PRESENTED BY CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC
IN ASSOCIATION WITH NEIGHBORHOOD FILM COMPANY

CHAS RADER-SHIEBER, writer and director
ALEK SHRADER, writer and director
GRANT LOEHNIG, music director
ROBERT KAHN, conductor

CAST

Tito
Vitellia
Sesto
Annio
Servilia
Publio
ETHAN BURCK
SOPHIA HUNT
ANASTASIA SIDOROVA
SARAH FLEISS
LINDSEY REYNOLDS
THOMAS PETRUSHKA

CATHERINE BLINN, wardrobe supervisor
STEVE PERRONG, technical director and editor
TIM STEVENS, production designer
BJORN AMUNDSEN, director of photography

DOROTHY SHRADER, DAVID RAYNOR,
and JONATHAN APPLEBAUM, producers

Featuring the CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

NOVEMBER 4 AND 6
PHILADELPHIA FILM CENTER
STREAMING ON-DEMAND FROM NOVEMBER 7

The Curtis Opera Theatre is generously supported by the Ernestine Bacon Cairns Trust, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation.
SYNOPSIS

*MERCY*, an opera/film based on W.A. Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*

Vitellia seeks only revenge. Tito now sits on a throne that was her destiny. She seduces Sesto into acts of betrayal and murder, to satisfy her singular desire. Meanwhile, Publio is an ineffective protector and Annio is a blind friend. Only Servilia’s honesty reaches the deepest, truest hearts. When Vitellia’s plot fails, will she choose obsession or acceptance? Will Tito choose wrath… or mercy?

DIRECTORS’ NOTE

When we embarked on this filmmaking project, we made two important decisions that were integral to the creation of the film itself. First, we wanted to create something new that would never be an apology in place of a live production. Second, we wanted to create something that was built out of an inspiration, rather than a slavish interpretation of an existing work. Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito* was that inspiration, and *MERCY* is the opera/film that is the result of the work of so many people who helped bring a new idea to life. Though nothing should or will ever replace live opera, the art form continues to adapt and expand with modern audiences.

This story of *MERCY* occurs simultaneously in two distinct but interconnected worlds. In the recording studio, the singers bring Mozart’s music to life, but are unable to connect physically with one another. Their commitment to their characters manifests itself in the images of the black and white “shadow” portion of the film, where they are able to touch, but not sing—two mirror image worlds that exist in a kind of electric tension, waiting for some moment of release.

The outcome of this experiment is a concentrated mix of sound and light and color; a fresh way of experiencing the emotional journey of these characters, untethered to the traditional methods of operatic storytelling. We are so proud of the students for embarking on this trip to new territory with us, and it is our hope that *MERCY* will engage and encourage the audience to find something new and unexpected in the familiar and infinitely interpretable music of Mozart.

—Chas Rader-Shieber and Alek Shrader
CREATIVE TEAM

CHAS RADER-SHIEBER
Writer and Director

Chas Rader-Shieber has directed over 30 productions for the Curtis Opera Theatre. His recent work outside of Philadelphia includes new productions of Rusalka and Rameau’s Platée for Des Moines Metro Opera; La finta giardiniera for Portland Opera; Artaserse for Pinchgut Opera in Sydney, Australia; and Shining Brow for Arizona Opera. His work has been seen at the opera companies of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe, Houston, Glimmerglass, St. Louis, Boston, Philadelphia, Minnesota, and Vancouver; Staatstheater Darmstadt; the New York City Opera; Washington National Opera; and the Spoleto Festival, among others.

Having made a specialty of 17th- and 18th-century operas, Mr. Rader-Shieber has directed Mozart’s Idomeneo, La clemenza di Tito, Die Zauberflöte, Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, Il re pastore, and Cosi fan tutte; Handel’s Giulio Cesare, Semele, Ariodante, Acis and Galatea, Imeneo, Alcina, Xerxes, Partenope, Rinaldo, Tolomeo, and Flavio; and works of Cavalli, Charpentier, Gluck, Monteverdi, and Purcell. In the 2021–22 season he directs a new production of Britten's A Midsummer Night’s Dream for Des Moines Metro Opera.

Mr. Rader-Shieber joined the Curtis faculty in 2009.

