

Emily Gillespie is a young soprano from eastern Connecticut with a love for voice that dates as far back as she can remember. She started her journey as a musician early, singing through her first full sentence and shocking everyone at her second birthday party with her ability to not only speak a sentence, but also hold a tune. Her love for the voice never dwindled, and she continued to sing her way into high school school choruses and talent shows. Throughout her teenage years, she experimented with contemporary guitar and piano, and began writing original songs. She filled her schedule with as many music courses as she could manage and even joined a folk band in 2016 named *Poor Man's Pepper*, in which she would meet her future husband. Together, Emily and her husband James still perform their music locally, performing at venues and festivals in Connecticut like Make Music Hartford, The Harvest Moon Festival (Hebron), The Willimantic CO-OP fair, The Lebanon Farmers Market, Arrowhead Acres Vineyard (Franklin), Victoria Station Cafe (Putnam), Silk City Coffee (Manchester), and more. Her love for writing and performing folk music only grew, but it wasn't until her junior year of high school that she decided to pursue a career in music. Surprisingly, it was not her experience as a performer but rather, teaching, that spurred this decision. She gained her first student in 2015 simply because her neighbor's son asked for piano lessons. She enthusiastically accepted the offer, and quickly fell in love with her role as a music teacher. Over the next few years, she would grow her studio from one student to eight on word of mouth alone, teaching piano, contemporary guitar, and voice to young students ages four to fourteen. Emily realized that she had a love for both performance and teaching, and knew then that a career in music held nothing but promise.

As she studied classical voice in college, she discovered a new love for classical technique and opera performance. Emily graduated Eastern Connecticut State University with a Major in Music and concentration in Voice Performance. Throughout her time in undergrad, she sang with Eastern Concert Chorale, Chamber Singers, and Opera Workshop. As a member of Eastern Opera Workshop, she has performed the roles of Susanna and Cherubino in scenes from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and most notably Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. *Hansel and Gretel* was Eastern's first highly successful opera, with a full budget and the highest attendance to date. Emily was also the recipient of numerous musical and academic honors, including the Music Program's Freshman Merit Award, the *Dr. David and Martha Yutzev Scholarship* in music and academic excellence, and represented the voice area at the Music Program's Honors Recital in Fall 2021 as well as Spring 2022. Aside from her opera roles, Emily performed as a soloist in Eastern Concert Chorale's performance of both Handel's *Messiah* (2021) and Vivaldi's *Gloria* (2020). She also appeared as a soloist in the Second Sunday Concert Series for the First Congregational Church of Glastonbury, CT. Emily's drive as a musician and teacher is undeniable. As her vocal instructor, Dr. Emily Riggs, said, "you could not have physically accomplished more during your time at Eastern."