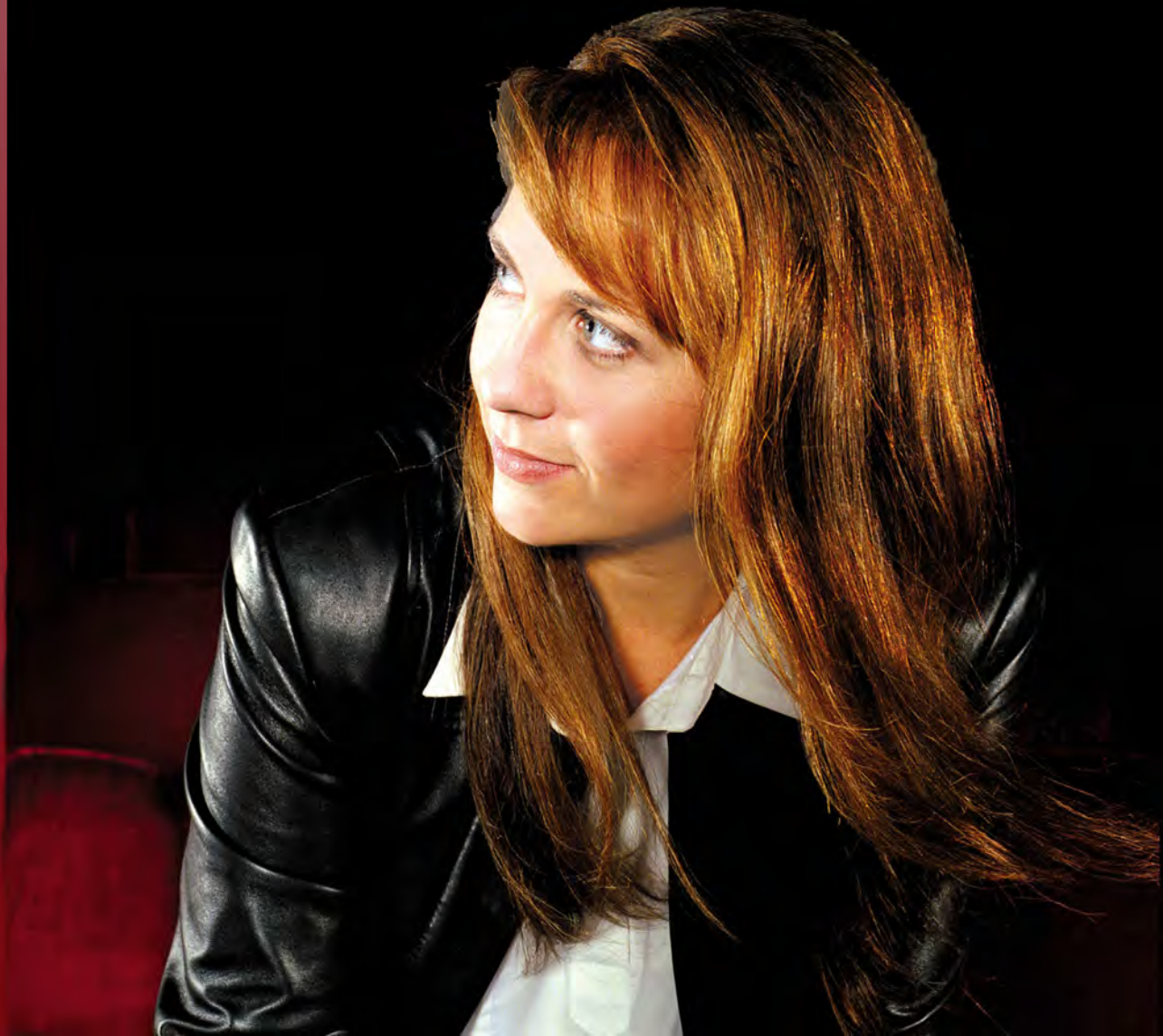


Heidi Grant Murphy

**"Murphy's astonishingly pure tone
floats with an otherworldly ease."**

Opera News



Heidi Grant Murphy Biography

A shimmering soprano with enchanting stage presence, Heidi Grant Murphy is in demand internationally for stage roles and guest soloist performances that elevate concerts into memorable musical occasions. *The Boston Globe* wrote "... her singing was sensitive, deliciously multicolored in tone quality, and altogether stupendous in its technical control – you realized that this was why people have adored and worshipped the human voice."

Ms. Murphy has appeared with many of the world's finest opera companies and symphony orchestras, notably the Metropolitan Opera, Salzburg Festival, Frankfurt Opera, Netherlands Opera, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Opera National de Paris and Santa Fe Opera. She has been engaged as soloist with the Vienna, New York, Los Angeles and Buffalo Philharmonics; Cleveland, Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras; and Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, San Diego, Atlanta, Saint Louis, Cincinnati, Houston, Nashville, Montreal, National and Dallas Symphonies. Ms. Murphy has worked with such esteemed conductors as James Levine, Herbert Blomstedt, Christoph Eschenbach, Reinbert de Leeuw, Kurt Masur, Kent Nagano, Seiji Ozawa, Sir Simon Rattle, Leonard Slatkin, Robert Spano, Jeffery Tate, Michael Tilson Thomas, Edo de Waart, Christoph Von Dohnányi, David Zinman, Bernard Haitink, Pinchas Zukerman and the late Robert Shaw and Lorin Maazel.

Heidi Grant Murphy's nearly 25-year-long career with the Metropolitan Opera has seen her play such signature roles as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Sister Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Servilia in *Clemenza di Tito* and Nanetta in *Falstaff*. European highlights have included the roles of Anne Truelove in the Netherlands Opera production of *The Rake's Progress* and Celia in *Lucio Silla* at both the Salzburg Festival and Frankfurt Opera; and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amor* and Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Opera Nationale de Paris. Over the course of this illustrious career she has been hailed by the *New York Times* for her "bright, focused tone and impressive agility" and by *Opera News* who said her "astonishingly pure tone floats with an otherworldly ease" -- vocal and technical hallmarks for which she continues to be renowned. She has been a featured guest on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, A&E's *Breakfast with the Arts* and BBC Radio 3.

During the 2016-17 season, Ms. Murphy performs Mahler's Fourth Symphony led by Stefan Sanderling with the Toledo Symphony. In recent seasons, Heidi Grant Murphy performed Haydn's *Messiah* with the Seattle Symphony and Chorale led by conductor Cristian Macelaru, and Haydn's *Mass in C Major* with the San Diego Symphony. She gave recitals with pianist Menahem Pressler, including the Chamber Music Society of Detroit. The program featured Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* alongside other Schumann and Strauss songs. In addition, Ms. Murphy appeared as guest soloist with the Tucson Symphony in Poulenc's Gloria and Strauss's Presentation of the Rose and Final Trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by George Hanson as part of the Tucson Desert Song

Festival, and with the New York Virtuoso Singers to give the World Premiere of Roberto Sierra's arrangement of *Missa Latina* for two Pianists and four Percussionists.

Beyond establishing a reputation for her musicianship, impeccable technique and silvery, youthful voice, Ms. Murphy is also widely recognized and valued by her colleagues, fellow artists and presenters for her warm personality and generosity of spirit. Throughout her career she has continually defied many commonly held beliefs attached to sopranos, maintaining and growing an international career while raising four children, and retaining all the technical and artistically-valued attributes of her voice into the second decade of her professional life. Throughout her career she has championed works by female composers in both her recital selections and recorded repertoire. In 2004 she performed the world premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's *Gathering Paradise*, a setting of poetry by Emily Dickinson, with the New York Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel that was recorded and released in 2006. In 2002 she released an acclaimed recording, *Clearings in the Sky*, featuring songs by Lili Boulanger of which *Gramophone* said "Murphy's crystalline soprano and expressive generosity prove an ideal combination to bring this varied repertoire to vivid life."

She has recorded for Koch International, New World, the New York Philharmonic's private label, Naxos, Arabesque, PS Classics, Delos and Deutsche Grammophon. In 2009, her roles as a singer and mother were brought together on a recording especially close to her heart called *Lullabies and Nightsongs*, adapted from a 1965 songbook of the same name featuring melodies by composer Alec Wilder and illustrations by Maurice Sendak. *San Francisco Classical Voice* said "It's hard to imagine a finer singer for this material than Murphy. The beauty of her pure, shining voice and the simplicity of her delivery caress Wilder's music with infinite charm." This recording and several others feature her husband, the noted pianist, conductor and opera coach Kevin Murphy, demonstrating their longtime musical partnership.

In August 2011, Ms. Murphy was appointed to the faculty of Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music as an adjunct professor of practice, teaching private voice lessons, diction courses and leading the opera scene programming. In October 2012, Ms. Murphy received an Honorary Doctorate from Western Washington University, where she pursued a bachelor's degree in music performance. Ms. Murphy resides in Bloomington, Indiana with her husband and children.

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Heidi Grant Murphy

Critical Acclaim

“Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who sang with bright, focused tone and impressive agility in music that suits her beautifully.”

The New York Times

“From first to last her singing was sensitive, deliciously multicolored in tone quality, and altogether stupendous in its technical control – you realized that this was why people have adored and worshipped the human voice. Add to the above an acute, truly chamber-musical awareness of where she was, of those around her...Murphy’s quiet singing was a beauty; so was the way she could

produce, all in one continuous phrase, everything a vibrato can be: wide, narrow, fast, slow, subtly fading away, and non-existent.”

The Boston Globe

“Ms. Murphy showed how the effect of intimacy and expressive directness depends on technique: on exquisitely precise control of intonation, color and phrasing. Of course natural assets also help. Ms. Murphy’s voice has an unusual brightness and lightness and would be delightful to hear even if not wielded with such artistry. But artistry is most certainly there, and effective.”

The New York Times

“Murphy’s voice sailed effortlessly into the far reaches of Orchestra Hall, gleaming like a delicate but indestructible silver thread.”

The Chicago Sun-Times

“Her sound is lovely, and she had that kind of dexterity that makes listeners hold their breath in awe. She never hides difficult notes or passages beneath vibrato or affectation. Murphy is the most natural of sopranos.”

The Philadelphia Inquirer

“And amid all of Mahler’s – and Goethe’s – angels was the most angelic singer on the planet: Heidi Grant Murphy. She stepped in at the end to present her usual miracle of control, beauty and sublimity.”

The New York Sun

“Her voice was blemishless and silvery, her singing immaculate, limber and precise.”

Newsday

“Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy was the standout vocal soloist, a charming performer with a spectacular voice that communicates simply but also handles flurries of notes with aplomb.”

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

“This was vocal artistry with a capital “A,” note leading onto note, phrase onto phrase, with the loveliest of taperings and shadings.”

The Dallas Morning News

“Murphy’s astonishingly pure tone floats with an otherworldly ease and her absolute trueness of pitch anchors the listener through the elusive and thorny tonal landscapes. It is to Murphy’s great credit that she makes the sweetest music out of disjointed melodies.”

