

Gabriel's Daughter

The Life and Legacy of Clara Brown
A Celebration in Song and Spirit



GABRIEL'S DAUGHTER

The Life and Legacy of Clara Brown

A Celebration in Song and Spirit

Co-Producer:
Lori Brown Mirabal

Co-Producer / Director:
Sharon Shepard-Levine

2022 / 51:35 Min / 60:33 Min (Extended) / U.S.A. / English / Documentary

Twin Souls-Gabriel Project, LLC
South Orange, New Jersey

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Technical Contents

Title	Gabriel’s Daughter, The Life and Legacy of Clara Brown
Genre	Documentary
Production Year	2022
County of Origin	USA
Language	English (with closed captions optional)
Run Time	51:35
Run Time (Extended)	60:33
Screen Ratio	16x9
Shooting Format	Digital
Audio Format	Stereo
Audience Rating	General Audiences (G)

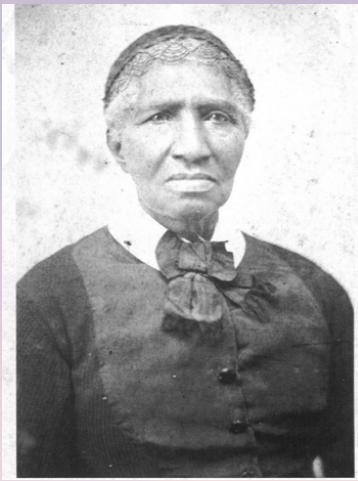
Lead Cast

Lori Brown Mirabal	Clara Brown
Sharon Shepard-Levine	Lucinda
Kenneth Overton	Barney Ford
Lisa Bryce	Eliza Jane & Eliza Brooks

Crew

Temesgen Asmerom	DP/New Jersey
Don Garcia	DP/Colorado
Robert Griffiths	Editor/Colorado
Edward Kessel	Sound Engineer/New Jersey
David Baud	Colorist/Colorado
Henry Mollicone	Composer/Gabriel’s Daughter
William Luce	Playwright/Gabriel’s Daughter





LOGLINE

Newly freed from enslavement, real-life African American pioneer Clara Brown, trudges along with a wagon train from Kentucky through treacherous westward territories in an impassioned search of her only surviving daughter, sold at an auction.

SYNOPSIS

"Gabriel's Daughter, The Life and Legacy of Clara Brown" is a historic documentary that tells the story of real-life African American pioneer, Clara Brown, through the lens of a world-premiere American opera, entitled "Gabriel's Daughter." Newly freed from enslavement, Clara walked along-side a wagon-train as a laundress and cook from Kentucky to the gold mines of Colorado. Settling in Central City, she became a successful entrepreneur, helped to populate the African American community, established and funded several churches, which still exist today. Poignantly, Clara was seeking a treasure much more valuable than gold, she longed to find her only surviving daughter Eliza Jane, sold away from her at an auction. An award-winning ensemble helps recount Clara's journey, as the film travels from a New Jersey recording studio, with opera highlight performances, to historic Colorado locations. Along the way, we discover how Clara earned great wealth and was inducted into the prestigious Colorado Pioneer Society. The storytelling is enhanced with candid interviews from the cast who, in examining Clara's life, grapple with past and present societal interconnections.

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/user23482393/review/793923052/e103eb3a15>

Directors Statement

Director and Co-Producer Sharon Shepard-Levine



As a very young girl, I was fortunate to become a member of the Metro Lyric Opera Company, in Allenhurst, NJ and thus began my lifelong love of opera. I met Lori Brown Mirabal during one of our children's elementary school functions just as she was headed out to sing the starring role as Clara Brown in Gabriel's Daughter in Central City, CO. I was intrigued about this woman, Clara Brown and upon learning more, Lori and I endeavored to tell Clara's story in different formats. We settled upon this documentary which infuses my love of opera and love of storytelling through a visual medium to tell the story of this amazing woman. As a mother of twin boys, my heart sank upon learning that one of Clara's twins died in a drowning as well as having her family ripped away from her at a slave auction. I find Clara's life so inspirational as she endured countless atrocities but was able to lead her life with love. I sincerely hope that Clara Brown's name will be synonymous with other iconic inspirational African American's as she is an inspiration to us all!

