

THE *Current*

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[Debra Herrick](#)

Graduate vocalist represents music community at UCSB Commencement

In addition to earning her doctorate this spring, Christina Ramsey, a Class of 2025 graduate of UC Santa Barbara's Department of Music, has been selected as the university's commencement singer. Blending a background in professional performance with a passion for teaching, Ramsey said the role was a personal honor and an opportunity to highlight UCSB's music community.

"I'm very excited," Ramsey said. "It's such an honor to represent the music department, as well as the vocal department for the Graduate Division. I'm looking forward to showing everyone what we're all about — sometimes it feels like we're off in our own little arts world. So it'll be nice for people to see a face to the name of the department."

After earning a master's degree from Rice University in 2015, Ramsey spent several years singing professionally across the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she opened a private studio teaching people how to sing. "I didn't realize how much I would love that," she said.

Encouraged by their longtime friend from Opera Santa Barbara and UCSB voice professor [Benjamin Brecher](#), Ramsey and her husband, who is also a musician, enrolled in the doctoral program in music at UCSB. "Knowing that we would be here in such a wonderful community that we already had ties to was the biggest selling point for us," she said.

“The performance faculty have been incredible, and the musicology faculty have really broadened our academic minds,” she said. “They’ve helped us think about the next steps in the academic world as well as the professional world.”

One of her most meaningful performances at UCSB was a fully staged opera gala that combined music, dance and storytelling. Collaborating with the dance program’s director of performance [Christina McCarthy](#), she performed a scene from Gluck’s “Orfeo ed Euridice” alongside UCSB dancers and orchestral musicians. “I got to sing to my dying wife on stage while her spirit danced around me,” Ramsey said. “It was really emotional for me, because I had just lost my dad. To have something so beautiful also representing life after death was awesome.”

McCarthy’s interdisciplinary approach was influential to Ramsey. “She was wonderful in how she asked us to do different kinds of acting with our bodies and how she incorporated the dancers into what we were already doing,” she said. “I would work with her again in a minute.”

Looking ahead, Ramsey plans to continue both teaching and performing. She said she hopes to help develop or lead an undergraduate vocal program, inspired by her love of mentoring young singers. “I think undergrads are kind of at the crux of figuring out who they are as people and who they are as singers,” she said. “I would really like to be the person to help them out with that.”

She’ll also remain active on the stage. Ramsey is slated to sing the lead female role of Sharon Falconer in Opera Santa Barbara’s production of “Elmer Gantry” next season and will perform Mozart’s “Requiem” with the symphony.

“I’ll be continuing my performing career as well as adding in a little bit more stable, academic life,” she said.

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