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The fortland Observer CAREER special edition Education

## Keeping the Faith



PHOTO BY JERRY HART/COURTESY PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

When Chandra Curtis first heard opera, she thought that must be what angels sound like. Today, the Portland Community College student is an accomplished opera singer. She is preparing audition material to enter the voice program at Yale University.

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vocal training. She pursued voice work with the diligence of a monk, practicing daily in a quiet space where she could isolate the disparate elements of her body that produce extraordinary sound and then concentrate on combining them to ecstatic effect.

for vocal studies at Yale." She'd planned long-term to secure a breathing technique and pre-Certificate of Voice from Yale University. "Right then, I knew ter the voice program at Yale. I wanted to study with someone who was doing what I would be going."

Curtis got onto the Internet, limitless world. found and contacted renowned

coach who would prepare me one-on-one with Saunders. She'll be honing her vocal and paring audition material to en-

Fine-tuning the beautiful instrument that is her voice, she doing or had been where I am is preparing to meet still greater opportunities in this

"It's all about combustion." For her exceptional aca- opera singer Elizabeth Curtis says. "Two notes com-

Work harder than anyone else. Learn everything about your craft and then return to square one and re-learn what you learned so you know it intellectually and experientially. Love what you do. Then love it more. Keep the faith, in fact let exhaustion strengthen your faith. Such is Chandra Curtis' method for success; a method that has opened door after door to her dream of singing opera professionally.

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demic work, Curtis landed on Saunders, then sent her an e- ing together to create somethe PCC Dean's list winter mail citing her qualifications thing different and beautiful." term. She planned to continue and inquiring if Saunders might studying science and acting work with her. A few days races from Starbucks to rewith a focus on voice, continu- passed. ing intense supplementary Opera.

But plans change.

straight up in my bed and the on as a student. idea came to move to New

"I prayed to God to send me plans, voice lessons, and perhaps per- a sign," Curtis says. Saunders, forming with The Portland then in Japan singing in a pre- says, "but the solitude can be a sentation of Madame Butter- dangerous thing." Still, every fly, responded to her e-mail. time she leaves solitude for "One night," she says, "I sat She'd be pleased to take Curtis the public arena she rises to

Haven and study with an opera necticut this month to work with hard work.

Curtis, buff as an athlete, turn to her studies and her

"I truly love to study," she the top. Her secret is her own Curtis will travel to Con- incandescence combusting

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