Co-Producers Statement



Co-Producer Lori Brown Mirabal

As an African American teenager growing up in Tennessee, I was once told that I would "never find myself" in opera. Ironically, I did find myself in this genre, and, in fact, have sung over thirty-eight roles in opera houses throughout the world. Further, as an entrepreneur, children's book author and music educator my overall mission has become to make opera relevant and accessible to the lived experiences of all children and families. Collaborating on this project with co-producer Sharon Shepard-Levine exemplifies what I have hoped to accomplish. When I embodied the role of Clara in the world-premiere opera about her life, it was the career honor of a lifetime. Spreading Clara's inspirational story even further, through this documentary, feels like finding my truest purpose.

Lead Cast Bios and Awards



Lori Brown-Mirabal, Co-Producer/'Clara Brown'

Throughout her international award-winning singing career, Lori Brown Mirabal has performed with legendary opera and music theatre luminaries. Lori created the leading role of “Clara Brown” in the acclaimed world premiere of Gabriel’s Daughter at Central City Opera in Colorado. She received professional training at the University of Memphis (B.F.A Theatre ’81), Juilliard (JOC, ’91) and at Manhattan School of Music (MM. Voice, ’94). Lori earned both a masters and doctorate in Music Education at Columbia University’s Teachers College (’08). Lori’s solo shows Charmed Life and Making Opera Soup have premiered off Broadway at Urban Stages in NYC, at 1st Stage’s Logan Festival in Tysons, Virginia., and throughout the tri-state area. She received 1st place honors in the inaugural Leontyne Price Vocal Arts Competition, and was a Metropolitan Opera Association regional winner.



Sharon Shepard-Levine, Director, Co-Producer /'Lucinda'

Sharon has over 30 years of experience in the field and is an international multi award-winning Producer/Director/Editor. Sharon specializes in projects that feature sensitive subject matters including mental health, substance abuse disorders, suicide prevention, bullying, natural and manmade disasters and, of course this documentary. Sharon has won multiple Telly Awards, Communicators Awards, Golden Bell Leadership Award and the Brandon Hall Excellence in Technology/Gold Award. Other notable works include: The Metropolitan Opera International Radio Broadcasts, weekly live broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House; The Washington Opera, Massenet's Le Cid starring Placido Domingo (aired on PBS); Houston Grand Opera, Little Women, (aired on PBS); Carnegie Hall, Skitch Henderson’s 80th Birthday Gala – six-camera live-to-tape shoot, Great Performances (aired on PBS); Leonard Bernstein: The Gift of Music (Unitel, Munich), Great Performances (aired on PBS); The Search for Scarlett (RHI Entertainment, Inc.), national and international syndicated live television broadcast.

Lead Cast Bios and Awards



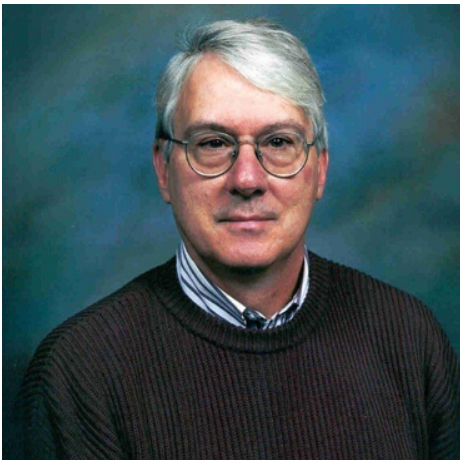
Kenneth Overton, Baritone/'Barney Ford'

Kenneth, a Metropolitan Opera Baritone, is a 2020 Grammy Award Winner for the title role in Richard Danielpour's, 'The Passion of Yeshua'. Upcoming engagements include a debut with the Welsh National Opera and a return to The Kennedy Center.



Lisa Bryce, Soprano/'Eliza Jane & Eliza Brooks'

Lisa is a graduate of Manhattan School of Music and has been lead Soprano internationally in Oratorio and Opera. She has enjoyed singing Henry Mollicone's score; "it brings tears to the eyes and tugs at the heart strings."



Roger Baker, Author Clara: An Ex-slave in Gold Rush Colorado

For 10 years Roger was the Gilpin County Librarian in Central City, Colorado. During that time he became fascinated with Clara Brown and wrote several plays based on Brown's life, one of which inspired the Central City Opera House Association to commission the opera "Gabriel's Daughter".



