



PHOTO: JEFF HAYNES

# Stage Struck

# Eve Summer '07

By TROY WATKINS

**E**ve Summer '07 came to Assumption as a professionally trained ballerina and graduated with a broader perspective of her role in theatre.

"I was given the opportunity to create my own productions at Assumption, to act and direct, to choreograph, to produce, and to take big risks and trust my instincts," Summer explains. "I gained confidence in my abilities, and I learned about real leadership through the theatre department, which prepared me to make big leaps in my career at a young age.

At Assumption, Summer became a fixture of the College's theatre performances, rediscovering a childhood love of acting. She was Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and choreographed the production as well. She directed *Extremities*; acted in and directed *The Woolgatherer*; and wrote a play based on Thomas Berger's novel, *Neighbors*, which she produced and directed.

She also branched out academically, majoring in French and German and minoring in Italian Studies, skills that would serve her well. "In my three years on campus I immersed myself in the study of languages and theater, and left college with a powerful set of tools that I use every day in my career as an opera director," says Summer. "One of the most valuable assets in my profession is knowledge of languages. The international community of opera will require me to work with singers and in companies from all over the world.

"I work in French, German, and Italian – the languages I studied at Assumption – every day of my life. Whether it's writing translations, communicating in a common language with colleagues, or studying, understanding and directing the operas, I feel comfortable."

Summer is quick to credit the positive influence of several professors as one of the factors in her success. "Four professors had an enormous impact on me and my college experience and helped to make my career possible – Brian Tivnan, Elisabeth Howe, Richard Bonanno, and Elisabeth Solbakken, respectively my theater, French, Italian and German mentors," she says. "They each helped me thrive by working with me over the course of my college career to create an experience that suited my unique needs."

She owes much to each of them, especially Professor Tivnan. "He showed me what I had the potential to become," she says. "After retiring from my first career as a ballet dancer, I came to college a little lost and quite heartbroken, but Professor Tivnan gave me a new dream," she said. "He encouraged me to try directing, and when I realized this was what I was born to do, he created opportunities for me to work outside the parameters of the existing theatre program.

"He introduced me to local theatre professionals, and encouraged me to write a play and produce and direct it myself. Professor Tivnan gave me a second chance at the kind of life I have always wanted, one that is rich with art that fulfills me more and more each day."

After graduating, Summer found work choreographing, stage managing, and writing supertitle translations for Boston-area companies. She then served as assistant director at larger companies and directed small theater and opera productions. When the opportunity

arose, Summer leapt at the chance to become artistic director at a small opera company, and to produce and direct her own mid-size professional productions.

"Last year was an extraordinary season for me," Summer explains. "I was responsible for casting singers, hiring designers and staff, writing and programming translations, fundraising, marketing, and managing and maintaining the budgets. It's an incredible amount of work, but the product is that much more rewarding when I realize my vision for the



Eve directs a rehearsal of *Così fan tutte* at Connecticut Lyric Opera.

opera. I want to produce more, bigger, grander operas each year."

Summer is making a name throughout New England. Among the many operas and plays she has directed, she spent a season with Commonwealth Opera and produced and directed a modern production of Handel's *Xerxes* with Arcadia Players Period Instrument Orchestra for Connecticut Early Music Festival. She directed the world premiere of the opera, *Holy Ghosts*, at The Berklee Performance Center, and choreographed the world premiere of a ballet, *Jeanne's Fantasy*. Summer also worked a season with Opera Boston, directing their outreach and education opera and assistant stage directing a main stage season at the Cutler Majestic Theatre.

Summer will serve as assistant stage director of a Boston Lyric Opera production next winter and hopes to produce more of her own productions in the near future, and freelance stage direct and choreograph. A Cambridge-area resident, Summer also has another important production in the works: an August wedding to fiancé Andrew Keefe.

"Ultimately, I want to run my own opera company where I can program the repertoire I love, hire artists I want to work with, and direct operas from the traditional repertoire and new works that move me." She's well on her way to making it a reality. ❖