Opera News Online

Heidi Grant Murphy

The New York Times

THE Arts

Arts&LEISURE

November 29, 2009

by Anthony Tommasini

A Power Couple Set to a Melody That's Domestic



November has been a typically busy time in the Murphy household. The Murphys of opera circles in New York and abroad, that is: the soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, celebrating her 20th season at the Metropolitan Opera, and her husband of 18 years, the pianist Kevin Murphy, formerly a valued coach at the Met and now the director of music

administration at the New York City Opera.

Just as in Hollywood, the world of opera has produced celebrity couples. The soprano Joan Sutherland and the conductor Richard Bonyngue were a powerhouse team, though they kept their married life private. In contrast the



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soprano Angela Gheorghiu and the tenor Roberto Alagna were marketed as opera's "love couple," and the hype may have taken its toll. Sadly, they are now in the process of divorce.



Ms. Murphy, aloft, with Stephanie Blythe in January in the Met's "Orfeo ed Euridice"

But opera has also had many less visible couples who mix everyday home life as married or unmarried partners with joint careers. Among them, Kevin and Heidi Grant Murphy, who met as students at Indiana University in Bloomington in the 1980s, stand out for their consistent and consistent contributions to the field.

Ms. Murphy, 43, has given more than 200 performances at the Met so far, excelling in lyric soprano roles like Verdi's Nannetta and Strauss's Sophie.

Her current assignment is the supporting role of the innocent, dreamy Sister Genovieffa in Puccini's "Suor Angelica," Part 2 of "Il Trittico," Puccini's triptych of one-act operas, in a revival of Jack O'Brien's tastefully grand and popular production, which runs through Dec. 12.

Mr. Murphy, 44, has been consumed of late with his work at the resurrected City Opera. The first two productions, of Hugo Weisgall's "Esther" and Mozart's "Don Giovanni," have just closed, and to judge from the confidence and quality of the singing over all, especially by the young, gifted and theatrically game artists in Christopher Alden's boldly modern production of "Don Giovanni," Mr. Murphy is running an effective music department.

As a professional couple the Murphys have recently seen the release of "Lullabies and Nightsongs" on Koch Records, a program of beguiling, tender works by the American composer Alec Wilder, whose music, which draws from jazz and popular song, has won him a devout if small following.

The original Wilder scores were not much more than sketches, with vocal parts and minimal piano accompaniments. For this album the jazz pianist and arranger Gil Goldstein prepared alluring arrangements with richly harmonic piano parts and, now and then, a bit of accordion. And the engineers have captured the honeyed warmth of Ms. Murphy's voice beautifully.

The Murphys know a thing or two about lullabies, being the parents of four children: Christopher, 14; Sean, 11; Patrick, 7; and Katie, 5. Home is a bustling, cheery apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where, as much as possible, the family makes

having dinner together a priority.



Mr. Murphy, in 1996, playing for the Met rehearsal of "Cosi Fan Tutti."

Kevin and Heidi Grant Murphy have long been recital partners, and over the years at the Met, Ms. Murphy was often coached by her husband, sometimes a challenging situation.

"We met making music," Ms. Murphy said. "So music was our connection and what made us fall in love." Yet there is a fine line to tread, she added.

"I think Kevin should love everything about me," she said. "And when you are an expert, like he is, on all different styles and languages, and I need his help, it's hard to take certain things from him. He's my husband. It's much easier to take it from a teacher or a coach."

On the other hand, Mr. Murphy said, they make a trusting and experienced musical team. "We do concerts together regularly," he said. The new Wilder album is their fourth joint recording.

How do they juggle work and home life? There was no better way to answer the question, they suggested, than to have me come to dinner with the children, as I did recently. Since it was Veterans Day, a school holiday, there was time to tuck away some of the children's clutter and put a tablecloth on the wood table in the dining area, to "cover all the Magic Marker scrawls," Ms. Murphy said. Even though she had rehearsed at the Met that day, and Mr. Murphy had been busy at his City Opera studio, they found time

to make braised beef ribs, roasted potatoes and green beans, which the children washed down with impressive quantities of milk. Even their grandfather Don Murphy, retired from an auto dealership in Syracuse, happened to be there for dinner.

All the children have nice voices, Ms. Murphy said, but none are particularly interested in opera. Christopher, a budding athlete, likes rap and is angling for guitar lessons. Sean enjoys cutting-edge pop music, and Patrick prefers "lyric pop," as his mother put it, especially the Beatles.

Katie especially enjoyed going with her father to a movie theater this year to see their mother in the Met's HD broadcast of Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice." In this Mark Morris production Ms. Murphy played the god Amor, descending from the clouds suspended on wires, an Ellen DeGeneres look-alike come to earth to rectify Orfeo's dilemma. Being able to eat popcorn while watching Mom on the big screen was really neat, Katie said.

After dinner Mr. and Ms. Murphy spoke of how their student training had brought them together and readied them for the profession. In 1992 Mr. Murphy became the first pianist invited into the Met's young artist program, previously open only to singers. Ms. Murphy also passed through the program, although becoming a singer was not what she had initially planned.

She entered the master's program at Indiana University, having received an undergraduate degree in music education at Western Washington University, intending to become a high school chorus director. A teacher at Indiana urged her to enter the Met's National Council Auditions.

The night before a regional round of the competition in Seattle, Ms. Murphy,

intimidated, wanted to pull out. Having “the instrument in your throat” is not enough, she said; becoming a singer “takes work on your psyche, your innermost being.”

She called Mr. Murphy, who was at home in Syracuse, and he emboldened her to compete. She won and was soon on her way to the winners’ concert with the Met orchestra in New York, where the 10 finalists sang two arias each.

These concerts are always billed as opportunities to hear the opera stars of tomorrow. On this occasion, in 1988, it was true. Four of the finalists who performed were Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Ben Heppner and Ms. Murphy.

Ms. Murphy was immediately invited by James Levine to enter the young artist program. Just being at the Met — listening to rehearsals and observing everything — was as much a part of her education as the coaching and performances.

“I watched Kathy Battle sing everything,” she said. “I watched Renée, Susan Graham, Dawn Upshaw, Ruth Ann Swenson. All these ladies I learned from. It was amazing.” In 1991, when she sang Barbarina in Mozart’s “Nozze di Figaro,” the Countess was Kiri Te Kanawa and Cherubino was Frederica von Stade.

But she still felt young and green, being thrown into the Met in her early 20s. She sang with Luciano Pavarotti at the Met, performing Oscar in Verdi’s “Ballo in Maschera” and Giannetta in Donizetti’s “Elisir d’Amore,” before she had ever sat in an opera house anywhere and heard him.

A rosy bloom in the sound is part of the job description for a light, lyric soprano like Ms. Murphy. It can be hard to maintain that youthful sheen as a singer

matures. As Sister Genovieffa in “Suor Angelica” recently, singing with sweet tone and bright clarity, Ms. Murphy captured the combination of wide-eyed freshness and wistful reverie as the nun who recalls her shepherdess childhood and longs to see a little lamb again, just once.

Mr. Murphy, unlike his wife, knew early on that he wanted to work in opera. Still, the path to his City Opera post over the last few years was an unlikely one.

In the 2005-6 season Ms. Murphy had a series of plum roles at the Paris National Opera. Mr. Murphy suggested that he take a break from the Met and move the family to Paris for an adventure.

“I had been at the Met for 16 great years,” he said, and this seemed like “a good idea, a good break.” It turned out wonderfully. The Murphy children loved the experience and picked up some French, especially Christopher. Gerard Mortier, then the director of the Paris Opera, invited Mr. Murphy to take charge of the music staff.

Mr. Mortier was already scheduled to leave the Paris company. “I knew this would be a short-term position,” Mr. Murphy said. But it was too good to turn down. For a season, with his family back home, he commuted between Paris and New York. Then Mr. Mortier, hired to take over the New York City Opera, asked Mr. Murphy to take on the music department there. Mr. Mortier’s involvement with the City Opera ended in debacle. But when he abruptly left the company, Mr. Murphy stayed.

Mr. Murphy said that Mr. Levine has been completely supportive of his choices. “Jimmy is like everybody’s teacher,” Mr. Murphy said, and Ms. Murphy agreed. What really made a difference in her career, she said, was “that a few people at a certain time took

an interest in me and guided me, and one of them was Jimmy Levine.”

“I will forever be grateful,” she added.

By this point in the evening and the interview, it came time to get the children to bed. But Katie did not need an Alec Wilder lullaby or any other. As her parents talked opera, and her brothers caroused in the bedroom, she fell asleep on the sofa.

BELLINGHAM HERALD

August 17, 2012

Western alum and soprano to receive honorary doctorate at summer graduation

By Kie Relyea

BELLINGHAM - A man helping with the sound check in Carver Gym on Friday, Aug. 17, turned to Western alum Heidi Grant Murphy and asked: "Are you the opera singer? I've heard you have a magnificent voice."

Dressed casually in a coral top and capri pants, the Bellingham native stepped behind two microphones and, seemingly with little effort, sang the national anthem as the small group of people prepping the gym for Western's summer graduation ceremony fell silent.

"Closer, farther? Am I OK?" the famed soprano asked after she finished and after the clapping ended.

Murphy, who also is a Bellingham High School graduate, will sing the national anthem at Western's summer graduation ceremony in the gym Saturday, when she will receive an honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts.

"I was incredibly honored by it and the generosity. It's wonderful to reward someone for a body of work," the 46-year-old said of receiving the degree.

That body of work could have been something entirely different.

The down-to-earth Murphy had planned to be a high school music teacher and volleyball coach in Bellingham before she went to WWU, where her professors suggested she major in vocal performance.

"This school is a special school for me," said Murphy, who still has family in Bellingham and who tries to visit once a year.

While in graduate school at Indiana University, she won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was offered

a spot in the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

She was 22 years old.

That was the beginning of more than 20 years with the Met, as well as with other companies such as the Netherlands Opera, Frankfurt Opera and Opera National de Paris.

She has earned accolades from the likes of The Boston Globe, Newsday, The New York Times, Associated Press, among others, who praised her technical control coupled with the silvery and graceful characteristics of her voice.

In August 2011, she was appointed as adjunct professor of practice at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.

In that role, she hopes to impart what she's learned to graduate students in her opera workshop class, including the importance of singing from "the inside out," singing in a way that connects with listeners and moves them.

With opera singers, the repertoire is so difficult and so technical that "sometimes they forget it's not about technique, it's about communicating something," Murphy said.

Murphy said she'll teach as her singing career allows.

Vocally, she's in her prime. But emotionally and as a mother, she said it's difficult to be away from the four children she had with her husband Kevin.

"I still love it. It's just harder and harder to go," Murphy explained.

For those who can't get to Western for Saturday's ceremony, Murphy said she will return next year to perform at the



Bellingham Festival of Music.
Upcoming projects include one with
composer Roberto Sierra on a piece
commissioned by the Detroit Symphony.
That Christmas song cycle will premier in
December.