Henry Mollicone, Composer/'Gabriel's Daughter'

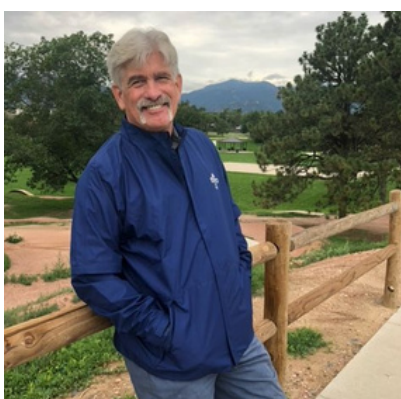
(1942-2022) Henry's popular opera compositions include: Gabriel's Daughter, The Face on the Barroom Floor, Coyote Tales, Hotel Eden, and Moses. Henry composed works for ballet, voice, chamber choirs, television, and film including The Premonition. As a composer, conductor, and accompanist, Henry has worked with notable actors/singers: Jean Stapleton, David Ogden Stiers, Angela Lansbury, Charles Nelson Reilly, Frederica von Stade, and Beverly Sills. He has collaborated with writers William Luce and Sheldon Harnick. Henry received grants and awards from Opera America, The American Organ Historical Society, The Presser Foundation, The American Composers' Alliance (recording award for the opera The Face on the Barroom Floor), Meet the Composer, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Lep Foundation, Santa Clara University, and other organizations.

Crew Bios and Awards



Temesgen Asmerom, DP/New Jersey

Temesgen “T” combines his years of experience in lighting with his passion for storytelling through the camera lens. His work in the documentary field includes several music-based projects, and in the production/postproduction of the feature length Holocaust remembrance film, Kinderblock 66/Return to Buchenwald. Other projects include camera operator and lighting for David Foster/Off the Record (Melbar Entertainment), and NY interviews with Josh Groban, Andrea Bocelli, David Foster, Clive Davis, Kristen Chenoweth, and Katherine McPhee.



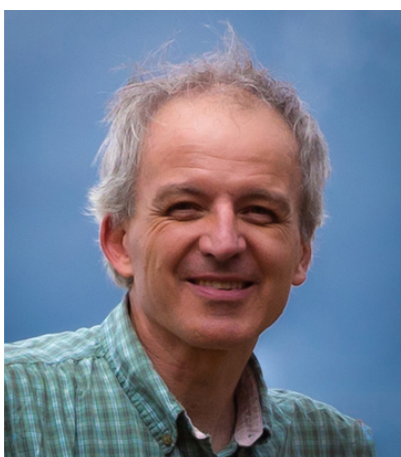
Don Garcia, DP/Colorado

“Garce” has been a professional Videographer, Director of Photography, and Audio Engineer for more than 20 years. He owns “Garce Works” Video Productions based in Denver and has travelled extensively throughout the United States as well as worldwide. He specializes in shooting documentaries, film, breaking news reels, and corporate videos. “Garce’s” awards include a 2002 Emmy for Olympic Coverage, 2 Golden Camera Awards, 30 Telly Awards, and the Denver Video Festival award (1986).



Robert Griffiths, Editor/Colorado

Bob is a multi-award-winning editor whose unique blend of skills provide a truly versatile individual. For 45+ years, Bob has worked extensively in the broadcast, commercial, event and corporate video arenas. He has traveled extensively directing and editing programs throughout North America, South America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Awards include: 36 Telly’s, 24 Communicators, 2 International Monitor, 2 ITVA National, Brandon Hall Excellence in Technology, NY Festivals, Omni Intermedia, Horizon Interactive, Summit Creative, US International Film and Video.



David Baud, Colorist & Finishing Editor (Colorado)

David is a highly accomplished colorist and finishing editor with a passion for pushing the boundaries of film quality. With over 25 years of experience in post-production mastering workflows, David has honed his skills across various disciplines, including editing, visual effects creation, and color grading. As a proud member of the Colorist Society International (CSI), he is recognized for his expertise and dedication to his craft. Throughout his career, David has worked with major networks in both Europe and the United States, leaving his mark on a wide range of projects.

Crew Bios and Awards



Edward Kessel, Sound Engineer/New Jersey

Ed is a multi-award-winning Sound Engineer and Composer of Sound Imagination, a music, video, and audio production company. Ed was recently inducted into the New Jersey Advertising Hall of Fame, and has been producing music, commercials, and entertainment projects for over 30 years. He has composed, orchestrated, and produced music for Broadway, movies, tv, jingles, and commercials, as well as songs for major artists.



