

Charlie Widmer is an award winning multi-genre singer, songwriter, guitarist, arranger, actor, and producer based in Connecticut. He received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Western Connecticut State University in 2016 and has been professionally singing and performing ever since.

Originally born in Zürich, Switzerland, Charlie is half-Swiss and half-Puerto Rican. Even as a young child, singing along to songs in the car and performing in school shows, his love for music was evident. Growing up, Charlie's parents loved music and listened to a wide range of styles and genres, and his grandparents were also musicians. His paternal grandmother was a classically trained soprano and both of his maternal grandfathers were singers. When Charlie was 12 years old, his grandfather bought him his first guitar; he has been playing ever since. Charlie didn't discover his voice, however, until he was 16 and in his junior year of high school. Auditioning on a whim for his first musical, *Grease*, Charlie landed the lead role of Danny Zuko.

From that first experience, the trajectory of Charlie's life changed completely. Originally intending to pursue science, Charlie chose to attend college for vocal training to study classical singing. Performing as Tony in *West Side Story* his senior year, Charlie wrapped up high school, started auditioning for colleges, and decided to attend Western Connecticut State University. It was during his time studying vocals at WCSU that he found a love for the opera art form and classical singing. During his time in college, Charlie performed such roles as Alfred from *Die Fledermaus*, Martin in *The Tender Land*, and Camille de Rosillion in *The Merry Widow*.

Upon graduating with his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, Charlie began his journey of professional singing. His first television appearance was a solo performance of the well-known aria "Una furtiva lagrima" on the Swiss television series *Die grössten Schweizer Talente* (Switzerland's Got Talent). Charlie received a standing ovation from the audience and four emphatic "yes" votes from the judges that night. The video quickly spread throughout Connecticut, and, due to its popularity, Charlie was invited to audition for the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, which started his long running relationship with the organization.

In the spring of 2017, Charlie made his debut with the NHSO, performing as Freddy in *My Fair Lady*. The following summer, Charlie also made his debut with the Ivoryton Playhouse's cabaret series, *Playhouse On the Shore*. This eight-week series touched on four themes, starting with music of the 50's, moving through Broadway show tunes, opera, and then closing with music of the 70's. Charlie performed in all four shows and, in the last, he performed as both a singer and guitarist. He also had the honor of singing at Opera Palooza, an annual event held on the New Haven Green in conjunction with Salt Marsh Opera. In the fall of 2017, Charlie returned to perform again with the NHSO as Benny Southstreet in *Guys and Dolls*. Then, in the winter, Charlie rounded his year off in *An Ivoryton Playhouse Christmas Hour with David Pittsinger* at the historical Ivoryton Playhouse.

In March of 2018, Charlie traveled with Opera Theater of Connecticut to perform at The Sanibel Festival in Sanibel, Florida. He then returned to Connecticut to perform in Salt Marsh Opera's commissioned work of *Jack and Jill and the Happening Hill* as Jack. During the summer, he performed for the second year in a cabaret theater series by Ivoryton Playhouse as a singer and

guitarist. Unexpectedly, Charlie was invited to sing backup vocals for a private event with 30 Seconds to Mars in June of 2018, just a day after they performed at Madison Square Garden.

During the fall of 2018, Charlie sang in his first production of *La Boheme* as Parpignol. During the run of this show, Charlie was invited to sing backup vocals for the great Josh Groban at Madison Square Garden as part of his *Bridges* tour. That November was Charlie's first time performing at MSG and to a sold-out crowd of 22,000 people. Luckily, the entire show was filmed and released as a DVD and through PBS. Charlie can be spotted in several songs throughout the concert.

In February of 2019, Charlie was invited to be a backup singer for Sarah Brightman at her Radio City Music Hall concert, performing for his first time at the storied venue as part of her *Hymns* tour. In the spring of 2019, Charlie starred in his first production of *The Magic Flute* as Tamino with Salt Marsh Opera.

At the beginning of 2020, Charlie was invited again to sing backup vocals for Josh Groban as part of his new show, *Josh Groban's Great Big Radio City Show*. The plan was to have 5 performances throughout the year, but only one show in February was performed before the show was put on hiatus due to COVID. With the shutdown of all public performing, Charlie dug into creating a cover series called *Songs From Home*. In this series, Charlie arranged, recorded, edited, and released a series of videos covering his favorite and popular songs. Charlie sang all parts and played all accompaniments. During this time, Charlie entered the Goffin and King Iso Booth Quarantine Cover Contest, and arranged his own interpretation of the tune "Up on The Roof." To his surprise, Charlie was selected as one of the winners of the contest.

