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Genaux makes D.C. debut

By Emily Cary
Special to The Examiner

Mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux makes her Washington Concert Opera debut as the hero Falliero in Rossini's "Blanca e Falliero." The performance unites her once more with Antony Walker, who conducted her New York City Opera debut last season in "Semele."

They got along so well that Walker traveled to Baltimore to hear her as Neocle in Rossini's "L'assedio di Corinto" and subsequently invited her to sing a role of her choice with WCO. When she consulted Philip Gossett, the world's foremost authority on 19th-century Italian opera, his suggestion that they do the rarely performed Rossini opera pleased everyone.

"I'm always excited by the character and vocality of a role, and this one offers an extension of range from low to high C," Genaux says. "I spent my first three years singing only Rossini and learning his mezzo-soprano characters, so I identify with them, both male and female. It feels good to incorporate the entire voice in a role, and to have the added pleasure of working with Antony, a great musician who is always well-prepared and never does anything hit-or-miss."

Genaux, a native of Alaska, is regarded as a foremost interpreter of Baroque and bel canto. Because the castrati portrayed both male and female characters during the Baroque period and the bel canto era utilized their tessitura (vocal



Vivica Genaux as Orfeo in "Orfeo ed Euridice." - Courtesy photo

range) in trouser roles, her repertoire includes more young male characters than heroines.

This season she had orchestra debuts in Spain and France, company debuts in Italy and Switzerland and a Turkish concert debut followed by a whirlwind European tour as Irene in Vivaldi's "Bajazet." With five role debuts under her belt this season, she prepares one more, Antiope in Vivaldi's "Ercole sul Termodonte," for a Virgin Classics recording in Brussels in July.

"I'm excited about 'Blanca e Falliero' and would love for the audience to enjoy this work," she says. "The role is a little stronger vocally than what I've done in the past and

If you go
Vivica Genaux debuts in Rossini's "Blanca e Falliero" April 13 at 6 p.m.
» **Venue:** Lisner Auditorium, George Washington University, 21st and H streets northwest, Washington.
» **Tickets:** \$65-\$90 at 202-364-5826 or concertopera.org

will be different than roles people in the Washington-Baltimore area have heard me sing. Best of all, I look forward to the musicality, colors and nuances Antony will bring to the piece."

STAGES » KENNEDY CENTER

Concert brings Jewish composers to fore

By Emily Cary
Special to The Examiner

Pulitzer Prize winner Charles Krauthammer is widely known for his syndicated columns, and his wife, Robyn, for her lovely Chinese watercolors and sculpture. Now both embrace a mutually beloved art form to establish Pro Musica Hebraica, a non-profit organization for preserving and celebrating the works of Jewish composers.

"My wife was the inspiration for this project," Krauthammer says. "She is the musicologist in the family, but I've always loved music and as a child played the piano and classical guitar. She began working on this about four years ago to bring Jewish classical music, much of it unknown, to the fore."

The inaugural concert at the Kennedy Center on Thursday is led by the distinguished conductor James Conlon, the PMH artistic advisor. The program features violinist Itzhak Perlman and Juilliard School musicians performing works by Russian Jewish composers.

The extensive research required to access much of this music and other manuscripts in the St. Petersburg archives was accomplished by James Loeffler, assistant professor of European Jewish history at the University of Virginia.

The earliest work on the program, "Jewish Sketches," written by Alexander Krein in 1910 for string quartet and clarinet, reflects his family connections to klezmer music. That instrumental combination is repeated in "The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind" (1994) by contemporary

If you go

Pro Musica Hebraica debut concert, April 10 at 7:30 p.m.

- » **Venue:** Kennedy Center Terrace Theater
- » **Tickets:** \$50 at 202-467-4600, 800-444-1324 or kennedy-center.org

composer and Argentine native Osvaldo Golijov. The composer-in-residence for the 2007 Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Golijov recently completed a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma and the soundtrack for a Francis Ford Coppola film.

"The Dybbuk Suite" is incidental music written in 1922 by Joel Engel for "The Dybbuk," destined to become the most famous Jewish play. Engel's music, however, was forgotten. Along with "Eli Zion" (1914) by Leo Zeitlin, whose daughter will attend the concert, and "Fantastischer Tants" by Solomon Rosowsky (1914), both works inspired by folk and liturgical melodies, the program presents the U.S. premiere of "Requiem for Our Lost Children" written by Mikhail Gnesin in 1943 upon his learning of the Holocaust.

"The Russian Revolution put an end to the St. Petersburg school of Russian Jewish composers," Krauthammer says. "This concert celebrates its 100th anniversary, and we hope it encourages students, like those at Juilliard who are performing the music, to embrace Jewish classical music and add it to their repertoire."

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