete Lunas de Sangre*
Appear in Prague with Pavel Kraus, installation at Mánes Museum
- 2000 Website Academic Excellence award from Study Web
- 2001 Visit Cséjthe Castle in Slovakia with Travel Channel crew
Anna Ištoková, Mayor of Cachtice, hosts celebratory dinner
Travel Channel special, *World's Bloodiest Dungeons*, is aired
Interview and photos appear in magazine, *The Bloodcult*
- 2002 Uden Television comes for interview—too graphic for broadcast
Begin virtual opera discussions with Bob Hobbs and Geof Saul
Photos appear in book, *The Most Evil Men and Women in History*
Elizabeth and castle photos appear in *Weekly World News*
- 2003 Microsoft features bathory.org for International Women's Month
Elizabeth photo appears in novel, *Romantic Ghost Stories*
Erzsébet opera set as topic of PhD dissertation for Paideia
- 2004 *Erzsébet* monodrama "Blood Scene" written, rehearsed, filmed
Visit Cséjthe Castle with Discovery Channel crew
Cachtice and Castkovec approve use of Cséjthe Castle for live opera
Set Martin Cikánek (Executive Producer, Europe)
Set Vit Širek (Marketing Coordinator, Europe)
Discovery Channel special, *Deadly Women*, is aired
- 2005 Photos appear in documentary, *Anatomical Travelogue*
- 2006 PhD in Border Studies awarded for dissertation on *Erzsébet*
Photos appear in film *Screamfest*
Photos appear on National Geographic Channel
- 2007 Begin talks with Daniel Davey of "Cradle of Filth" for joint opera
- 2008 Interview recorded for British television by Free@LastTV
Interview broadcast on Radio Prague
Interview in Slovak daily, *SME*
Photos appear on HBO production, *True Blood*
Create music for DiDonna production of "Bathory" play, Orlando
- 2009 Complete and publish monodrama libretto
- 2010 Begin fundraising
Complete monodrama score
Create T-shirts and related items
Johnson State College becomes a co-sponsor
Consortium of Vermont Composers becomes a co-sponsor
- 2011 Set Ann Harvey as director, Anne Decker as conductor
Set remainder of production team
Reserve performance venues
Premiere



As part of the post-Fluxus generation of independent artists, **Dennis Báthory-Kitsz** composes and advocates for nonpop. He has created more than 1,000 works for orchestras, sound sculptures, soloists, chamber ensembles, electronics, theater, installations, dancers, interactive multimedia, and performance events. His music is performed worldwide.

For fifteen years beginning in 1995 Dennis co-hosted the award-winning “Kalvos & Damian” nonpop radio and Internet show, interviewing hundreds of composer guests worldwide. He created the *We Are All Mozart* ‘productivity’ project in 2007, composing 100 works in a single year, all on commission.

Dennis’s music uses traditional instruments and voices as well as his designs for electronic and acoustic instruments, computer software and hardware, synthesizers, e-boxes, electronic costumes, the Rhythmatron, and extended voice performances. His lifelong nonpop advocacy encompasses directing the Trans/Media Arts Cooperative, Delaware Valley Festivals of the Avant-Garde, Kaxpiksu State Arts Festival, Vermont Composers Festivals, Amsterdramm, and Ought-One Festival of NonPop. He co-founded the Vermont Composers Consortium and the NonPop International Network. He is featured in the latest issue of Chamber Music Magazine in a profile by Kyle Gann.

In addition to being the author of books and articles in technology and the arts, Dennis directs the maltedMedia production group including its publisher Westleaf Edition, is an adjunct professor of theory and composition at Johnson State College, and has written several books including *Country Stores of Vermont: A History and Guide*, published by The History Press.

Erzsébet is his second opera.