And what of Murphy? What does the
woman in possession of such a voice - "It's
an absolute joy. It is a blessing." - listen to
when she wants to kick back?
That would be Ella Fitzgerald.
"The ease of her voice," she said, "it's just
butter."

Heidi Grant Murphy

**musical
america
WORLDWIDE**

August 4, 2011

Pianist Kevin Murphy, Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy Appointed to Jacobs School

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- The Indiana University Jacobs School of Music announced today that pianist and vocal coach Kevin Murphy and soprano Heidi Grant Murphy will join its faculty as professor of practice and adjunct professor of practice, respectively, this fall.

Both artists, whose careers have flourished internationally for the past two decades, are alumni of the Jacobs School.

"The Jacobs School is thrilled to welcome back to IU these two graduates who mean so much to the musical world and who have so much to offer our students," said Gwyn Richards, dean of the Jacobs School of Music.

The first pianist to be named to the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera and former directeur des etudes musicales at the Opéra National de Paris, Kevin Murphy has been director of music administration at the New York City Opera since September 2008. This month, he also assumes the position of director of the vocal program at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute.

"It is an honor and a thrill to join the distinguished faculty of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University," said Murphy. "As a graduate of IU (BM'87) and a student of Menahem Pressler, I have always been proud to share the value of my educational training at the Jacobs School with others. I now look forward to sharing my professional experiences with the extraordinarily gifted young musicians at IU and becoming a member of one of this country's most vital and influential musical communities."

One of the outstanding vocal talents of her generation, Heidi Grant Murphy has appeared with many of the world's finest opera companies and symphony orchestras, recently celebrating her 20th season with the Metropolitan Opera.

"If I had not attended Indiana University, I would not have had the opportunity to participate in the Metropolitan Opera auditions as a representative of IU or work with the young and talented pianist Kevin Murphy," said Murphy. "I am pleased to join the gifted faculty of the Jacobs School of Music as adjunct professor of practice as I continue my professional career, and Kevin and I are excited to have the opportunity to make a home for our family in Bloomington."

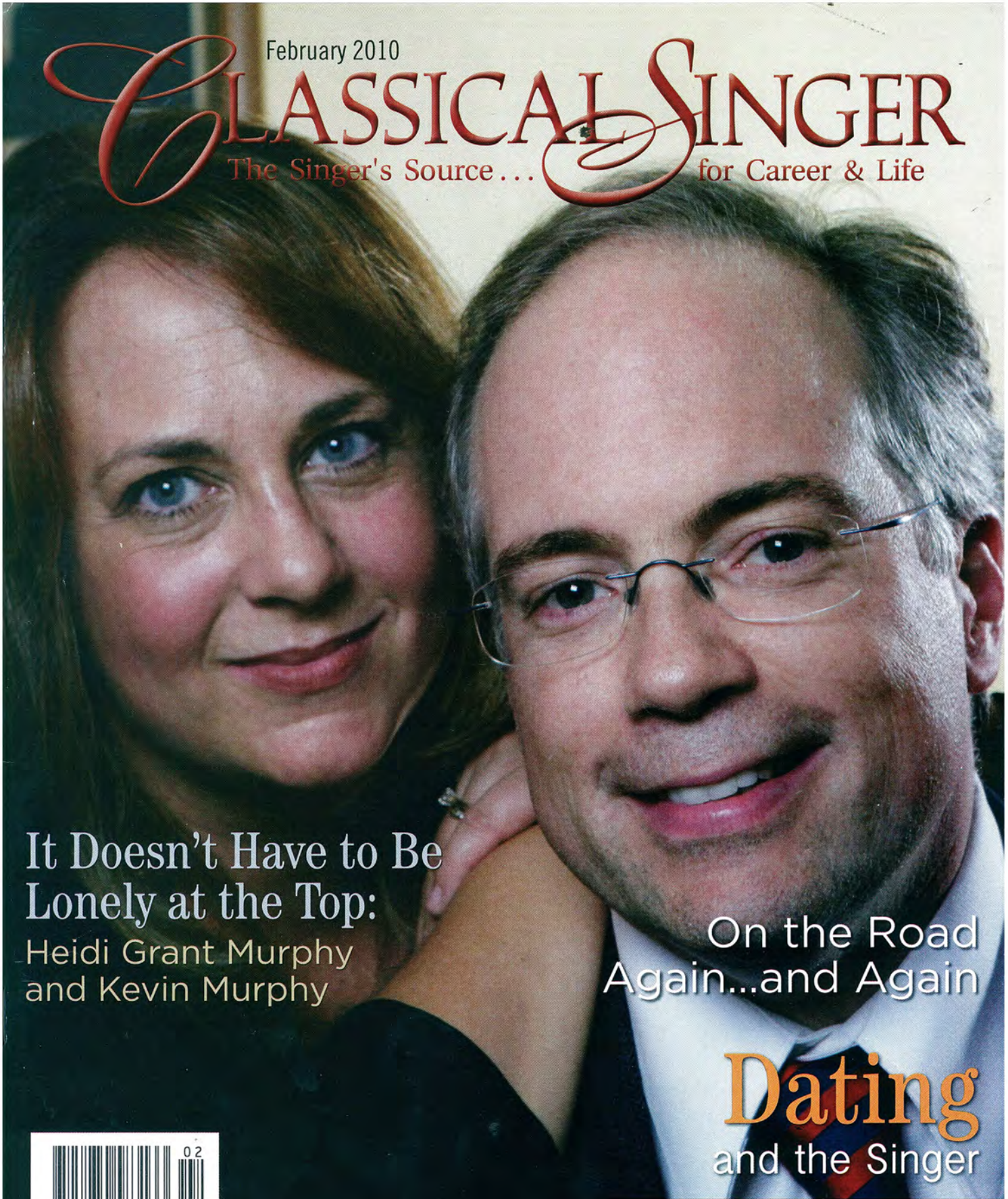
"What a wonderful day this is for the Voice Department!" said Mary Ann Hart, department chair. "Kevin and Heidi bring impeccable musicianship, an enormous knowledge of vocal repertoire and a wealth of experience to our students. I have often played their recordings in my song literature classes and held them up as examples of artists who put the music first. I look forward to welcoming them to our faculty."

Heidi Grant Murphy

February 2010

CLASSICAL SINGER

The Singer's Source... for Career & Life



It Doesn't Have to Be
Lonely at the Top:

Heidi Grant Murphy
and Kevin Murphy

On the Road
Again...and Again

Dating
and the Singer



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Top: The Murphy children (L to R): Christopher, Sean, Katie, and Patrick

Below: Kevin Murphy, Heidi Grant Murphy



It Doesn't Have to Be Lonely at the Top

An Interview with Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy and Pianist Kevin Murphy

by Jill Anna Ponasik

Collaboration is something that this husband-and-wife team has done and continues to do on a myriad of levels. From the beginning of their relationship when Kevin played for Heidi's voice lessons in college to marrying to rearing four kids, the two have honed the art of working together. As Heidi celebrates 20 years at the Met and continues to pursue an international singing career and Kevin steps into his new role as music administrator at New York City Opera, both agree that what keeps them grounded is their commitment to each other and their family.



photo by Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

T rue confessions. This is the first interview that I've conducted in my pajamas. I assumed it would be a challenge to find a time when both members of this powerhouse couple could speak with me at once, but I was still surprised when we settled on 8:30 a.m. as our best choice. I may have been sleepy, but husband-and-wife team Heidi

Grant Murphy and Kevin Murphy's voices cracked over the phone line—not with fatigue, but with good cheer, quick wit, and obvious affection.

Heidi, it's your 20th season at the Met. That's amazing!

Heidi Grant Murphy: It *has* been amazing. I feel very proud that I'm still

around and doing good work. It's hard to imagine that it has been this long. The Met gave me my start and nurtured me for all those years. Each opportunity I get to sing there, I'm just euphoric.

You started right at the top. Have things evolved the way you thought they might? In 1989, did you think that 20 years from now, you would be where you are?

HGM: In 1989 I don't think I knew what the possibilities were. Soon after that, I had visions of what they could be. But what really changed the picture for me was having children.

Tell me more about that.

HGM: We just jumped in and, for most of my career, I have to say that I haven't suffered much. I was able to do pretty much what I wanted to until just a few years ago when I had to start saying no to opera jobs that were far away or had long rehearsal periods. Having a child is tricky for anyone, in any business, in any life—but it's a particular challenge in this business. There are male singers out there who have a number of kids, but I don't know many female singers who have four children like I do.

Kevin Murphy: Heidi is lucky in that she has a manager who carefully plans the right projects and knows what her personal needs are.

It certainly doesn't seem as if you've cut back. You may not have accepted some international gigs, but you've been a busy artist.

HGM: I *have* been a busy artist. When I turned 40, I happened to be singing something deeply gratifying with the Cleveland Orchestra, and I remember sitting there and feeling so happy. I was a light soprano still singing with major symphonies and opera houses and I had four beautiful children and a fabulous husband. I couldn't ask for anything else.

Could you describe “A Day in the Life” for me? What’s it like being classical music celebrities and raising your family of four?

KM: Do you want the romantic version or the boring version?

Both!

KM: Well, Heidi is up at 6 a.m. . . .

HGM: I get the eldest up, make breakfast, and have a cup of coffee. Laundry gets thrown in, kids go off to school, I try to find a time to sing. There’s pick-up from school if I don’t have a rehearsal at the Met. I get them outside to play, push them through their homework, and make dinner.

KM: We did have a nanny for a lot of years, but now that they’re in school, it’s not so necessary. We kind of trade back and forth. I’ve had Dad stints for a couple of weeks while Heidi is away.

HGM: None of this would be possible without someone as flexible and lovely as Kevin. When I leave, he steps right in. He doesn’t do everything the way that I would, but he does it as well as could be.

Do you have a set system?

KM: No.

HGM: Yes.

I think we’ve found a stylistic difference! So, was that the boring version or the romantic version?

HGM: [laughing] I don’t know if there is a romantic version.

Could you tell me a little bit about how you met?

KM: We met at Indiana University. Heidi had been an education major at Western Washington University and was planning to become a high school music teacher. A teacher at Indiana, who was a friend of mine, convinced her to come audition for graduate school. When I heard her audition, I fell in love with her immediately.

What was that first impression like?

KM: When Heidi sings, you can tell what she’s like as a person—it comes from her heart. She just has this natural connection.

Funny you should say that, because I’ve read reviews that say you can sense Heidi’s warm and generous personality in the sounds of her singing. And I have to agree—she just sounds like a terrifically nice person.

KM: She is!

HGM: You should see me around dinnertime. I’m not so sure.

Heidi, tell me about your first impression of Kevin.

HGM: When I met him, I immediately felt he was a good guy. We struck up a friendship and then the music part of things solidified the rest. He started playing for my voice lessons. That music partnership was a beautiful thing then and has been ever since. It’s a partnership of our hearts, our souls, and our music as well.

I read an interview where you mentioned that, were you to be something other than a singer, you would have selected education as your path. It’s interesting to find out that’s actually what you had in mind.