ALEK SHRADER
Writer and Director

American tenor Alek Shrader has appeared with many of the world’s most prestigious opera companies including those of Bordeaux, Chicago, Dallas, Lille, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Oviedo, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Saint Louis, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Seattle, Toulouse; the Metropolitan Opera; the Canadian Opera Company; the Bavarian and Hamburg state operas; and the Salzburg and Glyndebourne festivals.

As a concert singer, Mr. Shrader has appeared with the San Francisco Symphony; Los Angeles Philharmonic; Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras; National, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Cincinnati symphony orchestras; and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. His recitals have been presented by Carnegie Hall, San Francisco Performances, the Broad Stage in Santa Monica, Calif., Oberlin College, and Wigmore Hall.

Mr. Shrader was a winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was the recipient of a Sarah Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation. He is an alumnus of the San Francisco Opera’s Adler Fellowship Program and was selected as a member of the Atlanta Opera’s Company Players for the 2020–21 season.

Mr. Shrader made his directorial debut with a production of Dido and Aeneas as part of the Green-Wood Cemetery’s “Concerts in the Catacombs” series.
GRANT LOEHNIG  
Music Director

Grant Loehnig collaborates with many of today’s most renowned musical artists as a pianist, vocal coach, and administrator. He serves as head of music staff at Opera Philadelphia and Wolf Trap Opera, where he is also the music director of the Studio Artist program. He works regularly as music staff for Lyric Opera of Chicago.

In recital, Mr. Loehnig has collaborated with such artists as Morris Robinson, Albina Shagimuratova, Paul Groves, and Marcus DeLoach. Recent recordings include art songs of Karim Al-Zand and a premiere recording of songs of Carlisle Floyd with Susanne Mentzer. He has prepared the chorus and small roles for the Houston Symphony’s performances of Wozzeck, which was recorded for commercial release and awarded the 2018 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Mr. Loehnig holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., and a Master of Music degree in vocal accompanying from the Manhattan School of Music. He is a graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, Music Academy of the West, and San Francisco Opera’s Merola Program. Before joining the Curtis faculty in 2015, Mr. Loehnig served on the faculty of the opera studies program at Rice University in Houston.

ROBERT KAHN  
Conductor

Robert Kahn, from Laren, the Netherlands, entered the Curtis Institute of Music in 2019. As a conducting fellow, he works closely with Curtis mentor conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. All students at Curtis receive merit-based, full-tuition scholarships, and Mr. Kahn is the Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow.

Mr. Kahn was the assistant conductor for Don Giovanni with Juilliard Opera in 2019 and, from 2015 through 2018, was assistant conductor of Mannes Opera, where he worked on productions of Le nozze di Figaro, Così fan tutte, L’elisir d’amore, The Rake’s Progress, Vanessa, and Little Women. Mr. Kahn previously served as a cover conductor for the Fort Worth Symphony and the Buffalo Philharmonic and has conducted the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and the International Chamber Orchestra of America. He appears on the studio recording of David Hertzberg’s The Rose Elf and led a new opera by John Musto at the American Museum of Natural History in New York for On Site Opera.

Mr. Kahn holds a dual bachelor’s degree in physics and clarinet from Johns Hopkins University and the Peabody Institute, as well as a master’s degree and professional studies certificate in orchestra conducting from Mannes School of Music.
ETHAN BURCK (Tito), from Aurora, Ill., is a tenor studying in the opera program with Michael Paul, adjunct faculty, and is the Arthur Tracy Fellow. Credits include: Albert Herring (title role) and The Barber of Seville (Chorus) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; The Threepenny Opera (Macheath), Il matrimonio segreto (Paolino), The Rake's Progress (Tom Rakewell), and Glory Denied (Young Jim) for Baldwin Wallace Opera; The Tragedy of Carmen (Don José) and The Mikado (Nanki-Poo) at the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival; Gianni Schicchi (Rinuccio) for Oberlin in Italy; Le nozze di Figaro (Basilio) and Verlorene Heimat (Damien) for Cleveland Opera Theater; and Falstaff (Fenton) for the International Summer Opera Festival of Morelia. A first-prize winner of the Classical Singer Vocal Competition University Division and the Hakola Competition for Academic and Vocal Excellence, he earned a bachelor's degree from Baldwin Wallace Conservatory.

