



## [Meet Opera Woman](#)

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Sometimes a foolish young woman steals a puppy and has her photo in the newspaper too many times. Sometimes a young man looking for some alone time with a Michelob finds himself sharing a rump roast with a cowboy at Outback Steakhouse. Sometimes an old man full of beer shoots his friend in the face and feels bad about it. And sometimes a middle-aged woman with a Yale Ph.D. in Italian sings Why don't we get drunk and screw in an operatic voice at a Press Room Hoot Night, clearing the room.

Darby Tench, local Soprano for All Seasons and instructor at the University of New Hampshire, Italian scholar and vigilante provocateur, hopes to convince the Dick in each of us that her Comedopery (a mix of comedy and opera that she'll perform with Diane Jachlin on April 1 at the West End Theatre in Portsmouth) is the healthier way to access one's inner human being.

**You once sang an Operap (operatic rap) Ridi Pagliaccio, So you think you're so macho... at a comedy night organized by Chris Elliot, introducing a somber moment into the evening. Why proselytize opera?**

That's my husband John's ditty. What I rapped was (Bellini's) Norma was a priestess of the Druids, but her boyfriend mustabeen a-drinkin flu-ids (to have left her). I ask not only what can I do for opera, but what can opera do for me.

**Since Single on the Seacoast broke up with itself, should women see Don Giovanni before reading the Portsmouth magazine article on bachelors?**

Yes, then read it with sunglasses and through binoculars, just to be safe.

**If you were to write Opera for Dummies, what would you promote?**

Tosca is a great little redneck opera it's all rapes and murders, rapes and murders, like Channel 7. La Traviata and La Bohemia have been known to bring physics professors and football players alike to tears.

**Why hasn't anyone written an opera about a yoga class?**

Yet would be the operative word.

**Would Desperate Housewives make good opera?**

I've never seen it but it sounds ridiculous enough. I used to think opera was ridiculous; now I think life is more ridiculous.

**Why did Ingmar Bergman make a film about The Magic Flute?**

Maybe Bergman wasn't paying child support the Queen of the Night is like a pissed-off single mom. But Masonic allegory is boring.

**Was rock-opera Tommy an allegory of the life of Helen Keller?**

Verdi's Don Carlos is about Helen Keller.

**What do you think of the ultimate Asian-bride fantasy, Madame Butterfly?**

If you mean do I think a 6-foot-tall, 50-year-old white woman can play a 15-year-old Japanese girl, I say absolutely yes.

**Your folk song Tim the Sailor feminism's response to Brandy shows what you've learned from your travails in the demi-monde. Has the sophisticated yet deliciously unsavory underworld of jazz led the way?**

At the Larry Garland Conservatory I learned how not to get my eyes poked out by pool cues while singing at Dover's Sweetlands. Jazz is focused but flexible, so you can wander along byways. Opera is like NASCAR; the course is fixed so you crash and burn if you're even a little off.

**Jay Smith had a beautiful voice. What operatic role would you have cast him in?**

A sweet and earnest tenor maybe Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni.

**Which character does Emilio remind you of?**

Pagliaccio. His wife is lovely, and it's a tragedy his store is closing. His sign Sorry, We're Open encapsulates with succinct longevity the very paradigm of opera.

**Bill Clinton?**

He'd be Rodolfo to my Mimi, Tristan to my Isolde, Alfredo to my Violetta, Romeo to my Juliette but John the Baptist to my Salome.

**Senator Fulbright's book The Arrogance of Power critiqued the Vietnam War. During your Fulbright grant to Sicily, what effect did your presence have on the Mafia?**

There's always been a bad tree blight when I'm there. I don't know if there's a connection.

**Did Roy Orbison, rockabilly's only operatic tenor, inspire your asking big brother Benmont to let you sing backup to the Heartbreakers' Don't Have to Live Like a Refugee?**

The audition went very well. Tom Petty is insanely jealous of my sturdy coloratura.

**Is it true Chinese opera can cure deafness?**

What?

**Have you heard Russell Crowe's music sounds better underwater?**

Does he need back-up singers?

**We'll probably never know why Johnny Depp blew his job interview at Breaking New Grounds. Are you the Siren of the Seacoast who lured him here?**

He probably read my book, *Fictive Mediation and Mediated Fiction in the Novels of Giovanni Verga*. Seriously, you'd have to pay for that answer.

**What do you make of the BBC's operatic version of American Idol on PBS?**

If a certain 12-year-old girl had had access to opera with subtitles on TV, you might be interviewing La Diva Darbina Buonanotte.

**Have you ever heard your voice recorded?**

Yes, and it shattered a crystal sculpture of Ella Fitzgerald, if I rememorex correctly.

**Have you ever been shot by Dick Cheney?**

Not in the face.