HGM: I never intended to be a singer, although I always liked to sing. I went to my undergrad to go into education, and in fact I was . . .

KM: [interrupting] You had a job lined up.

HGM: Yeah, I pretty much had a job lined up and then, at the last minute, I threw in a performance degree. A couple of teachers suggested that I at least give it a try. They wanted me to see that there’s life outside of Bellingham, Washington,

“Having a child is tricky for anyone, in any business, in any life—but it’s a particular challenge in this business.

There are male singers out there who have a number of kids, but I don’t know many female singers who have four children like I do.”

where I grew up, went to school, and was going to continue living for the rest of my life. That would have been beautiful, but I would never have met my husband and my life would have been a very different thing.

Kevin, what drew you to collaborative piano?

KM: It was natural. I was always a singer growing up and I took voice lessons in school even though I was a piano performance major. People at music school asked, “Would you like to play for my voice lessons?” and I said, “What does that mean?” When they said, “Well, you get paid!” I thought, “OK! I can help pay for part of my school.” It just began to domino from there. I used to kid the singers that I took more voice lessons than they did because I would go to every studio and hear all the teachers. I’ve always had an affinity for working with singers.

Eventually, it became more interesting for me to play the piano with other people because I think I can be empathetic toward other performers. I can read what they need and help support them, which interests me.

You and Heidi sound as if you sing and play as one—which, knowing of your relationship, isn’t a big surprise—but what caught my attention on your recent recording together, *Lullabies and Nightsongs* (see sidebar), is how perfectly in sync you are with the accordion.

KM: Gil Goldstein is the accordionist. Even before we got together in the sessions, we had an immediate rapport. The sessions themselves were just so much fun. We had such a good time making the recording that we almost didn’t care what happened with the record.

The choice to include accordion on a recording like this is somewhat unconventional.

HGM: I know where you’re going with this and I thought the same thing! When I first saw the accordion in the studio, I thought, “Oh, dear.”



photo by Marty Sohl/Metropolitan Opera

Will you tell me about the decision to include it?

HGM: Some of the songs needed something to connect them, and Gil just started fiddling around. I was floored by the beautiful, haunting, improvisational things he was doing, things that could pull you away from your moment in time to some other place. Immediately we knew that we had to have as much of that as we could.

KM: I just love the sounds that he makes. Gil can make a sound with an accordion that sounds like a voice. It sings. My favorite musicians are people who transcend their particular instruments. He plays the music, and it's not about the instrument.

One thing that struck me as possibly a happy accident is that by introducing the accordion into the mix, it brings out a quality of Americana.

HGM: When we first sat down to talk with Gil, we mentioned that we had done a lot of Copland songs and other folkie things in the past and we loved that sound. He may have had that in his mind when he was arranging Wilder's scores, but none of us had any idea that the accordion would add that much color.

That reminds me of something that I read in the liner notes about wanting to invoke the styles of Aaron Copland, Bill Evans, and J.S. Bach in the

recording. That's quite a trilogy.

KM: They sound so different, but those three guys have a lot in common.

Like what?

HGM: They can make complex music sound simple.

The original book of Wilder songs was illustrated by Maurice Sendak. What were some of those illustrations?

HGM: Each one of those songs had a little illustration. They're beautiful in that there are a lot of dark colors, night colors, and blues.

Did those inform your work, because the CD seems to sound like that.

KM: I think we all had that in our heads a little bit.

HGM: One of our favorite books happens to be *Where the Wild Things Are*. I think the things we love about it are the elements of unpredictability, of being childish and interesting, and using the imagination right up to the edge of “too scary.” There’s a little bit of that throughout all these songs, which made them interesting and fun to do.

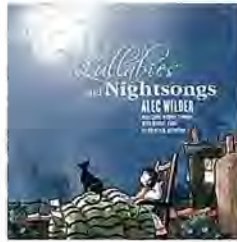
Heidi, your voice just shimmers through each song on the recording. I’ve noticed you seem to elicit more heavenly metaphors than other singers and I don’t think it’s just the sound of your voice. It seems to have something to do with your delivery. It’s so serene and sounds so easy.

KM: Heidi would never say this, but it’s just her goodness. There’s a goodness in Heidi and her sound. She’s a decent human being, and you can hear it.

I do think you can hear it. Heidi, you’re compared to “heavenly bodies” on a regular basis. Are there ever times when you think, “I just don’t think I can do it today?”

HGM: Just having children does that to you. There are days when it’s so exhausting. One moment there’s a rag on your right shoulder for the burps, and then you have to do a quick change and go sing something. But the moment you hear that overture, it does something to you. It changes you and draws out some part of you that is the musician, the performer, the perfectionist. It’s the part of you that says, “these people want to be inspired.” So you just do it.

KM: I can tell you something else about Heidi—no matter what the stresses are, she can always step up and do it. She never lets anything creep into her performance.



‘Lullabies and Nightsongs’

A brand new CD featuring Heidi Grant Murphy and Kevin Murphy

When record producer Susan Napodano DelGiorno visited the library one September day in 2007, she came home with a special treasure: an anthology of miniature lullabies and night songs by the late Alec Wilder. She contacted jazz artist Gil Goldstein to create new arrangements, which he did, slyly embedding each song with either rhythmic, intervallic, or harmonic concepts. With the addition of Heidi Grant Murphy’s soprano, Kevin Murphy’s piano, and Goldstein himself on accordion, the three recording artists make an inspired team.

The 28 tracks of the CD include early childhood classics like “Rock a Bye, Baby,” “All the Pretty Horses,” and “Douglas Mountain” as well as more obscure fare like “The Elephant Present” (a 29-second story about the challenges of gift wrapping a pachyderm) and “The Cottager to Her Infant.” Surprisingly, some of the most interesting music occurs in the improvised interludes that are beautifully used to weave these little gems into a comprehensive, dreamlike whole. In these, the piano, voice, and accordion move us through key areas and into and out of songs as if we’re children ourselves on a nighttime adventure.

Each instrument explores a broad, and sometimes unexpected, range of color and texture. Grant Murphy’s voice is predictably honeyed and glowing, but it’s also satisfying to hear her deep, slow breaths as she prepares for the luxurious phrases in these arrangements. Goldstein’s accordion is shockingly wistful, reminding us that childhood is both sweet and sad. From the moment his playing enters the scene after Grant Murphy’s humming in “Chinese Baby Song,” one cannot imagine this album without it. Murphy, a consummate collaborative pianist, supports each of these artists with ease and understatement.

The overall effect is a children’s album that is, in its harmonic richness, careful phrasing, and artistic integrity, quite grown up. It was, in fact, important for the team to not write down to children, but to write up to them instead. They’ve succeeded in writing beautifully to all of us.



What do you think prepared you for that?

HGM: My upbringing. My mom and dad are wonderful, “salt of the earth” people. My father is a minister, my mom is a nurse, and I have three sisters. We were our own best friends. My mom and dad were the greatest influences in my life.

There was a time when some people wanted me to go into Christian contemporary music and I got it into my mind that I was going to be a recording artist like Amy Grant. My dad said, “That’s not what it’s all about. Go to school and finish the degree. Get to work!” In the end, that helped me. Coming home and having to change diapers also helped me.

I would imagine that’s indeed a big part of it. Although having

a family challenges you in terms of flexibility, it also serves as something that grounds you because you have to be there.

HGM: Precisely. I can think of one instance when I was singing an opera in a foreign country and I was just not happy with it. I would come home discouraged and unhappy, and these beautiful children would come running up and immediately change how I felt. On the other hand, there were times when we’d have an opening night that was all sparkles and champagne and I would come home feeling like I was the most important person in the world, and someone would throw up. You can only laugh.

I was watching some clips of your work, and it got me thinking about the spectacle involved in so many productions at the Met. I wondered, what are some of the most frightening things that you’ve had to do? Of course, I’m already thinking of the Mark Morris *Orfeo ed Euridice* when you were flown in as Amore.

HGM: Thankfully, I’m not afraid of heights. But I’ll tell you what—that was still pretty frightening. Oh my goodness! I don’t even know how high the top of the stage is, but in order to be strapped in and brought down, you have to go up several stories more to get to the catwalk. I had to lean out while somebody would hold onto the back of my pants so they could attach the cables. There was a period of one or two minutes there where I was looking down, seeing Jimmy [Levine], Stephanie [Blythe], and David [Daniels] way down there doing their thing. I had to trust that the fabulous, historical establishment that is the Met would keep me from falling to my death.

You are a brave soul. Was it exhilarating?

HGM: No. If I got to jump or something, maybe. The hard part was stepping off. They would bring the slack out of the wires and I’d have to step off the platform myself, just knowing that they would hold me. Then I’d slowly be lowered down.

Anything else?

KM: [whispers] The horse.

HGM: Oh yes, the horse. There used to be a horse that Nannetta [in *Falstaff*] would come in on to sing her little aria in the third act. The first time I ever did that, I was really young and I was covering Barbara Bonney. The horse had been fairly well behaved for most of her performances and then, of course, it was my turn.

I got up there, and the handler said, “You know, the horse is kind of agitated tonight. I’m not sure what’s going on.” I thought, “No big deal, I’m a big girl. I can do this.” I got on the horse and we began walking out, but it wasn’t exactly walking. The horse was actually bouncing up and down. I sang the first part of the aria and then slipped right off and sang the second part on the floor.

You did?

HGM: I did. I had to. I wasn't going to be able to sing anything sustained while something was bumping me.

So now you have a "no horse riding" clause in your contracts?

HGM: [laughing] I wish.

Kevin, you're now the director of music administration at New York City Opera. What exactly does that mean?

KM: Primarily, I'm the head of the music staff. I help oversee the music part of things and am involved in the casting of singers. From the moment that we audition and cast a singer, I take care of them and help coach them, keeping my eye on

Murphy performs with the New York Philharmonic, 2004.

the performances to make sure that everything stays where it's supposed to stay while trying to keep elevating the musical level.

In a way, it's always been part of what I do. From the time that I was a student at Indiana University and the Curtis Institute, through my 16 years at the Met, I've always been interested in working with singers and helping them get better. Now that I've been in the business for 20 years, I see the younger ones coming out of college and it's a passion of mine to help them, collaborate with them, and perform with them.

HGM: Frankly, Kevin would never say this but, in my opinion, he's one of the very best. People who work with him come from all over the world to do it. Although his main job



photo by Chris Lee

"There's nobody in the world who knows my voice better. Sometimes, I swear, all he has to do is look at me a certain way and I know what he's going to say."

now is working at City Opera, what he does in the vocal coaching arena is spectacular.

What was it like being the first pianist in the Young Artist Program at the Met?

KM: I was lucky to have had a lot of access to Maestro Levine. He was one of my most influential teachers. When you make music with him, you feel very comfortable because it makes sense. It has a "just right"-ness about it. When you hear a performance of something that he does, you don't say, "Oh that's a good tempo," you say, "That's the way it goes."