William Luce, Librettist/'Gabriel's Daughter'

(1931-2019) For over thirty-five years Broadway playwright William Luce wrote extensively for stage and screen. During that time, he authored several award-winning classics like *The Belle of Amherst* for Julie Harris (International Emmy Award) and *Barrymore* for Christopher Plummer (Tony-Award for “Best Actor”), among a dozen other acclaimed works for acting legends Zoe Caldwell, Claire Bloom, Frances de La Tour, George C. Scott, Jane Seymour, and Piper Laurie. He collaborated with Henry Mollicone on several stage works, including the 2003 opera *Gabriel's Daughter*. The PBS production of “Belle” won three Christopher Awards, Mr. Luce's 'My Business Is to Love' starred American soprano Renee Fleming with Julie Harris and Claire Bloom. It debuted at Lincoln Center and London's Barbican Centre. Some of Mr. Luce's other award-winning plays include *Baptists*, a comedy about Moliere, *Lucifer's Child* (Tony Award), *Bronte* (Peabody Award), *Lillian*, *Bravo Caruso*, *The Last Flapper*, *Chanel*, and *The Divine Orlando*.

Full Cast

Lori Brown Mirabal	Clara Brown/Mezzo Soprano
Sharon Shepard-Levine	Lucinda/Soprano
Allison Brewster Franzetti	Pianist
Kenneth Overton	Barney Ford/Baritone
Lisa Bryce	Eliza Jane and Eliza Brooks/Soprano
Hanne Ladefoged-Dollase	Evanline/Contralto
Matthew DeMarco	Col. Chivingto/tenor
Becky Grace Kalman	Jane Gordan/Ensemble/Soprano
Theron Cromer	Ensemble/Tenor
Danny Dollase	Ensemble/Tenor
Donald Boos, Baritone	Ensemble/Baritone
Justyna Giermola	Ensemble/Soprano
Sabrina Kalman	Ensemble/Soprano
Sarah Lucero	Ensemble/Alto
David Maiullo	Ensemble Director
Ava A.	Angelic Choir
Elizabeth M.	Angelic Choir
Evelyne M.	Angelic Choir
Gabby M.	Angelic Choir
Jaileen P.	Angelic Choir
Kayla K.	Angelic Choir
Leah C.	Angelic Choir
Sana J.	Angelic Choir



FAQs

1. What was our inspiration for the film?

Lori's inspiration for this film was Clara Brown. One of her goals as an opera singer has been to create educational outreach opportunities that enrich the lives of children and families through opera. Also, she has wanted to collaborate with Co-Producer and Film Director, Sharon Shepard-Levine, for over twenty years to help Clara's legacy have an enduring impact in the world. Sharon's inspiration for this film is also the film's subject. Partnering with Lori, from the unique perspective of creating the role of Clara in the opera, has been a privilege and a joy! Sharon's hope is that Clara's name will become synonymous with other iconic African Americans of her time. She is an inspiration to us all!

2. What were the challenges you faced in creating this documentary?

It was extremely challenging filming during the height of the COVID pandemic. Following CDC and industry precautions, we needed to record our Grammy Award Winning pianist, Allison Brewster Franzetti without singers in the studio. Those piano tracks were sent to all the of the singers to learn and sing their parts to the recorded music before arriving at the recording studio. This not only helped to cut rehearsal cost but limited potential COVID exposure time in the studio. The studio was not large enough to safely accommodate the full ensemble in one session, so we filmed the women and men ensembles in separate sessions, according to COVID spacing regulations. Further, the leading cast was recorded separately on different days. Another COVID challenge included filming the on-camera talent from various locations throughout the US with travel restrictions and health precautions. For example, Henry Mollicone, Gabriel's Daughter composer, was undergoing cancer treatments and not allowed to bring in a film crew. By use of GoPro Hero 9, Sharon was able to capture Henry's interview. Similarly, Roger Baker, the film's historian, used a film crew at Huntington University in Arizona near his current residence. Sharon had to direct via Zoom in both instances.

3. How is Clara Brown's story relevant today?

Stories from our collective American past are essential because they remind us of our triumphs and short comings, they guide us, and they provide us with hope. Clara Brown's inspirational life and legacy is an example of all these. Relatively unknown, she overcame bigotry, theft, and loss, yet made a significant difference in the lives of people with whom she interacted. Currently, darkness and divisiveness are prevalent in the United States and the world. Clara's story, with its universal human commonalities, has the power to connect and serve as a stellar example of how to be human. Examining her story through the lens of an opera about her life, provides a uniquely creative way to commemorate this humble-born, African American Colorado Pioneer.

FAQs continued

4. What was your favorite part of the production?

Throughout the whole process Lori has been filled with awe and gratitude. It has been edifying watching Sharon's (Film Director) and Ed Kessel's (Sound Engineer) amazing processes. Also, revisiting her beloved mountains and the charming jewel box opera house at Central City, Colorado where she performed Clara's story was soul-fulling. In addition, it was gratifying to employ out-of-work singing artists during the height of the Covid pandemic.