Appreciation 1982-2010

Sincere appreciation to my wife Stevie Balch, to all visitors to the website bathory.org, as well as to Vladimir Ammer, Michael Arnowitz, Adriana Assini, Clarence Barlow, Robert Blais, Carlos Carillo, Mark Carter, Charlotte, Martin Cikanek, Andrei Codrescu, Lynne DeBeer, Dead Cowboy, John DiDonna, Tammie L. Dupuis, Dani Filth, Eurydice Georgiou, David Goodman, David Gunn, Bill Hayes, Bob Hobbs, Pavel Kraus, Anna Istoková, Iza, Lisa Jablow, Jerome C. Krause, Sarah Leon, Sondra London, Lisbet Lorentsen, John McClaughry, Elizabeth Miller, William Max Miller, Lorraine Nemeč, Nikos of *Bloodcult*, Marco Oppedisano, Carlos D. Pérez, Zoltán Rádai, Margaret Radcliffe, Shyla, Léa Silhol, Vit Sirek, Chris Thorburn, Miranda Twiss, Zuzana Ulicianska, Robert Vlad Wisniewski, Sam Wouters, the staff of *Vampyres Unveiled*, the crew of the Travel and Discovery Channels, the Cachtice Museum, the Trencin Medical Center, and hundreds of others who have encouraged this project over the years.

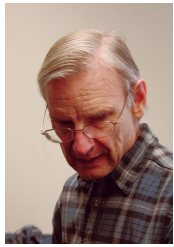
The **Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble** is the state’s long-time, permanent group of musicians dedicated to the commissioning and performance of new music. The VCME was founded in 1987 to foster the creation of new “classical” music by commissioning composers and



performing their music in addition to performing the great post-tonal masterpieces of the 20th century. The ensemble has been performing throughout Vermont and New England for the past 24 years, during which it has premiered over 90 works, more than 70 of them the ensemble’s commissions. Its concentration gives local composers and performers the first opportunity in commissions and performance. In response to the 9/11/2001 attack, the group asked ten composers to write short works with their responses. The resulting concert presented a rare musical snapshot of the spirit of that historic time. The VCME has also performed many of the post-tonal masterpieces such as Olivier Messian’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, Arnold Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* and a full production of Igor Stravinsky’s *l’Histoire du Soldat*. The VCME strives to make this new music understood by offering creative presentations, composer interviews describing the music, and a close interaction of the audience with the artists.

Steven Klimowski played for three years with the State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra and continues to concertize in a solo and chamber music capacity, premiering several works for solo clarinet. In addition to his solo career, he is a member of Raising Cane, the woodwind trio of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. He is founder and director of the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble and teaches clarinet and saxophone at the University of Vermont and St. Michael’s College. In 1987 and again in 1990 Mr. Klimowski was honored with an individual artist’s fellowship and in 2002 he was awarded a citation of merit from the Vermont Arts Council.





Thomas L. Read, composer and violinist, is Professor Emeritus at the University of Vermont. He work, almost entirely on commission, is for small ensembles, full orchestra, solo voice, chorus and musical theater. He has received Arts Council and University stipends, fellowships from the McDowell Colony, Charles Ives Institute, and Johnson Composers Conference. Recent premieres include *Third String Quartet* (2008, Kiev), and *Octet for Strings* (2009, Ann Arbor), *What Story Awaits Its End?*, *Beneficent Shadow* (2010, Burlington), *Lullaby for Guitar* (2010, Salem Mass.), *First String Quartet* (2011, Harvard). C.F.Peters, American Composers Edition, Tunbridge Music, Tuba Euphonium Press and Yelton Rhodes publish his work, with releases on Zimbel Records, VCME Records, Socialband.org, ERM Media Masterworks, Vol.2, and YouTube. A complete repertoire and recording list is at ThomasLRead.com.



Elizabeth Reid studied viola performance at the University of Western Ontario and the Glenn Gould School in Toronto. She has performed across Canada and the United States as a soloist and chamber musician, including the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, Hertz Hall in Berkeley, the Mozart Festival in Thunder Bay, and the Southern Illinois Chamber Music Society. Ms. Reid has played principal viola in the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra, Southern Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Banff Opera Orchestra, and National Orchestral Institute. She has a strong interest in contemporary music and has been involved in premieres of solo and chamber works in Canada and the United States. In Vermont, Elizabeth has played with Counterpoint, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestra, Hanover Chamber Orchestra, and Capital City Concerts. She teaches violin and viola at home in Northfield, Vermont.