I've read that you're also Heidi's coach. What's that like?

HGM: That's a very good question. There's nobody in the world who knows my voice better. Sometimes, I swear, all he has to do is look at me a certain way and I know what he's going to say. He doesn't even have to say it out loud. He's my best eyes and ears, and I think that is why I'm still singing as healthfully as I am after 20 years of a rigorous career.

What are you looking forward to right now?

HGM: I'll give you the same answer that I probably would have given you years ago. I look at what I have scheduled for the next few months, and that would

be the next project I am looking forward to. In every engagement I accept, there is something artistically satisfying—from the administrative staff to the conductors to my gifted colleagues. How could you not look forward to something like that?

Jill Anna Ponasik is a singer-actor living and working in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she is the artistic director of Milwaukee Opera Theatre. Upcoming projects include "26"—a collision of dance, film, and 26 Italian songs and arias—and the commissioning of a brand new operetta for children. She is online at www.jillannaponasik.com.



Heidi Grant Murphy

Austin American- Statesman

June 4, 2011

Conspirare sings Roberto Sierra's Missa Latina

By Luke Quinton

The title of Conspirare's final undertaking this season is a bilingual double entendre: Missa Latina means Latin Mass in Spanish, but the lush work by Puerto Rican composer Roberto Sierra refers equally to the sounds of Latin America and to the Latin of Rome. Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare will join the Victoria Bach Festival Chorus and members of the Texas State University Chorale to swell into a massive ensemble of 150 singers plus orchestra.

Sierra, taking time to speak from upstate New York, talks excitedly about the piece he first wrote in 2006, a recording of which won a Grammy in 2009.

"That it was appealing for enough numbers of people to join it — that's really wonderful," he says, his accent pulling on each vowel.

When Sierra originally took the 2006 commission, it was open-ended. "They were not expecting me to write a mass.

"And I didn't write a mass because I am a very religious person, because, although I was raised Catholic, you know, I do not go to church every Sunday. In fact, I go to church only on specific occasions — a wedding or a baptism."

The musical mass that Sierra crafted came from a childhood of Sundays. "I used to go to Mass as a child, and it's basically those memories," he says.

The Mass that Sierra remembers was a strange ceremony that entranced centuries of young Catholics and was celebrated in an otherwise dead language: Latin.

"That was changed after, in one of the



Heidi Grant Murphy has performed Missa Latina more than any other soprano. She says the work is daunting but that it 'unites beautiful, beautiful melodies in a complex piece.'

Vatican councils, I think in the early '60s," he says.

Celebrating Mass in another language was a formative if strange experience. "Well, Spanish has Latin roots, but more than strange, it was something mysterious," he says, his voice emulating awe. "It was like a ritual."

"The fact that it was set in Latin made it more ritualistic than when you hear it in your own language and you understand it. Not understanding something has a mystery attached to it.

"Once you know what it's saying, it's 'ah, sure, that's what it's saying,'" he says. "In other words, (Latin) sounds like magical words."

Like the incantation of a spell? "Exactly," he says.

Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy has performed Missa Latina more than any other soprano to date, and speaking from her New York apartment, she sounds as though she has fallen under its spell.

"It's a daunting piece," she says. "It has these underneath rhythms that are phenomenal."

Sierra "unites beautiful, beautiful melodies in a complex piece," Murphy says. "You're listening to something that just pulls on your heartstrings, yet you know that there's just so much else going on that you can't figure it all out on the first hearing."

"I just love that he has incorporated a real spice of a different culture into something we traditionally think of as church music," she says.

The merging of the Latin and the Latino is illuminating. "It's one of those pieces that's very unusual. Even though it has the Latin text, it has this spice to it."

Sierra, whose son lives in Brownsville, is keenly aware of his work's heritage.

"One of the aspects that links us all, either Mexican Americans or Caribbean Americans, is the culture \u2026 of Catholicism."

This cultural upbringing, says Sierra, lends itself to a common experience, transcending any geographical divide. "When they experience it, they identify with the vision of it."

Is it a very personal work? "I believe so. I think all works are, but this one in particular," he says.

"It's — I don't know how to say it — maybe a landmark moment for me." He hesitates, then says, "To have written this piece?"

Missa Latina is a soaring operatic mass that recalls the Latino forays of Leonard Bernstein. Behind Murphy and baritone Daniel Teadt will be waves of voices: 30 or 40 per part in the chorus.

"That's going to be a massive sound," Sierra says. "It will be great."

'Missa Latina 'Pro Pace (For Peace)'

When: 7 p.m. Sunday, June 12

Where: Dell Hall, Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside Drive

Cost: \$20-\$50

Heidi Grant Murphy

The★Star.
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

April 3, 2010
by John Heuertz



Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy will perform with the Kansas City Symphony this weekend.

Kansas City Symphony presents works of Ravel, Barber and Mahler

Many of us over a certain age understand the concept of yearning for the people and places that aren't around anymore, and the rightness of honoring them in music, too.

The Kansas City Symphony will explore this territory Friday and Saturday with a program of music by Maurice Ravel, Samuel Barber and Gustav Mahler.

"What spurred the idea to program these three works together was Mahler's Fourth Symphony, the most nostalgic, gentle and most intimate that Mahler ever wrote as a symphonist," Symphony music director Michael Stern said. "It's music to revel in."

American soprano Heidi Grant Murphy will sing in the Mahler and in Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915." It's her

debut collaboration with the Symphony.

"I've visited Kansas City a few times for chamber music or recital programs, but this is a first," she said. "I'm looking forward to it."

Mahler finished his Fourth Symphony in 1901 and conducted its premiere that November.

The last movement, with tempo marking "Sehr behaglich" ("Very comfortably"), is the only one of its four movements scored for soprano.

The last movement is soft, easy and pastoral, for the most part. It's built around the song "Das himmlische Leben" ("The Heavenly Life").

Mahler wrote the song in 1892. It's his

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idea of a child's vision of heaven and the entire last movement is sung by the soprano.

Heaven, of course, implies death, and Mahler's song is emotionally quite complex. Considering that Mahler's narrator is a child, it's also a perfect vehicle for Murphy's voice, which *Newsday* has described as "immaculate, silvery and youthful."

"The Mahler is very well composed," Murphy said. "It's four beautiful movements, and sometimes if they're played very, very well, you have to live up to that."

Murphy will sing the Barber in the first half of the program.

"Knoxville: Summer of 1915" was commissioned in 1947 and first performed by legendary soprano Eleanor Steber.

Barber set to music James Agee's 1938 prose poem of the same name and captured Agee's intensely evocative words with music that Americans especially will find very affecting.

"I've performed it in other countries, and I'm not sure it goes over as well overseas," Murphy said.

Which is a pity, because Murphy undoubtedly was right to say, "It's an absolutely beautiful, haunting, lovely piece. It has a real feel of America."

Maurice Ravel — half Swiss, half Basque — loved France and its musical traditions, and the Symphony's nonvocal work this weekend is his "Le Tombeau de Couperin," written to honor friends who had died fighting for France in World War I.

Ravel pulled every string he could to enlist when the war broke out in 1914. But he was denied on the grounds that he was a national treasure and that endangering him was contrary to the French war effort.

Instead, he served as an ambulance driver and wrote "Le Tombeau de Couperin," orchestrating its six movements in 1919 from piano music he wrote during the war.

The title is a little misleading, a Ravel specialty.

He wanted to honor the conventions of French baroque keyboard suites, not the Couperin family.

This cheerful, beautifully orchestrated music honors the dead by reminding us that life is worth living — meaning his friends' lives were worth living.

"I love this program," Stern said. "It brings together music full of nostalgia, the ache of loss, and the innocence of childhood evocative of a certain time and place."

Heidi Grant Murphy



October 2009

Music

Mama diva

On a new CD, an opera singer trades arias for z's. By **Jen Nails**

How does soprano Heidi Grant Murphy make time for her four kids (ages 5, 6, 11 and 14) and find the energy to perform regularly with the Metropolitan Opera? "It's been an issue," she says, her giggle subverting any weariness she may feel. "It's a hard career when you have lots of children." On a typical weekday, she rallies the troops at 6am, makes four lunches, then drops everybody off at their Manhattan schools. Afterward, she tackles classroom projects—did we mention she volunteers as a class parent?—and, of course, vocal rehearsals. And as if she weren't busy enough, *die Muttersinger* has just released her first CD for kids, *Lullabies and Nightsongs*.



Heidi Grant Murphy and her youngest child, five-year-old Kathleen

Adapted from a 1965 songbook of the same name—with melodies by composer Alec Wilder and illustrations by Maurice Sendak—the album is a delightful collection of 24 verses both well known ("Rock a Bye, Baby") and less so ("The Crocodile"). Grant Murphy's voice is, as you'd expect, stunning, and she shows tremendous stylistic

versatility. In the whimsical "The Elephant Present," she ponders how on earth to get the darn thing wrapped. The torch-song tenderness of "All the Pretty Horses" will move you to tears—of joy, as the soothing tune ushers your Peanut off to slumberland.

Before her own little ones came along, Grant Murphy considered

and then shelved the project in favor of other pursuits. Fast-forward 15 years: The youngest and most musically inclined Murphy child, Kathleen, was charmed by the songs her class sang at preschool. This inspired mama Heidi to revisit that idea from years ago, and *Lullabies and Nightsongs*, with papa Kevin on piano, finally came to life.

Born and raised in Bellingham, Washington, Grant Murphy began singing as a teen. In grad school at the Indiana University School of Music, she won entry into the Metropolitan Opera's Young Artist Development Program. This year marks her 20th anniversary with the company—yet another milestone in a career, and a life, filled with them.

Get to know other local musicians at timeoutkids.com

Heidi Grant Murphy

OPERA NEWS

January 2007

Opera Watch

by So-Chung Shinn

5. On January 31, soprano **HEIDI GRANT MURPHY** and pianist **KEVIN MURPHY** join the **ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET** for the world premiere of Roberto Sierra's *Songs from the Diaspora* at Penn State's Center for the Performing Arts, followed by a seven-city U.S. tour. Later in February, the soprano offers recitals and master classes in Michigan and Arkansas before a spring sojourn at the Met in new productions of *Il Trittico* (Suor Genovieffa) and *Orpheus ed Euridice* (Amor).



Peripatetic soprano Murphy

Heidi Grant Murphy

NEW YORK

MUSIC & DANCE

OCTOBER 4, 2004

EDITED BY ALICIA ZUCKERMAN

SPOTLIGHT

Well Versed Augusta Read Thomas finds the music in poetry—then adds her own.

