

Mark Billy is a young Verdi baritone of Native (**Choctaw**) ancestry from Oklahoma. His voice captivates and hearkens to the golden age of bel canto singing. Mark has a multi-faceted career in opera, recital, and concert work. This fall, Mark will make his **Madison Opera** debut singing the role of the Sacristan in Puccini's *Tosca* and covering the role of Baron Scarpia. Next season Mark will make several world premiers of recital works and song literature in Seattle and New York city. This summer Mark will make his **Minnesota Orchestra** debut. In July Mark joins **Mixed Precipitation** for their Pick-up truck opera production of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, directed by Tara Moses- fellow Oklahoman and member of the Seminole Nation.

In May of this year the baritone made his mainstage debut at **Intermountain Opera Bozeman** singing Marullo in *Rigoletto* as well as covering the title role. Mark recently made a surprise Madison, Wisconsin debut in the role of Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata* by Verdi at the **University of Wisconsin**, Madison. He stepped in at the last minute to much success. Mark was a member of the touring company of **Lyric Opera of the North** in their production of the *Pirates of Penzance* as the Pirate King and the Major General.

Passionate about the furthering of music education and that of Indigenous culture, Mr. Billy has performed in five different educational tours including the Wheels of Harmony tour sponsored by **Intermountain Opera Bozeman**. The Wheels of Harmony tour was the first of its kind- a tour specifically designed to expose as many students as possible to Indigenous music and culture (including opera), to engage students in meaningful discussions about United States' Tribal Nations and to encourage students to consider music performance as an option in their life. In April IOB engaged two Indigenous singers (fellow Shell Shaker opera star **Kate Raquel Morton**, Cherokee Mezzo-Soprano) and one Indigenous pianist to present vocal works composed by Indigenous composers and a sampling of standard operatic repertoire to rural and Tribal schools across Montana. The Wheels of Harmony Tour gave the baritone the opportunity to sing in his Native language- Choctaw as well as to perform music on the Native flute. Recently Mark was engaged to join the **Oklahoma City Philharmonic** for a second performance at the **First American's Museum** in Oklahoma- singing in Choctaw and playing the native flute.

Next season Mark travels to Boston to create the lead baritone roles of Inki and Okhina in the first ever opera written in a Native language: *Shell Shaker* written by fellow Oklahoman and Chickasaw composer **Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate**. In October of 2024 Mark will join the **Oklahoma City Philharmonic** and the **Canterbury Choral Society** to sing the roles he created in *Shell Shaker*. Mark was a 2022 finalist in the **Sullivan Foundation Awards Competition**. Last October Mark joined the **Mesabi Symphony Orchestra** and **Lyric Opera of the North** performing arias and ensembles from Verdi's *Rigoletto* (title role) and *La Bohème* (Marcello).

As the 2022-2023 **Opera Reading Project IDEA Fellowship** recipient, Mark will sing Ford in *Falstaff* this season. In October Mark sang the role of King's Man and Drifter in **Minnesota Opera's** world premiere production of *Edward Tulane*, by Paola Prestini. In demand as a recitalist, this season Mark presented **solo recitals** at **Minnesota Opera's** Luminary Art Center (inaugural), University of Wisconsin-River Falls in their Coffee Concert Series, Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, University Lutheran Church of Hope, and St. Albert the Great Church.

In the 2021-22 season, the baritone stepped in to sing Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate's work *Standing Bear* at the 2022 **Moab Music Festival** in Utah. As the first place winner of the 2018 **Schubert Club Competition**, the Schubert Club engaged Mark to sing and play clarinet a recital in April 2022 as part of their **Courtroom Concert Series**. In the summer of 2022 Mr. Billy won first place in the **St. Croix Valley Opera Competition** and sang with orchestra in the Opera On The River Concert conducted by Joseph Li. The **Minnesota Opera** engaged Mark to sing a solo recital program to celebrate the opening of MNOP's new venue - **The Luminary Arts Center**. In 2021 Mark was engaged to join his hometown orchestra the **Oklahoma City Philharmonic** to celebrate the opening of the **First American's Museum** in Oklahoma City. He sang in Choctaw and played native flute with the orchestra.

In 2020 Mark was awarded the prestigious Music in Action Grant from the **Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest**. The grant allowed the baritone along with soprano Alexandra Razskazoff to curate a virtual recital that featured works by Verdi and Verismo composers juxtaposed with narratives of violence against Native Women to bring these largely untold stories to light. In the summer of 2020 Mark sang the role of Angelotti in Chia Patino's production of *Tosca* at the **Northern Lights Music Festival** in the Iron Range of Minnesota (the only opera performing live in the United States). That same year Mr. Billy was to make his role and house debut at **Mill City Summer Opera**, singing Marullo in Katherine Carter's production of *Rigoletto* as well as to cover the title role. This was cancelled due to Covid.

In 2019 Mr. Billy was a Young Artist with **Hawaii Opera Theatre** where he sang the role of Figaro in their touring production of *The Barber of Seville* on Oahu, the Big Island, and Kauai. Following the tour, the baritone made his debut in the role of Marchese in *La Traviata* on HOT's main stage, where he also covered Quinn Kelsey in the role of Germont. Upon returning to the mainland the baritone made his role debut as Der Vater in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* led by AVA vocal coach Luke Housner. That summer he was featured as Marchese in *La Traviata* on the mainstage at the **Northern Lights Music Festival**.

In 2018 Mark was a Young Artist with **Fargo Moorhead Opera** singing Melisso in Handel's *Alcina*, and appeared as a featured soloist with Minnesota Chorale (*Messiah*), East Metro Symphony (Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*), and Hennepin Avenue Methodist

Church (Durufle's *Requiem*). In the fall of 2019 Mark joined the **St. John's Boys Choir** to sing the role of Mega the Baker in Stephen Paulus' opera *The Star Gatherer*. Mr. Billy was also the featured soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with the St. Catherine Choral Society and in Gerald Finzi's *In Terra Pax* at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church.

Currently Mark serves as Cantor at St. Albert the Great Church, St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church and is a Cantor for the Masses sung in Spanish at Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Paul. Mark is formerly the bass/baritone of the Bethel Quartet in Hudson, WI under the direction of Skip James. Mark is a soloist/chorister at Minnesota Chorale, and is a member of Minnesota Opera Chorus as well as singing comprimario roles. Additionally Mr. Billy is a voice instructor at North St. Paul High School and the St. Paul Conservatory of Music.

Hailing from Finley, Oklahoma, Mark's undergraduate studies in voice at the **University of Oklahoma** were under the mentorship of baritone Richard Anderson. At OU the baritone also studied with the legendary mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne. Mark's graduate studies at **Indiana University's Jacob School of Music** and were with soprano Carol Vaness. Mark is also an accomplished clarinetist, having studied with David Etheridge at the University of Oklahoma.