

Composer's Timeline of Erzsébet

- 1958 Grandfather Jozsef reveals family shame Elizabeth Báthory
- 1983 Read Raymond McNally's biography, *Dracula Was a Woman*
- 1987 Decide on opera after discussion with father Zoltán
- 1988 Begin collecting books, articles, music, and films about Elizabeth
- 1989 Write first sketch, the piano dance *Csárdás*, for Michael Arnowitt
- 1990 Contact Andrei Codrescu, who is working on *The Blood Countess*  
Meet with first of possible singers for a future opera  
Write scenario sketches while living in Cologne
- 1991 Visit Cséjthe Castle in Czechoslovakia with Zoltán Radái
- 1992 Codrescu publishes *The Blood Countess* as a novel, not a biography
- 1995 Collect extant materials and publish on MaltedMedia website
- 1996 Work with Pavel Kraus on *Detritus of Mating* (for *Sex and Death*)
- 1997 Set Pavel Kraus (designer) and Andrei Codrescu (interim librettist)  
Articles, photographs appear in *Requiem: Archives du Vampirisme*  
Set Lisa Jablow (title role of Elizabeth)
- 1999 Establish domain bathory.org, expand contents with contributions  
Elizabeth photo appears on cover of novel, *Siete Lunas de Sangre*  
Appear in Prague with Pavel Kraus, installation at Mánes Museum  
Website Academic Excellence award from Study Web
- 2000 Visit Cséjthe Castle in Slovakia with Travel Channel crew  
Anna Istoková, Mayor of Cachtice, hosts celebratory dinner  
Travel Channel special, *World's Bloodiest Dungeons*, is aired  
Interview and photos appear in magazine, *The Bloodcult*
- 2002 Uden Television comes for interview—too graphic for broadcast  
Begin virtual opera discussions with Bob Hobbs and Geof Saul  
Photos appear in book, *The Most Evil Men and Women in History*  
Elizabeth and castle photos appear in *Weekly World News*
- 2003 Microsoft features bathory.org for International Women's Month  
Elizabeth photo appears in novel, *Romantic Ghost Stories*  
*Erzsébet* opera set as topic of PhD dissertation for Paideia
- 2004 *Erzsébet* monodrama "Blood Scene" written, rehearsed, filmed  
Visit Cséjthe Castle with Discovery Channel crew  
Cachtice and Castkovec approve use of Cséjthe Castle for live opera  
Set Martin Cikánek (Executive Producer, Europe)  
Set Vit Šírek (Marketing Coordinator, Europe)  
Discovery Channel special, *Deadly Women*, is aired
- 2005 Photos appear in documentary, *Anatomical Travelogue*
- 2006 PhD in Border Studies awarded for dissertation on *Erzsébet*  
Photos appear in film *Screamfest*  
Photos appear on National Geographic Channel
- 2007 Begin talks with Daniel Davey of "Cradle of Filth" for joint opera
- 2008 Interview recorded for British television by Free@LastTV  
Interview broadcast on Radio Prague  
Interview in Slovak daily, *SME*  
Photos appear on HBO production, *True Blood*  
Create music for DiDonna production of "Bathory" play, Orlando
- 2009 Complete and publish monodrama libretto
- 2010 Begin fundraising  
Complete monodrama score  
Create T-shirts and related items  
Johnson State College becomes a co-sponsor  
Consortium of Vermont Composers becomes a co-sponsor  
Set Jan Herder (stage director) and Anne Decker (conductor)  
Set Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble (performers)  
Interview appears in magazine, *Rue Morgue*  
Set U.S. production date of October 2011  
Begin planning for illustrated novel by Bob Hobbs based on opera
- 2011 Set Naomi Flanders (director) and three premiere locations

Complete budget information on the fundraising and production of the opera is available. The full score for singer and eight instrumentalists is also available for perusal. Contact bathory@bathory.org to obtain a link to the score download and budget information.

Supporters & Fans of the Opera

For years, fans of the Báthory opera have supported the project. Far from a band of dissolute vampire followers, they are artists and musicians. Here are some of them...



