

Brenton Ryan

Today Brenton Ryan's voice fills the most storied venues around the world, but he recalls his connection with music and theatre beginning by sitting at a piano with his grandmother, Ginger Swearingen, on Christmas Eve in 1995 as she played Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata."

Ryan, a 2005 graduate of Smith-Cotton High School, has performed with the largest opera houses in the United

States, including the Metropolitan Opera of New York City, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Opera Philadelphia, the Dallas Opera and many more, including Opera Theatre of St. Louis. In March 2019, he made his debut at Opera de Monte-Carlo in Monaco.

During his S-C career, Ryan carried a 4.2 GPA while being involved with show choir, vocal music, National Honor Society and the Tigers boys golf team; he also excelled in German language studies. He consistently received "1" ratings at district and state vocal music contests, and as a sophomore was selected for the National American Choral Directors Association's Men and Boys Choir. His junior year he was selected for the All-District and All-State Choirs, feats he repeated his senior year. He was nominated for the Missouri Fine Arts Academy in 2004 and was nominated for the Danforth Scholarship at Washington University in 2005.

He earned a bachelor of arts degree in Music, Voice Performance in 2009 from DePaul University in Chicago, graduating Summa Cum Laude. Next came a master's degree in Music, Voice Performance in 2011 from Rice University in Houston, again graduating Summa Cum Laude. He was a member of the Los Angeles Opera Young Artist Program from 2014-16. Also in 2016, he won the Operalia Birgit Nilsson Award at Placido Domingo's International Opera Competition in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Ryan is a two-time Grammy Award winner, for Best Opera Recording in 2016 and 2017. He also was the soloist in the 2012 film "In Our Nature."

A piece on Ryan in Bravo Magazine references his start in musical theater in 1996 in "Oliver!" at Sedalia's own Liberty Center for the Performing Arts when he was just 9 years old. Ryan would grace the Liberty Center stage six more times, his last being in "Godspell" in 2002 under the direction of the late Thom Fuller.

Ryan now lives in New York City with his wife, Naomi Louisa O'Connell, and says he "will forever be indebted to my parents, Gena and Stafford Swearingen, for their unwavering love and support."

Inducted in Smith-Cotton Activities Hall of Fame, 2019