In the winter of 2020, the height of the pandemic, Charlie married the love of his life, Shelby Lynn Lanaro, an award winning professor and published poet and photographer in her own right. By 2021, Charlie had survived the worst of the pandemic and work was starting to pop up again. Playing countless shows with On the Trail, his bluegrass band, Charlie was offered a unique opportunity: to put together a solo program with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. Charlie took a chance and proposed the idea of a multi-genre concert. A central theme anchored all songs as he moved from singing classical music to pop to musical theater to jazz. The NHSO jumped at the idea, and the program *My Song* was created and performed to great acclaim in that summer of 2021. In August of that same year, Charlie and his band, On the Trail, competed in the 2021 Podunk Bluegrass Festival's Telefunken Band Competition.

In the fall of 2021, On the Trail made its debut at the famous Two Roads Brewery, and Charlie performed his first ever solo show in Ridgefield, CT—just him and his guitar. During this time, Charlie also began designing more multi-genre programs with long-time mentor, teacher, and pianist Eric Trudel. Together, they began shopping out the program to local venues. In the meantime, Charlie was offered the opportunity to sing backup again for Sarah Brightman in the fall of 2022, this time for several shows in several cities, as part of her tour *A Christmas Symphony*.

The first of Charlie and Eric's multi-genre concerts, *You and I*, was performed in February 2022 at Bethesda Lutheran Church in New Haven, CT. The program included songs from Schubert to

Sondheim and Billy Joel to Louis Armstrong. In March 2022, Charlie headed to Florida again with Opera Theater of Connecticut for the Sanibel Music Festival, this time performing in an Andrew Lloyd Webber themed show that encompassed the majority of his big hit musicals. During his trip in Florida, Charlie received the offer to be a backup singer again for Josh Groban, picking up where they left off in 2020, with a run of 4 shows straight at Radio City Music Hall. The shows were filmed, published, and aired on PBS as well.

Just a month later, in May 2022, Charlie took the stage again with the NHSO for a program of Rodgers and Hammerstein music as one of four featured soloists. The busy summer season took off with shows across the northeast for Charlie and his band, *On the Trail*, as well. While visiting his father in Switzerland, Charlie got the biggest backup singing gig offer to date: singing backup for the one and only Michael Bublé at MSG. Charlie got the chance to share the stage with one of his long-time heroes in August 2022 to a sold out arena.

Before he'd even graced the stage with Michael Bublé, the incredible opportunity began opening doors in Switzerland for Charlie. He was invited back to his home country in the fall of 2022 to perform at *Das Zelt*, a large tented event organizer, as a special guest for their series *Young Artists*. Because of this honor, Charlie was featured in *Blick*, one of the largest and most read publications in all of Switzerland. Upon arriving for the event, a news piece was filmed and aired by Tele M1 about what Charlie was doing.

Through all the excitement of *Das Zelt*, Charlie became connected with Swiss rockstar, Baschi. He was invited by both Baschi and his business partner, Phil van Merk, to go to their studio during his trip and record demos of some of his original music. A friendship and partnership was struck that day in the studio, and, after many months of recording, mixing, photoshoots, music video shoots, and another news piece by Tele M1, Charlie will be dropping his first solo single in the fall of 2023.

Charlie has been a founding member of two separate bands. From 2015 until 2019, he was one of the founders and front-men of a six piece soul/hip-hop fusion band called Sub-Urban. Throughout this time, Charlie recorded a record with the band and played countless shows throughout the northeast, including famous venues in NYC such as The Bitter End, Arlene's Grocery, Rockwood Music Hall, The Bowery Electric, and Pianos. The band was even a featured recording of the famous SoFar Sounds NYC series, performing an unreleased original of theirs called "South Paris". Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules for some band members and a change in focus for others, the band went on hiatus and has yet to return.

Right before the hiatus of Sub-Urban, Charlie sought to form a new group with his best friend and fiddler Austin Scelzo. Even though he had never heard a bluegrass song before then, Charlie and Austin, along with third founding member Tom Polizzi, formed a bluegrass fusion band, eventually to be named *On the Trail*. The first show was for their alma mater WCSU and was an event entitled *Bluegrass and Beyond*. Since the formation of the band, the three—along with banjo player Chet Duke—recorded their first EP. *On the Trail* has performed across the northeast in countless venues, won the 2022 Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival Emerging Artists contest with bassist Matt Curley, and was featured as Emerging Artists at the 2023 Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival. The band is still active today.

Charlie is currently represented by Professional Artists Agency in NYC for theater, television, and film.