The short and vivid poems of Emily Dickinson are full of dashes and breaks, and they're there for a reason. "She herself said that those places are for musical interludes," explains Augusta Read Thomas, whose *Gathering Paradise: Emily Dickinson Settings for Soprano and Orchestra* will have its world premiere with the New York Philharmonic this Wednesday. "I say that, though, with great humility, because I keep her poems so high in the universe. I'm still way below. I just appreciate what she made." Heidi Grant Murphy will be singing the great poet's words, describing images of light—a literal and metaphorical cycle, running from daybreak to sunset. (Thomas says the piece was "tailor-made for Heidi Grant Murphy," written after the composer spent two months listening to all of the soprano's CDs.) "The only thing I know something about beside music is poetry," explains Thomas, a Long Island native and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's composer-in-residence. On her own most recent CD, . . . *Words of the Sea* . . . *In My Sky at Twilight*, she sets text by Wallace Stevens, W. S. Merwin, Pablo Neruda, and others to music, conducted by Pierre Boulez. "What I love about poetry in general is the music in it, the sense of the beauty of the words, not only their meaning, but the collision of such gorgeous words." Miller Theater will devote one of its signature "Composer Portrait" concerts to Thomas in April. (See "Classical Music.")

A.Z.



Heidi Grant Murphy sings the poetry of Emily Dickinson, backed by the Philharmonic.

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ★

The world premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's *Gathering Paradise*. (See box.) Lang Lang performs Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1; also, Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina* Prelude and Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* Suite. 9/29, 9/30, and 10/5 at 7:30, 10/1 at 2, and 10/2 at 8. • Lincoln Center, Avery Fisher Hall (212-875-5656); \$22-\$90.

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THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

May 27, 2004

May Festival opera singer promotes female composers

By Janelle Gelfand
The Cincinnati Enquirer

If opera singer Heidi Grant Murphy had not won the Metropolitan Opera Auditions as a 22-year-old student at Indiana University, her life would have taken a much different turn.

"I thought that I would be a choral conductor at the local high school – they were saving a position for me," says Murphy. "I thought I'd do that and be a high school volleyball coach. But then I changed my plans – drastically!"

Murphy, 38, makes her May Festival debut this weekend singing Mozart and Mahler.

Since training with the Metropolitan Opera's Young Artist Development Program, she has sung on most of the world's great stages, released several recordings (her CDs of Latin love songs and Christmas songs come out on Koch later this year) and appeared on A&E's *Breakfast with the Arts*.

A champion of female composers – she tries to program one on each recital – her recording of Lili Boulanger's "Clearings in the Sky" (Arabesque Recordings) is



CHRISTIAN STEINER

Heidi Grant Murphy

enchanting. "I think women composers are becoming much more prevalent," says the soprano, who will sing the world premiere of "Gathering Paradise" by Augusta Read Thomas with the New York Philharmonic in September.

The minister's daughter grew up singing in church and school choirs in her hometown of Bellingham, Wash. It was then-boyfriend, now husband pianist Kevin Murphy, who encouraged her to try for the Met's contest. She was flabbergasted when she won.

If you go

What: Cincinnati May Festival.

When: Friday: Mozart's *Regina Coeli*; *Exsultate* *Jubilate* and *Requiem*.

Saturday: Mahler's Symphony No. 8, "Symphony of a Thousand," both at 8 p.m.

Where: Music Hall, 1241 Elm St., downtown. 381-3300 or www.mayfestival.com

Now she realizes that singing has made her what she is.

"It's funny, I look at my four children, and I realize that I am a certain kind of mother because I am a singer," says Murphy, who is bringing her two youngest, ages 18 months and 9 weeks, with her to Cincinnati. "(Singing) gives me confidence, it makes me happy, it fulfills me, all kinds of things. Now, I can't imagine not being a singer."

How does she balance it all?

"I try to get as much sleep as possible and I just don't stop from morning 'til night," she says.

Heidi Grant Murphy

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

August 13, 2004

La Jolla SummerFest 2004

This Met-trained soprano loves music and children

By Valerié Scher
CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

SUMMERFEST SPOTLIGHT Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano

The only singer at this year's SummerFest, Murphy brings her own unique blend of experience and expertise. A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions who trained at the Met's Young Artist Development Program, she has distinguished herself in recordings and live performances, and has worked with such conductors as James Levine, Seiji Ozawa and Herbert Blomstedt.

Find out more about this accomplished soprano, who's featured in upcoming concerts at the La Jolla Music Society's festival.

• **Age:** 38

• **Home:** New York City. She lives with her husband, pianist/vocal coach Kevin Murphy (who will join her in this weekend's performances of music by Chausson and Shostakovich) and their four children: 4-month-old Kathleen; 21-month-old Patrick; Sean, 6; and Christopher, 9.

• **Why she's a musician:** "Music is an expression of what is in my heart and my soul. It's a very



At home, soprano Heidi Grant Murphy listens to recordings by Ella Fitzgerald, James Taylor, Yo-Yo Ma and James Levine conducting Mozart symphonies.

La Jolla Music Society

wonderful way to let out what's inside. You put a piece of yourself out there and hope that people appreciate what you're doing."

• **Influential factors:** "What made me a singer is that I grew up in a very warm family environment (in Bellingham, Wash.) where we sang and sang. My father was a minister who was also a self-taught musician. He played guitar and marimba in addition to singing. Me and my three sisters had music all around us."

• **The worst thing about being a professional singer:** "The traveling, when it takes me away from my children."

• **The best thing:** "Being a singer makes me confident. That makes me a better mom and a better person. It gives me something that I do really well and adds so much to my life."

• **If she could sip a glass of seltzer water (one of her favorite beverages) with any composer, past or present, it would be:** "Mozart. I sing a lot of Mozart (including works she performed in last

Thursday's SummerFest opener at downtown's Copley Symphony Hall), and I appreciate him so much. I would just love to watch him and listen to him talk. He was such a genius. I'd love to try to understand how it was possible for him to have written such music."

• **Guilty musical pleasure:** Broadway show tunes. She's especially fond of Maury Yeston's song, "New Words," from the show "History Loves Company" (1989). "It's a fabulous song about a mother teaching a child new words, including 'love.' Stephen Sondheim once wrote that he wished he had written it himself."

• **If she wasn't a musician, she would probably be:** a music teacher. "A teacher has so much to offer. I'd always want to be in a field that gives something to people and helps them." (Murphy helped pay her way through college by working as a high school volleyball coach.)

• **The best thing about coming to San Diego:** Enjoying it with her family. "We came to the festival a couple of years ago and did so much, starting with the beach and including the zoo, SeaWorld and Legoland. You can't find a more beautiful setting."

• **At SummerFest:** Murphy will perform in the program to be presented at 7:30 tonight and 3 p.m. Sunday at Sherwood Auditorium in the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 700 Prospect St., La Jolla. Tickets and information: (858) 459-3728 or www.lajollamusicociety.org.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The Arts

The New York Times

FEBRUARY 9, 2003

Singing Angel With a Human Pulse



HIGH NOTES

The soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who makes her Lincoln Center recital debut at Alice Tully Hall this afternoon, has the purity to sound like an angel. She did so recently in San Francisco as the celestial visitor to 13th-century Assisi in Messiaen's opera "St. François d'Assise," climbing into the musical action like a real voyager from another world. But she is an angel with a human pulse and feeling — and a human curiosity.

Her Tully Hall program typically includes a mix of familiar items — a Schubert bunch, including "The Shepherd on the Rock" — with choice findings from the byways of song. She starts with vocalises by Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Copland, and ends with a suite of songs by Gabriel Pierné, a man torn between his teacher Massenet and his fellow conservatory student Debussy.

Here Ms. Murphy continues her useful work of restoring life to French song of around a century ago. Lili Boulanger has already benefited, in recital and on record. From Pierné she selects his "Sérénade" — an invitation to love in the night, and the only song of his that could be described as in any sense popular — along with other youthful numbers. To these she adds a song from his later and generally more serious years, "La Ronde Autour du Monde," a charming piece in which the poet, Paul Fort, imagines all the young people on earth linking hands around the globe.

As she has often proved before, not least in Messiaen, Ms. Murphy has a voice well suited to French music, not only because of her clarity of timbre but also because of her light phrasing, good accent and care for



Keith Saunders

Heidi Grant Murphy gives her Lincoln Center debut recital this afternoon.

words. With her as guide, listeners should find Pierné's gentle idylls discoveries well worth making.

Ms. Murphy includes a handful of show tunes by Frank Loesser, Richard Rodgers and others, and they are tougher material for a classically trained singer, as many have found. This is a new departure for her, and a precarious one, to judge by her new CD ("Times Like This" on Koch International), where again she offers standards — "If I Loved You," "I Could Have Danced All Night" — along with songs that did not make it in quite the same way. Probably this repertory will come off better in the recital hall, with simpler accompaniment. (Her pianist husband, Kevin Murphy, plays throughout the program.) But most likely Schubert and Pierné will be what the audience comes out humming.

PAUL GRIFFITHS



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Winter 2011

RECOMMENDED • ON RECORD

Requiem as Dialogue

Thierry Lancino

Requiem

Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano, et al

Radio France Choir

Philharmonic Orchestra

Eliahu Inbal, conductor



Thierry Lancino's audacious work keeps in the tradition of the Requiem but is by no means traditional, reconceiving the form as a sacred oratorio, or in the words of the composer, "an epic fresco." Inspired by the liturgical text "Dies irae... teste David cum Sibylla" ("Day of wrath... as announced by David and the Sibyl"), Lancino's Requiem unfolds as a dialogue between the pagan Sibyl — from the Greek "Sibylla," meaning "prophetess" — and the biblical David. With the choir functioning as a Greek chorus of sorts, the four soloists are the ora-

torio's principal actors. David is sung by the tenor and the Sibyl by the mezzo-soprano. The soprano (**Heidi Grant Murphy**) is the mortal, suffering Everyman, and the bass represents the warrior side of David. Challenging but approachable, the musical landscape is wide and far-reaching, yet the work's lexicon steers clear of any dogmatic or academic approach. In collaboration with librettist Pascal Quignard (*Tous les matins du monde*), Lancino's Requiem makes for a thoughtful meditation on Death and Time. — B.F.



Heidi Grant Murphy

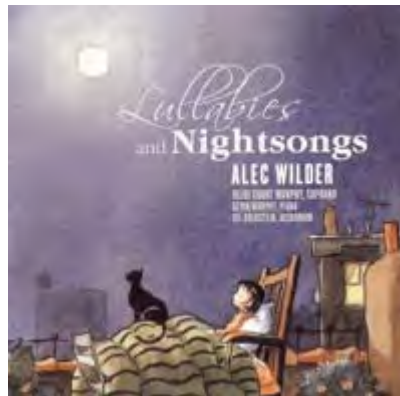
San Francisco
Classical Voice

The Bay Area's Most Complete Source for Classical Music News and Reviews

November 30, 2009

by Jason Victor Serinus

A Gift of Song For the Holidays



Alec Wilder: *Lullabies and Nightsongs*; Heidi Grant Murphy (Koch KIC-CD-7746)

During his lifetime, Alec Wilder (1907-1980) defied categorization. Combining elements of jazz, classical, and popular music, his several hundred compositions include orchestral and chamber music, opera, musical theater, and popular song. Musicians as diverse as Jan DeGaetani, Eileen Farrell, Erich Leinsdorf, David Zinman, Sarah Caldwell, Frank Sinatra, Marian McPartland, Stan Getz, Mabel Mercer, and Doc Severinson have embraced his music.