Bonnie Thurber Klimowski, cellist, is a graduate of the University of Vermont and also holds a Master of Music degree in Cello Performance from Kent State University in Ohio. She performed with the Mexican State Orchestra for three years and is presently a member of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Polacca String Trio, the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble and the Klimowski Chamber Music Ensemble. Bonnie enjoys folk music and is featured on three of Jon Gailmor's albums. She also tours with the VSO string trio, "Fiddlesticks," presenting programs for children.

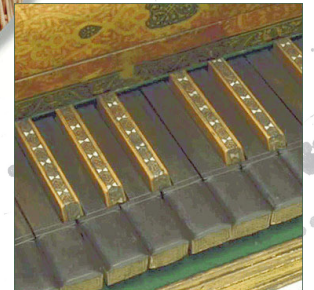
BOLDER Sounds

The Hungarian cimbalom you will hear during tonight's opera performance was sampled by Bolder Sounds of Colorado and organized for this production by the man behind Bolder Sounds, Dennis Burns.

Along with more traditional sounds such as piano and guitar, Bolder Sounds has created hard-to-obtain sample sets including the Hungarian cimbalom, hammered dulcimer, fortepiano, toy piano, handbells, virginal, buffalo drums, African marimba, thumb piano, singing bowls, harmonium, crystal glasses, Bavarian zither, Christmas bells, suspended rocks, music box, conch shells, Celtic pipes, meditation bowls, wind chimes and an array of early music instruments.



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The Stage Set



The stage design by Pavel Kraus abstracts the castle and Erzsébet's environs into simple and mysterious group of objects made from wood and beeswax and found objects such as the lens—suggesting the Renaissance that was enfolding central Europe—and the bowl of dark, bloodlike berries. Conceived and

designed in his studio in Londonderry, Vermont, the objects bear the weight of the ages. The composer's work with Pavel dates to the late 1990's, when they collaborated on projects that underscored the darker nature of life and death.



Berta Frank is a native of New York City who holds a degree from Sarah Lawrence College and an M.A. from Columbia University. Ms. Frank has been a soloist in Alice Tully and Carnegie Recital Halls. She moved to Vermont in 1992 and currently plays principal flute with the Burlington Chamber Orchestra and the Opera Company of Middlebury. She has been a member of VCME for fifteen years, a soloist with The Burlington Ensemble, and recently a member of the Heliand Consort. An active educator in Vermont, Berta is an adjunct faculty member of Johnson State College and the Director of VYOA's Vermont Youth Chamber Winds program. She lives in Jericho where she runs an active flute studio.



Daniel Gordon directs the Symphonic Band and Saxophone Ensemble at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, instructs the saxophone studio, and teaches music theory and history. He is founder and director of the Adirondack Wind Ensemble and served as the Music Director of the Adirondack Youth Orchestra. He taught saxophone at the Domaine Forget International Summer Music Festival in Québec, and was in residence at the Suomen Tyovaenmusiikkiliiitto Summer Music Festival in Finland. He has performed with the Frontier Saxophone Quartet since 2003, and has appeared at Alice Tully Hall and Bruno Walter Auditorium at New York's Lincoln Center, the American Embassy in Paris, the Circle of Fine Arts in Madrid, and in Spain, France, Finland, Canada, and the United States.



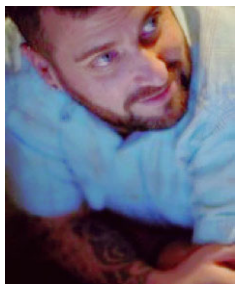
Brian Johnson has appeared as soloist and ensemble musician in major venues for new and experimental music in the United States and Europe, and has performed in New Music America Festivals and Percussive Arts Society conventions. As soloist, he has premiered works by John Cage, Alvin Lucier, Joseph Celli and Stuart Saunders Smith. As ensemble musician, he has performed with Loren Mazzacane, William Hooker, The Vernon Frazer Poetry Band, No World Improvisations, Billy & The Buttons, and the Chamber Music Plus Jazz Band. He has made voice and percussion music for dance and theater, and was the on-stage sound effects artist and percussionist with the Public Theater. Johnson is percussionist with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and has performed with the Vermont Mozart Festival, Green Mountain Opera Festival, Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, Vermont Stage Company, and others. Recording credits include the CBS, Folkways, Spectrum, Button, Woodcrest and OO Discs labels.