Rewards for Your Support

Available from maltedMedia productions and The Westleaf Edition: The libretto (\$25) and the t-shirt (\$35)! PayPal to bathory@maltedmedia.com or check to Dennis Báthory-Kitsz, 176 Cox Brook, Northfield VT 05663



Premiere productions in Vermont in 2011: Friday, October 28 / 8pm, Hyde Park Opera House, Hyde Park — Saturday, October 29 / 8pm, Haybarn Theatre at Goddard College, Plainfield — Sunday, October 30 / 3pm, Main Street Landing Black Box Theatre, Burlington

Erzsébet: The Opera

The Story of Elizabeth Báthory, the "Blood Countess"

In late 16th century Hungary, there emerged a noblewoman so powerful, so wealthy, so intelligent and so beautiful that she was envied by the known world. Scientists and politicians came to her table.

She negotiated treaties between the Eastern attackers from the Ottoman Empire and the Western cities of the Habsburgs. She spoke to everyone in their own languages. She had four children, yet carried her own name after her marriage. She was unique.

She was Countess Elizabeth (Erzsébet) Báthory, beloved cousin of the king of Central Europe itself. And she held a reign of terror so intense that she became known as The Blood Countess, the Tiger of Cséjthe, and ultimately Hungary's National Monster—with a family crest of three dragon teeth.

*Erzsébet: The Opera* tells her story from her own viewpoint—a gripping monodrama that weaves the audience into her living web, from childhood to maturity to old age and death in her tower prison.

In October 2011, her story comes to the opera stage for the first time, with musicians and designers supported by dozens of individuals and organizations across the world who have waited for years to witness this production at long last. Thousands of fans have deluged the bathory.org website, and documentaries have covered the project on television in North America and Europe.

Written by composer Dennis Báthory-Kitsz, *Erzsébet: The Opera* is the result of 24 years of research into the personality and actions of the Countess.

To this day, her behavior is in dispute. Was she innocent of the awful crimes attributed to her, framed by envious nobles and relatives and warlords? Or was she the most horrific serial killer in history?

You are invited to become a participant in this historic event by supporting the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble's premiere production of *Erzsébet: The Opera*. Contributions may be made to the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, P.O. Box 67, Fairfax VT 05454. *The VCME is a 501(c)3 corporation.*

Lisa Jablow as Countess Erzsébet Báthory





# The Story of Erzsébet Báthory

*The personal scenes in this opera have been fictionalized, but all the characters were real people of Renaissance Hungary.*

Countess Erzsébet Báthory (1564-1614), cousin to István Báthory, King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania, was said to have been a serial killer, indeed, the worst in history. In all, 612 women died—and in her diary, it was said, she documented their deaths. Though the diary itself has proven illusory, she nevertheless became known as “Hungary’s national monster,” and was (along with Vlad Dracul) the supposed model for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*—a claim that is itself often disputed.

Erzsébet was married to the warrior Count Ferenc Nadasdy, and she is said to have taken Anna Darvulia—a mysterious woman—as a lover during his frequent absences. The Countess had at least four children: Anna, Ursula, Katarina and Paul. In the course of her life, servants Dorattya Szentes, Ilona Joo and Katalin Beneczky reportedly became procurers of hundreds of servants girls who were tortured and died by Erzsébet’s hand. Defending her throughout was deformed servant Janos Ujvary.

The death of Viennese singer Ilona Harczy led to her downfall. For dramatic purposes, the character of Harczy has been relocated from Augustinianstraße in Vienna, where Erzsébet heard her sing and later murdered her, to Cséjthe Castle (in present-day Cachtice, Slovakia), where most of her evil work was done over her 40 adult years. Erzsébet also maintained castles in Ecsed, Sárovar, Bicse (Bytca), Kéresztur, and Leka (Lockenhaus) during the turbulent political times that pitted the Habsburgs against the Ottomans. The line from Budapest to Pozsony (also known as Bratislava or Pressburg) to near Vienna was a constantly shifting battleground for more than a century.