Record producer Susan DelGiorno and her 4-year-old daughter stumbled on Wilder's songbook, called *Lullabies and*

Night Songs, illustrated by Maurice Sendak, in the public library. Seduced by the music, she brought together Grammy-winning arranger Gil Goldstein, soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, and pianist Kevin Murphy.

It's hard to imagine a finer singer for this material than Murphy. The beauty of her pure, shining voice and the simplicity of her delivery caress Wilder's music with infinite charm. Not only is this recording ideal for children, but the inner child in every one of us will also want to own it. Don't miss this gentle gem.



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Heidi Grant Murphy



June 15-21, 2006

Classical & Opera

Album reviews

New York Philharmonic

★★★★★

Works by Augusta Read Thomas, Jacob Druckman and Stephen Hartke

Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano; the Hilliard Ensemble; Lorin Maazel conducting (New World)

When the New York Philharmonic announced some months ago its resumption of recording activities, the news was greeted with enthusiasm. But two routine concert programs made available for download via iTunes—an overstuffed all-Mozart bill and a mixed bag of Brahms, Kodály and Dvorak—have hardly lived up to the initial fanfare. On the other hand, a CD series on the New World label, intended to preserve the orchestra's recent premieres, stands to be of far greater significance.

For all that he's touted as a master of the basic repertoire, Lorin Maazel's true métier nowadays may be in contemporary music. It is in pieces like the ones on this disc, in which the conductor's keen intellect and unparalleled technique are fully engaged, that Maazel eschews the willful distortions that often disfigure his standard offerings.

Augusta Read Thomas's *Gathering Paradise*, an expressionistic setting

of poetry by Emily Dickinson, backs Heidi Grant Murphy's gleaming voice with vivid, picturesque cadences.

Jacob Druckman's *Summer Lightning* evokes forked tongues of electricity against a glowering sky. In Stephen Hartke's Symphony No. 3, a conscious evocation of September 11, the Hilliard Ensemble sings fragments of an Old English elegy describing a city in ruins. On record, the balance between the early-music consort and orchestra is achieved more readily than had been possible in the concert hall, revealing the work's intricate detail to far greater effect.

—Steve Smith



Heidi Grant Murphy

Gramophone

Volume 79 Number 943

August 2001

Clearings in the Sky

N

Lili Boulanger Clairières dans le ciel

Rachmaninov 6 Songs, Op 38

R Strauss Ständchen, Op 17 No 2.

Morgen, Op 27 No 4. Amor, Op 68 No 5.

Ich wollt ein Sträusslein binden, Op 68 No 2.

Muttertändelei, Op 43 No 2

Heidi Grant Murphy sop **Kevin Murphy** pf

Arabesque Recordings © Z6754 (72 minutes: DDD)

A spell-binding programme attractively sung

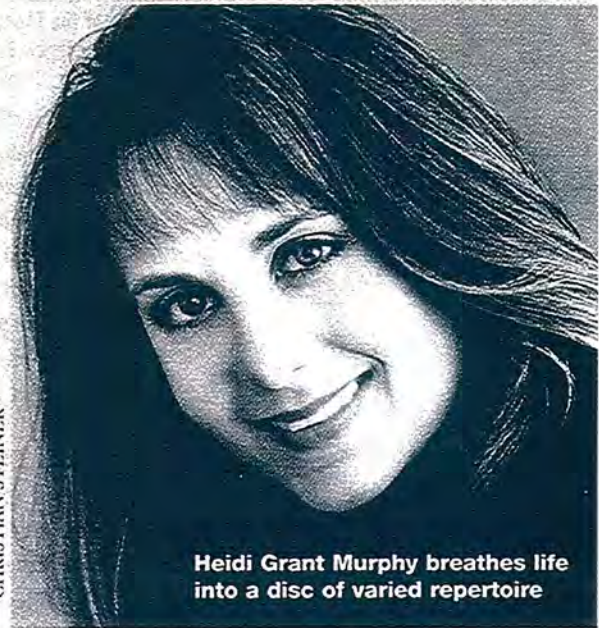


The title of Heidi Grant Murphy's new recital disc is drawn from Lili Boulanger's 1914 song cycle set to verses by the symbolist poet Francis Jammes. *Clairières dans le ciel* comprises 13 songs that show the

French composer at the height of her powers, marrying Jammes' melancholic texts to music of glowing impressionistic character. Breezes of Wagner and Debussy waft through these gorgeous pieces, which nevertheless cast their own distinctive magic. What a loss that Boulanger lived so briefly. The disc's other fare consists of five songs by Richard Strauss, including such well-traversed items as 'Morgen' and 'Ständchen', as well as six by Rachmaninov, here in his most enchanting frame of mind.

Murphy's crystalline soprano and expressive generosity prove an ideal combination to bring this varied repertoire to vivid life. The Boulanger

songs receive exquisite treatment, full of urgent phrasing and delicate nuances. They suggest that Murphy would make a superb Mélisande. Her flexibility and pinpoint intonation make the Strauss songs a delight, even for ears attuned to heavier voices ('Morgen', for example, takes on entirely different shades when sung by an artist like Jessye Norman). Murphy's experience as Strauss's Sophie, and her potential to be a sterling Zerbinetta, can be heard in her lustrous reading of 'Amor'. How accurate her Russian is in the Rachmaninov is for others to say, but Murphy tells each story deftly by employing inflections with a subtle touch. Her collaborator is her husband, Kevin Murphy, whose pianism is vibrant and knowing. **Donald Rosenberg**



CHRISTIAN STEINER

Heidi Grant Murphy breathes life into a disc of varied repertoire



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Heidi Grant Murphy

THE BUFFALO NEWS

March 22, 2014

Clever BPO program pairs Barber with Mahler

By Mary Kunz Goldman

There is an art to putting together a symphony program. And at this weekend's Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra concert, conducted by Music Director JoAnn Falletta, the components fit together beautifully.

Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915" unfolds in a kind of nostalgic, sepia haze. The soprano sings about lost childhood, and her parents, a time and a place that are gone forever. It is lovely but it hurts, too, a lot like the play "Our Town." You think of the years passing, people you have lost.

Then comes Mahler's Fourth Symphony, and it lifts you up. It has its drama and its clashes. In the second movement, you look death right in the face. But then comes the gloriously ethereal slow movement, and from there you soar into the last movement, a vision of heaven, with its song about saints and music and dancing and all the food you can eat, cooked by St. Martha herself. It's childlike and silly at times but in its naivete it is such a statement of faith. And you leave Kleinhans Music Hall smiling, thinking, so this is what life is all about.

In other words, Barber looks backward on this life and Mahler looks forward to the next. It's a great juxtaposition, and a wonderful journey. The audience Saturday applauded it with tremendous warmth.

The concert begins with a buzz. Ralph Vaughan Williams' Overture to "The Wasps" – a BPO first, the program says – is eight minutes long and leaves you wanting more, it's so pretty and vivid. The buzzing of the wasps, courtesy of the strings, is startlingly realistic, and the English folk melodies are a

joy. There were nice notes from the horns and the woodwinds.

"Knoxville: Summer of 1915" also had its share of creative sound effects, fun to hear in pristine Kleinhans. Barber gives you the clang and wheeze of a streetcar, the horn of a 1915 automobile. He also suggests the vast, starry night sky, and the BPO and soprano soloist Heidi Grant Murphy communicated that vision with a natural, unhurried feel. The music had just the right gentleness.

Murphy sang very well, with sweet, clear high notes that you could tell would be great for the Mahler. But it was hard to understand the words she was singing. If you go to today's concert, read the text in the program beforehand. If you don't get to it, all is not lost – it's easy, thanks to the music, to use your imagination. But the prose poem, by James Agee, is just so touching.

The BPO performed the Barber on its 2004 visit to Carnegie Hall. The orchestra is also, happily, no stranger to the Mahler.

Like the Barber, the symphony got a leisurely, loving performance on Saturday. Falletta gave it space and room to breathe. The sleigh bells, the triangle, the sharp blasts from the trumpet, the booms on the timpani – all the instruments were bright and distinct. Michael Ludwig, the concertmaster, put soul into the klezmerish, off-key fiddle solo in the second movement that suggests the dance of death. It was fun, by the way, to see Ludwig walk out with two violins, one in key, one out of key. What if he mixed them up?

Murphy's voice is best in its highest registers. In her lower and middle range, it

can be tough to hear her. There was one moment when she was drowned out completely by a honk from the bassoon. I bet Mahler, with his taste for the grotesque, would have liked that.

The last minutes of the symphony, so full of sighing serenity, drifted by with a lovely languor. The tender descending octaves just

made you want to close your eyes, and now that I think about it, I imagine that must have been the composer's intent. Dear Mahler. All I can think is he is up in heaven now, eating and drinking, with St. Martha waiting on him.

The concert repeats today at 2:30 p.m.

Heidi Grant Murphy

KALAMAZOO
GAZETTE
BEST LOCAL CONNECTION

April 20, 2013

**Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra's
memorable performance of 'Carmina
Burana' brings enthusiastic response**

By C.J. Gianakaris

Music director Raymond Harvey pulled out all the stops Friday before a packed Miller Auditorium for the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra's gigantic enterprise, Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana."

The Grand Chorus (200 strong) and full KSO opened together with an explosive segment, "O Fortuna" (quadruple fortissimo), to establish the work's core: Life's inescapability from the Wheel of Fortune. From there, Orff moves through three phases of life: Nature (In Springtime), bodily pleasures (In the Tavern) and love (The Court of Love). "Carmina" concludes as it began with "O Fortuna" to reinforce the inevitability of our life cycles.

Western's Grand Chorus sang many of the work's central passages. They performed gloriously, with wonderful intonation and articulation. Attacks and releases were flawless, and blend was lovely. High notes emerged clean and on pitch — all that any audience might desire. The "Veni, veni" section (20) was miraculously precise. Conductor Kimberly Adams drew extraordinary singing from her choristers.

The Kalamazoo Children's Chorus (Fred Sang, conductor) played a small but pivotal role in the work's third movement, lending a befitting purity of tone. Their voices were delightful and accurate — kudos.

Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy offered wonderful singing, characterized by

accurate intonation and splendid enunciation. Her creamy sound soared effortlessly into the stratosphere in section 22 ("I am burning"). She cannot be sufficiently praised for a remarkable effort.

Baritone Nmon Ford also impressed the audience with superb singing in "In the Tavern" where his physical actions added to a musky vocal timbre. His high notes stood out, along with effective phrasing. Tenor J. Raymond Myers had one solo, "The Roast Swan" (12), but it was sung amazingly well. Using an incredible counter-tenor range, Myers fulfilled all effects Orff may have sought.

But foremost credit is due Maestro Harvey for miraculously bringing together the disparate elements. His baton insisted on the steadiness required to bring cohesiveness to Orff's rhythmic anomalies. Likewise, the KSO earned high praise for extraordinary efforts in all sections.