Sharon loved every stage of pre-production, production and post-production. Working with a very limited budget and the pandemic restrictions made her think outside-the-box and create visual images using nontraditional methods. Her favorite part was creating new relationships and rekindling old ones!

5. What is the plot(s)?

"Gabriel's Daughter, The Life and Legacy of Clara Brown" is a historic documentary based on the true life of African American pioneer, Clara Brown. Along with interviews and historic photographs, the film uses highlight performances from the world-premiere American opera about Clara called "Gabriel's Daughter."

The film begins with Clara's personal journey as an enslaved African American. While enslaved as a house maid, Clara was 'allowed' to marry and had four children, including twin girls Paulina and Eliza Jane. Tragically, Pauline drowned when she was 8 years old. Reeling from that unimaginable grief, Clara's entire family was shortly afterwards sold away from her at a slave auction. After that, all of Clara's efforts were driven by her life-long desire to find her beloved Eliza Jane whom she felt was still alive.

Clara was sold to a hat maker's family where she took care of the two daughters Lucinda and Evaline. When their father died, his will stated that Clara was to be set free and given \$300. Subsequently, Clara was provided an opportunity to "purchase her freedom" by Lucinda and Evaline.

Newly freed from enslavement, Clara walked along-side a wagon-train as a laundress and cook from Kentucky to the gold mines of Colorado. While the families along the wagon train were hoping to find gold, Clara was seeking a treasure much more valuable than gold, she ached to find her only surviving daughter, Eliza Jane.

Settling in Central City, Colorado, with the backdrop of Reconstruction, the assassination of President Lincoln and the Civil War, Clara set up a successful laundry business, became a real estate entrepreneur, helped to populate the African American community, and established and funded several churches, which still exist today. As Clara's steadfast searches for her daughter often left her feeling shattered, Clara continued to befriend, nurture, and champion the causes of the people whom she encountered, including the much-maligned American Indian population. As an even greater reward for a well-lived life, through efforts of her connections with Lucinda and Evaline, Clara was finally reunited with her beloved daughter, Eliza Jane.

An award-winning ensemble helps recount Clara's journey, as the film travels from a New Jersey recording studio to historic Colorado locations. Along the way, we discover how Clara earned great wealth and was inducted into the prestigious Colorado Pioneer Society. The storytelling is enhanced with candid interviews from the cast who, in examining Clara's life, grapple with past and present societal interconnections.

FAQs Continued

6. What are your hopes for distribution?

We hope that distribution companies such as PBS and streaming services such as: Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime and others will want to distribute our film. This documentary will have wide-ranging audience appeal. Anyone interested in American, Afro-American, and political history might benefit and enjoy watching this documentary. Opera and Music Theatre enthusiasts might also like the film. Lori is in the process of creating a Middle School history curriculum and an outreach opera enrichment curriculum for various ages (3rd grade, high school, and adult), which will integrate the film. These educational outreach packages will be made available for national and international distribution.

7. What do you hope people take away from watching this documentary?

We hope that people will have a better understanding of what life was like for Clara Brown and other African American's as well as marginalized members of the community in Colorado in the early 19th Century. Clara's story provides us with hope and resiliency against horrific tragedies and prejudices which she faced. Clara's life is inspirational and is an example of how we can bring together humankind. Since opera is an integral part of our storytelling, we hope that people will acquire an appreciation for this genre, and discover that it is a unique way of communicating emotions that cannot be expressed through the spoken or written word.

8. Was there anything you were surprised to learn when creating the documentary?

We were both surprised and inspired to learn of Clara Brown. Before going out to Colorado to sing the role, Lori and Sharon had never heard of Clara or her tremendous impact in Colorado. Additionally, we were both thrilled and enthralled as composer, Henry Mollicone spoke about his process for creating "eclectic" music for *Gabriel's Daughter*. Little did we know at the time that, a few months after his interview, Henry would succumb to a long-fought battle with cancer. Further, it has been truly humbling and gratifying how so many people have donated services, equipment, and money to help us create this documentary honoring Clara's life.

9. Why is the title "Gabriel's Daughter"?

Angel Gabriel is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Quran. He is described as an Archangel (angel of higher rank) with the power to announce God's will, and herald visions. In the opera, *Gabriel's Daughter*, Clara sings to Angel Gabriel when horrific events occur, during her struggles with her faith in God, and when she needs strength to persevere. We wanted to honor the opera and therefore, kept the name *Gabriel's Daughter* in the title. If you listen closely, you'll hear Lori singing to Angel Gabriel over the title page of the documentary!

Historical Stills