Latter-day research suggests that Erzsébet was framed and defamed for political and economic reasons. She was arrested by Count György Thurzo and his compatriots after she was caught in the act of dispatching a servant girl. Or so it was reported. The aging Countess—quite old for those times of ill health and early death—had become an embarrassment, particularly since she had begun to kill members of the royalty, and despite (and perhaps because of) her high placement in the Báthory family as cousin to the revered King István and holder of vast amounts of royal land and a vast personal fortune of gold and jewels.

Anna Darvulia had gone blind and died sometime earlier, probably of tuberculosis. Ferenc Nadasdy had been killed in battle several years before.

That opened the door to two trials brought by Thurzo, held in 1611, one in Hungarian and one in Latin. A later tribunal with more than 200 witnesses was convened by King Matthias II. Erzsébet and her servants were found guilty and had their punishments set by the Bicse judge. Ilona Joo and Dorattya Szentes were tortured and burned at the stake in 1611. Janos Ujvary was beheaded. Katalin Beneczky was spared death, and her fate remains unknown.

Erzsébet herself was then walled into her torture chamber, where she died after three years of imprisonment in 1614. Around her grew the reputation—and legend—of the Tiger of Cséjthe, the Blood Countess of horrific tortures and killings. By the 19th Century, this legend expanded to include a penchant for admiring herself in the castle mirrors—and for bathing in blood. All records of Erzsébet were sealed for more than a century, and her name was forbidden to be spoken in Hungarian society.

In this monodrama, Erzsébet speaks to the characters who were real and of the intimate actions which she may—or may not—have taken.

# The People of Erzsébet: The Opera



Lisa Jablow holds a D.M.A. in Choral Conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with additional study in conducting and voice at the Aspen School of Music, Tanglewood Festival, Westminster Choir College, Carnegie Hall Conductors’ Workshops and Conductors Retreat at Medomak under the likes of Pierre Boulez, Robert Shaw, Joseph Flummerfelt and Kenneth Kiesler. As a vocal soloist she has appeared

onstage with such organizations as New York City Opera, Opera Orchestra of New York, Milwaukee Symphony, Boise Opera and Skylight Opera. She has recently performed Carlisle Floyd’s monodrama *Flower and Hawk* with WordStage Vermont, Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs* with the Vermont Philharmonic, and DeFalla’s *El Amor Brujo* and Poulenc’s *La voix humaine* with the Windham Orchestra.

Dr. Jablow is also active as a conductor. She has been the music director of the Montpelier Chamber Orchestra and has guest-conducted numerous other groups. She has also served as Assistant Conductor for productions at Opera Illinois and the Green Mountain Opera Festival and is the former Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director of the Pioneer Valley Symphony in western Massachusetts. Her current positions include Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director of the Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director of the Vermont Symphonic Winds.



As part of the post-Fluxus generation of independent artists, Dennis Báthory-Kitsz composes and advocates for the presentation of nonpop. He has created more than 1,000 works for orchestras, sound sculpture, soloists, chamber ensembles, electronics, theater, installations, dancers, interactive multimedia, and performance events. His music is performed worldwide.

Since 1995 Dennis has co-hosted the award-winning “Kalvos & Damian” nonpop radio and Internet show, interviewing hundreds of composer guests worldwide. He created the *We Are All Mozart* ‘productivity’ project in 2007, composing 100 works in a single year, all on commission.

Dennis’s music uses his designs for electronic and acoustic instruments, computer software and hardware, synthesizers, e-boxes, electronic costumes, the Rhythmtron, and extended voice performances. His lifelong nonpop advocacy encompasses directing the Trans/Media Arts Cooperative, Delaware Valley Festivals of the Avant-Garde, Kaxpiksu State Arts Festival, Vermont Composers Festivals, Amsterdramm, and Ought-One Festival of NonPop. He co-founded the Vermont Composers Consortium and the NonPop International Network.