Alison Bruce Cerutti has performed as soloist and chamber musician throughout Vermont, and as accompanist in the U.S. and France. Solo and collaborative credits include piano recitals, orchestral appearances and chamber music concerts. A Vermont native, she studied with Sylvia Parker and earned degrees from, Oberlin Conservatory and the Hartt School. For eight years, she studied with Louis Moyse and accompanied his flute master classes in Vermont and France, and in 2009 performed with his former students at the National Flute Convention in New York. Cerutti has played with *Arioso*, *Veritas*, the *Bruce Klavier Duo*, Vermont Philharmonic, Capital City Concerts, Paine Mountain Arts, Cathedral Arts series, Norwich University's *Brunch with Bach*, and the Spencer Memorial Concert Series in Virginia. 2011 marks the beginning of her duo collaboration with violist Elizabeth Reid. She has premiered works by Vermont composers Lydia Busler-Blais, Erik Nielsen, David Gunn and Dennis Bathory-Kitsz. She maintains an active piano studio and is an adjunct professor at Norwich University. Cerutti lives in Northfield with her family.



Jim Eaton has been creating professional video since 1970, with a B.A. from the University of Vermont in Communications and an M.A. from Vermont College in Media Production Studies. He is Director of Media at Vermont College and Norwich University. His projects include Lost Nation Theater, Vermont Opera Company, Bleeker Street Opera in New York City, as well as performers Alica Bay Laurel and Bobby Gosh. Jim's clients include the Barre Granite Association, Royalton College, Vermont Law School, Cornell University, and multiple video production projects in Vermont, New York, Massachusetts and Washington, DC.



Working in installation art, lighting & scenic design, and architectural lighting, **Mark O'Maley** is the recipient of the Independence Foundation Fellowship in the Arts, and his work has been recognized with Barrymore Award nominations by the Theater Alliance of Greater Philadelphia for *Poetic Life/The Choices We Make* with Philadelphia Young Playwrights ("New Approaches to Collaboration") and for *Planetary Enzyme Blues* with New Paradise Laboratories ("Outstanding Lighting Design").

Additionally his work has been recognized as "Best Lighting Design" of the

season by Philadelphia Weekly for *Mission to Mercury* for Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Britney's Inferno* with Headlong Dance Theater, and *The Gate* with Brian Sanders' Junk was given honorable mention. The Boston Globe named his work on *Fun House Mirror* at Boston Playwrights' Theater one of the "10 Best" for the season. Most recently Mark's short dance film with Liz Staruch & Victoria Zolnoski, *The Camera Betrays You*, received four awards at the 2011 American College Dance Festival and was chosen for the Northeast Region Gala performance.



Kimberly L. Craft holds bachelor and master's degrees as well as a juris doctorate (law) degree. She also holds a *Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache* from the Goethe Institut in Munich. An attorney and legal historian, Prof. Craft has served on various faculties, including DePaul University and Florida A&M College of Law. Fascinated by the legal history of Countess Báthory's case, Prof. Craft has spent nearly a decade researching the details of her life and trial, and over a year translating the original source material into English. Prof. Craft brings a corrected history as well as new and exciting source material for the first time to an English-speaking audience.

The Costume

Created by **Meg Hammond** with assistance from



Katy Knuth, Erzsébet's costume reflects her power as well as her memories of the horse and its pivotal role in her life. Meg and Katy have made the back of her outfit into a saddle. Her tortures are implied by the hooped skirt, with its dark hoops made to resemble cage bars. The rest of the costume uses material and design that move through various eras of the past, characterizing the wide influence of the Countess into the future.