SARAH FLEISS (Annio), from North Bergen, N.J., is a mezzo-soprano studying in the voice program with Julia Faulkner, adjunct faculty, and is the David H. Springman Memorial Fellow. Credits include Albert Herring (Cis) and scenes from I Capuleti e i Montecchi (Romeo) and Così fan tutte (Dorabella) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; Le nozze di Figaro (Cherubino) for the Berlin Opera Academy; Die Zauberflöte (Pamina) at the Columbia New Opera Workshop; and leading roles in musical theatre productions of The Light in the Piazza, South Pacific, The Sound of Music, and The King and I. She was a national semi-finalist in the New York Lyric Opera Competition and has performed at Alice Tully Hall, the Apollo Theatre, the Irish Repertory Theatre, and the Nassau Coliseum.

SOPHIA HUNT (Vitellia), from Brooklyn, N.Y., is a soprano studying in the opera program with Carol Vaness, adjunct faculty, and is the Mark E. Rubenstein Annual Fellow. Credits include: Empty the House (Faith), Don Giovanni (Donna Elvira), Sweeney Todd (Company), A Quiet Place (Susie), Eugene Onegin (Larina), Impressions of Pelleas (Geneviève), La rondine (Chorus), Doctor Atomic (Pasqualita), The Rape of Lucretia (Bianca), L'Enfant et les sortilèges (Mother), Le nozze di Figaro (Marcellina), and Manon (Chorus) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; A Little Night Music (Mrs. Anderssen) and Trouble in Tahiti (Tri) for the Aspen Music Festival and School; and Madame Butterfly (Chorus) for Martina Arroyo’s Prelude to Performance. She has also performed with the New York University Chorale and the Collegiate Chorale Singers at Carnegie Hall as part of its Side by Side program.

THOMAS PETRUSHKA (Publio), from Johnstown, Ohio, is a bass studying in the opera program with Bill Schuman, adjunct faculty, and is the Hirsig Family Fellow. Credits include: Albert Herring (Superintendent Budd) and The Barber of Seville (Basilio) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; Gianni Schicchi (Simone) with Oberlin in Italy; #UncleJohn (Commendatore, Masetto) and Madame Butterfly (Lo Zio Bonzo) for Opera Columbus; I due timidi (Narrator), Tosca (Jailer), Amahl and the Night Visitors (King Balthazar), and Rigoletto (Sparafucile) with Opera Project Columbus; Le nozze di Figaro (Dr. Bartolo), Candide (Dr. Pangloss), Don Giovanni (Commendatore), Sweeney Todd (Judge Turpin), and La rondine (Rambaldo) at Ohio State University’s Lyric and Opera Theatre; La fille du régiment (Corporal) for Martina Arroyo’s Prelude to Performance; and the world premiere of Herschel Garfein's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (Player) at Seagle Music Colony. He holds bachelor’s degrees in vocal performance and business from Ohio State University.
LINDSEY REYNOLDS (Servilia), from New Orleans, is a soprano studying in the opera program with Julia Faulkner, adjunct faculty, and is the Charles and Judith Freyer Annual Fellow. Credits include: Albert Herring (Miss Wordsworth), Riders to the Sea (Cathleen), Don Giovanni (Zerlina), Sweeney Todd (Beggar Woman), Dido and Aeneas (Second Witch), The Medium (Monica), La rondine (Gabriella), L'Enfant et les sortilèges (Country Lass, Owl), and Doctor Atomic (Chorus) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; I Capuleti e I Montecchi (Giulietta), L'elisir d'amore (Adina), and Caroussel (Carrie) for the Chautauqua Institution's Voice Program; and Rinaldo (Armida), Dido and Aeneas (Second Witch), and Pauline Viardot's Cendrillon (Barigoule) for New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. She was selected as a Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2020 and 2021.