In addition to being the author of books and articles in technology and the arts, Dennis directs the maltedMedia production group including its publisher Westleaf Edition, is an adjunct professor of theory and composition at Johnson State College, and is director of the Vermont Alliance of Independent Country Stores.

*Erzsébet* is his second opera.



Anne Decker joined the artistic staff of the Vermont Youth Orchestra in 1999 as conductor of the Vermont Youth Sinfonia; she has been conducting the Vermont Youth Philharmonia since the fall of 2000. In 2004, Ms. Decker led the ensemble in their first international Youth Orchestra exchange with the Sherbrooke Youth Orchestra of Quebec.

Ms. Decker teaches at U-32 High School in East Montpelier. Most recently, she conducted the Amateur Musicians Orchestra in Burlington and served as interim conductor of the University Orchestra at the University of Vermont through the 2005-2006 season.

In the summer of 2005, Ms. Decker conducted Tosca with the Middlebury Opera Company. She has also been involved with Vermont Opera Theater, where she conducted *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and the world premiere of Erik Nielsen’s *A Fleeting Animal*. As a part time assistant conductor for the Amato Opera Company in New York City, Ms. Decker conducted Bizet’s *Carmen* in May 2002.

Ms. Decker holds a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from Illinois State University, where she served as Music Director for the musical *Cabaret* and also conducted Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*. She earned a degree in music education from Western Michigan University. She has studied conducting with Glenn Block, Kirk Muspratt, and David Effron.



A classical singer, actor, and director, Naomi Flanders has spent the last 30 years committed to the development of the performance arts in Central Vermont. She founded Echo Valley Community Arts in 2002 and developed Shakespeare in The Hills, a project of EVCA, in 2008.

She has directed three operas and produced others, directed six Shakespeare camps for kids and numerous Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, and directed and produced musicals for local public schools and community theaters. She received her bachelor’s degree in the humanities from Johnson State College with a minor in music, and studied voice and Feldenkrais bodywork in New York with Marcy Lindheimer.

Naomi incorporates deep breath work, Feldenkrais, and yoga into her teaching and accepts all singers from various musical genres.



Pavel Kraus is a New York City-based visual artist. He received his MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1975 and has been working as a painter and sculptor ever since. He has exhibited in Chicago, Washington DC, and

New York, where his studio is located in DUMBO, Brooklyn. He has collaborated on international exhibits and projects in Prague, London, and Portugal. Pavel’s work has been reviewed several times in *Art in America* as well as international art publications. His most recent installation has been realized in southern California as part of a permanent collection. With the collaboration of his artisans in India, Pavel is working on an extensive art exhibit opening in January 2011 at The Proposition Gallery in Manhattan. He continues to work on large-scale public and private projects to be realized in 2011-2013. Information about Pavel’s work can be found on his website, pavelkraus.com.



The Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble is the state’s long-time, permanent group of musicians dedicated to the commissioning and performance of new music. The VCME was founded in 1987 by its current

director, Steven Klimowski, for the purpose of fostering the creation of new “classical” music by commissioning today’s composers and performing their music in addition to performing the great post-tonal masterpieces of the 20th century. The ensemble has been playing concerts throughout Vermont and New England for the past 22 years, during which it has premiered over 90 works, more than 70 of them the ensemble’s commissions. Its concentration gives local composers and performers the first opportunity in commissions and performance.

In response to the 9/11/2001 attack, the group asked ten composers to write short works with their responses. The resulting concert presented a rare musical snapshot of the spirit of that historic time. The VCME has also performed many of the post-tonal masterpieces such as Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, Arnold Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* and a full production of Igor Stravinsky’s *l’Histoire du Soldat*. The VCME strives to make this new and sometimes difficult music understood by offering creative presentations, composer interviews describing the music, and a close interaction of the audience with the artists.

**Erzsébet: The Opera** is also available for production worldwide. Please contact the publisher The Westleaf Edition, 176 Cox Brook Road, Northfield, Vermont 05663 US or email bathory@westleaf.org for more information.