ANASTASIJA SIDOROVA (Sesto), from St. Petersburg, Russia, is a mezzo-soprano studying in the opera program with Patricia McCaffrey, adjunct faculty, and is the Curtis Institute of Music Friends Board Annual Fellow. Credits include: Albert Herring (Florence Pike), Riders to the Sea (Chorus), Sweeney Todd (Company), Trouble in Tahiti (Dinah), Dido and Aeneas (Dido), A Quiet Place (Mrs. Doc), Eugene Onegin (Olga, Filippyevna), The Rape of Lucretia (Bianca), La rondine (Chorus), L'Enfant et les sortilèges (White Cat), Doctor Atomic (Chorus), Le nozze di Figaro (Cherubino), Manon (Rosette), The Rake's Progress (Mother Goose), Ariadne auf Naxos (Dryade), La scala di seta (Lucilla), and Iolanta (Martha) for the Curtis Opera Theatre; Die Zauberflöte (Third Lady), Carmen (Mercedes), and Tancredi (Roggiero) for Opera Philadelphia; Rigoletto (Giovanna) for the Wolf Trap Studio Artist Program; The Bartered Bride (Hata) for Music Academy of the West; Elektra (Second Maid) and Eugene Onegin (Olga) for the Verbier Music Festival; Luciano Berio's Sinfonia with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra; and performances with Curtis on Tour.

**PRODUCTION TEAM**

**CATHERINE BLINN**
Wardrobe Supervisor

**STEVE PERRONG**
Technical Director and Editor

**TIM STEVENS**
Production Designer

**BJORN AMUNDESEN**
Director of Photography

**DOROTHY SHRADER**
Producer

**DAVID RAYNOR**
Producer

**JONATHAN APPLEBAUM**
Producer

**PAMELA PEITZMAN**
Hair and Make-up

**HAN LY**
Hair and Make-up

**SARA PRINCE**
Post-Production Manager
The Curtis Institute of Music educates and trains exceptionally gifted young musicians to engage a local and global community through the highest level of artistry.

For nearly a century Curtis has provided each member of its small student body with an unparalleled education alongside musical peers, distinguished by a “learn by doing” philosophy and personalized attention from a faculty that includes a high proportion of actively performing musicians. Curtis makes an investment in the artistic potential of its students, providing them with full-tuition scholarships and need-based grants for living expenses to ensure that each student can enter the profession without educational debt. In a typical year, Curtis students hone their craft through more than 200 orchestra, opera, and solo and chamber music offerings in Philadelphia and around the world.

ROBERTO DÍAZ
President and CEO
The Curtis Opera Theatre has become known for imaginative productions, bold concepts, and absorbing theatre.

Under the artistic direction of Eric Owens, promising young singers work alongside established professional directors and designers, resulting in fresh interpretations of standard repertoire and contemporary works. All of Curtis’s 20 students in vocal studies are cast regularly throughout each season, receiving a rare level of performance in fully staged productions, in recitals at Field Concert Hall, and as soloists with Curtis on Tour and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra. Curtis’s educational approach opens professional opportunities for Curtis graduates, who sing with top opera companies across the United States and Europe, including La Scala, Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, Houston Grand Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

ERIC OWENS
Artistic Director
ABOUT THE CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Acclaimed for its “otherworldly ensemble and professional level of sophistication” (New York Times), the Curtis Symphony Orchestra offers a dynamic showcase of tomorrow’s exceptional young talent. Each year the 100 extraordinary musicians of the orchestra work with internationally renowned conductors, including Osmo Vänskä, Vladimir Jurowski, Marin Alsop, Simon Rattle, Robert Spano, and Yannick Nézet Ségui, who also mentors the early-career conductors who hold Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellowships. This professional training has enabled Curtis alumni to assume prominent positions in America’s leading orchestras, as well as esteemed orchestral, opera, and chamber ensembles around the world.

ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD FILM COMPANY

Neighborhood Film Company is a film production company founded in 2011 with a mission to apprentice and employ formerly incarcerated adults. In addition to award winning commercial work for clients like Nike, Under Armour, and AT&T, their most recent feature film, Concrete Cowboy, starring Idris Elba and Caleb McLaughlin, was released on Netflix on April 2, 2021. Their short film, The Cage, garnered numerous festival awards including Grand Prize at the Heartland Film Festival, which qualified it for 2019 Oscar consideration. Neighborhood Film Company has offices in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.