The orchestra performed brilliantly in the program's opening work, Borodin's lovely tone poem "In the Steppes of Central Asia." Mozart's sparkling "Exsultate, jubilate" (K. 165), also earlier on the program, was played crisply and precisely by the KSO. Soloist Murphy displayed exceptionally fine singing here, as in "Carmina."

There was a great deal to enjoy in Friday's memorable concert that concluded with wildly enthusiastic audience response.

Heidi Grant Murphy

Music in Cincinnati

May 14, 2012

May Festival Opener Fulfills Tradition

By Mary Ellyn Hutton

For this listener, opening night of May Festival 2012 in Cincinnati's imposing, neo-Gothic Music Hall (built for it in 1877) was everything it is supposed to be.

Herald trumpeters called the audience to their seats, wreaths of flowers decked the proscenium arch, young girls danced around a maypole in the lobby at intermission, and flower girls and boys presented bouquets to the performers at the end. The 139-voice, all-volunteer May Festival Chorus (directed by Robert Porco), 58-voice May Festival Youth Chorus (directed by James Bagwell), 49-voice Cincinnati Boychoir (directed by Christopher Eanes) and 91-piece Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, all led by May Festival music director James Conlon, filled the stage – a total of 340, including soloists, for the evening's blockbuster "Carmina Burana," according to May Festival marketing and communications manager Lauren Hess. The event marked the opening of the 91st May Festival (founded in 1873, the festival was biennial until 1967).

To maximize the experience, visually and aurally, I took my seat in the front row of the gallery, with the hall's enormous crystal chandelier directly above and a panoramic view of Music Hall's 3,400+ red velvet seats (almost, but not quite sold out). It was tradition with a capital "T."

Conlon -- who is celebrating his 33th year at the helm of the festival, a record now equaling that of founder Theodore Thomas -- led off with the "Star Spangled Banner" and welcomed the crowd in remarks from the stage. The theme of the festival's first weekend, he said, was "sacred vs. secular." Then it was on to a generous helping of the

former, with two of Verdi's "Quattro Pezzi Sacri" ("Four Sacred Pieces") to open the concert.

"Stabat Mater" was shaped beautifully, from the stark open fifths at the beginning to the harp-splashed climax. Conlon moved with scarcely a break into the "Te Deum," which was filled with expression. The men's voices opened ever so softly, setting up the glorious fortissimo "Sanctus." "Te gloriosus Apostolorum" ("The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee") was cloaked in warmth by the women's voices, and the a capella (unaccompanied) "Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine" ("Oh Lord, save they people") rang out with steadfastness and strength. A lone soprano at the top of the gallery made the final, heartfelt entreaty "In Te Domine, speravi" ("Oh Lord, in Thee have I trusted").

Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana," one of the May Festival's hardy perennials, received a spirited performance on the second half of the program. The work was framed powerfully by the chorus and orchestra with "O Fortuna" (the spiritual outlook of the monks who penned the text in the 13th century), and the contrasts between movements were vividly drawn. Baritone Stephen Powell announced the twin themes of spring and love smoothly and seamlessly in "Omnia sol temperat" ("All things are tempered by the sun") in part I. The chorus picked it up from there with their joyous "Ecce gratum et optatum" ("Behold the welcome, long-awaited Spring"). The chorus followed with a touch of sadness in "Floret silva nobilis" ("The noble forest"), where a maiden's lover rides away ("equitavit") on his horse, and in the lament



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that followed, “Chramer gip die varwe mir” (“Salesman, give me colored paint”).

The CSO strings sounded like a great big guitar in the “Swaz hie gat umbe” (“They who here go dancing round”), where the men and women answered each other playfully, and the brasses introduced “Were du weit alle min” (“Were the whole world but mine”) with a glittering fanfare.

Powell returned with a vengeance in part II (“In the Tavern”), dispatching big, full high notes in “Estuans interius” (“Seething inside”). Tenor Rodrick Dixon walked on to nail one of the highlights of any “Carmina,” the roasted swan (“Cignus ustus”). The effect was unreal, almost surreal, as he breached the heights of tenordom, singing of the poor swan turning on a spit. Another highlight, the song of the Abbot of Cucany, was delivered skillfully and hilariously, drunken swagger and all, by Powell. Conlon gave pointed emphasis to the Gilbert and Sullivan aspect of the chorus’ “In taberna quando sumus” (“When we are in the tavern”), drawing rowdy oompahs from the CSO brass.

Part III, “The Court of Love,” began with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy and the Boychoir, who gave splendid character

to “Amor volat undique” (“Love flies everywhere”), with its gauzy, meandering woodwinds. It was Powell’s turn to weep in “Dies, nox et omnia” (“Day, night and all the world”), where he negotiated the tricky, melismatic falsetto with deep feeling. Murphy echoed Powell with her gentle, unforced “Stetit puella” (“There stood a young girl”). The courting continued in “Circa mea pectora multa sunt suspira” (“My breast is filled with sighing”), where Powell traded yearnings with the chorus’ “Manda liet, min geselle chumet niet” (“My sweetheart comes not”).

Murphy gave in sweetly and softly (at first) in “In trutina mentis dubia” (“In the scales of my wavering indecision”). The men answered with a triumphant “Tempus est iocumdum” (“Pleasant is the season”), joined lustily by Powell on “Oh, oh, oh totus floreo” (“Oh, I blossom”), punctuated by castanet.

Murphy’s final “Dulcissime” (“Sweetest boy”) was just that, soft, sweet and pure, with nothing forced or heavy. The chorus rang out in response with “Banziflor and Helena,” lit up by bright, metallic percussion, then sealed the evening’s music-making with smooches for all in the concluding “O Fortuna.”

January 9, 2012

**Concert review: IRIS Orchestra's 'Taste of Heaven' elevates spirit
Murphy's voice adds lush layer to concert**
By Jon W. Sparks



When Heidi Grant Murphy starts singing, you marvel at how a human voice can do what it does.

Murphy's sweet, subtle, crystalline vocals elevated the luminously performed works in Saturday night's IRIS Orchestra concert at the Germantown Performing Arts Centre.

Maestro Michael Stern programmed the evening, titled "A Taste of Heaven," around Mahler's "Symphony No. 4 in G major," a stunning work that culminates with a child's view of heaven in the song "Das himmlische Leben" ("Heaven's Life").

This is the first time IRIS performed a Mahler symphony, and there's no question that Stern chose well. Mahler's symphonies range from big to gargantuan, but the Fourth is not unwieldy. Yet it is both cerebral and transcendent, beautifully blending the human and the spiritual, and the orchestra played with exquisite passion. The final movement featured Murphy's singing, her lustrous soprano layering on another dimension of gorgeousness to the piece that enthralled the audience.

The acclaimed singer had already wowed the crowd earlier in the evening, first with the perfectly lovely Mozart aria "Ruhe sanft, mein holden Leben" ("Rest gently, my tender love").

Next, Murphy and the orchestra performed Copland's "Old American Songs, Sets 1 and 2," a collection of traditional 19th Century tunes ranging from a child's lullaby to the familiar strains of "Simple Gifts." The evening's only drawback was where the orchestra occasionally overpowered Murphy's voice.

Opening the evening was IRIS's pristine take on Debussy's "Children's Corner," half a dozen works the composer did in honor of his young daughter.

While the evening's theme relied on childlike wonder and the virtues of simplicity, there was nothing simplistic about the concert. The selections were well chosen and beautifully played, a reminder that purity of spirit in music as in any endeavor elevates us all.

Heidi Grant Murphy

A COPLEY NEWSPAPER
JournalStar
SERVING CENTRAL ILLINOIS SINCE 1855

November 13, 2010

Mozart on full display at concert

Symphony explores works through excerpts

By Gary Panetta

The Peoria Symphony Orchestra's superb, ambitiously conceived concert Saturday at the Civic Center Theater was something of a Mozart microcosm.

A little bit of almost every aspect of Mozart was explored. Opera was represented in form of excerpts from "The Marriage of Figaro," "Don Giovanni" and "La Clemenza di Tito" and "Idomeneo." Choral music was represented by the Mass in C Major. Orchestral work was represented by the Overture to "The Impresario" and Violin Concerto No. 3.

Linking all of this together was the human voice. As music director George Stelutto pointed out in his pre-concert lecture, much of the purely instrumental work by Mozart has a singing, vocal quality, which possibly explains - if anything can - why his music continues to entice and haunt us.

The other common denominator of the evening was the sheer scope and depth of talent on stage, perhaps unprecedented in the Peoria Symphony's history.

We can start with the four guest vocalists - soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Salzburg Festival and elsewhere; mezzo soprano Nina Yoshida Nelsen, who will soon debut in "Madama Butterfly" at the Royal Albert Hall; bass Jordan Bisch, who performs at the Metropolitan Opera this spring; and tenor Kevin Murphy, who has collaborated in concert and recitals with many leading artists.

Heidi Grant Murphy was the stand out in "Oh Come, Don't Be Late," from "Figaro." Her Italian is beautiful and her voice had all the gentleness of a lullaby, rising gracefully and memorably on the line "I want to crown you with roses." Nelsen, for her part, sensitively delivered "I am Leaving, But You My Dearest," which became almost a duet with clarinetist Roger Garrett.

Fifteen-year-old violin prodigy Anna JiEun Lee, who studies conducting with Stelutto, both played and conducted the violin concerto - turning, during the orchestra's sections, and leading the musicians with a graceful, sweeping hand. Lee's playing is precise, her technique formidable, her tone rich. What's really striking, however, is her communicative power, evident especially in the piece's cadenzas, played with soul and perceptiveness. She's an imaginative, thoughtful performer whose deep sympathy with the music she plays will carry her a long way.

The evening concluded with the Mass in C major, which featured a return to the stage by the vocal soloists plus the Western Illinois University Singers and Bradley University Chorale, prepared by James Stegall and John Jost, respectively. The Latin text was crisply articulated, key words such as "gloria" almost explosively delivered. An effective, moving performance from any perspective.



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Heidi Grant Murphy



July 12, 2010

Superstars at play

BFOM recital slightly revised

By Christopher Key

By the time tonight's Bellingham Festival of Music recital was over, my program looked like a Pentagon flow chart, with arrows going every which way. Cellist Joshua Roman, soprano Heidi Grant Murphy and pianist Kevin Murphy decided they wanted to have a little fun and bring the audience along with them. I didn't hear any complaints.

Roman got things underway with Boccherini's *Cello Sonata #6 in A Major*, G.4. He is starting to mature a bit and looks somewhat less like a 12-year-old. Maybe it's just the glasses. One thing he has not lost is the boyish charm which, when added to his technical wizardry, have made him a superstar. This was demonstrated just prior to his launching into a particularly difficult passage. He gave the audience a little half-smile that seemed to say "Watch this!" It was definitely worth watching.

Bellingham's own Heidi Grant Murphy then took over. The internationally renowned soprano owns the stage as much as Roman does, but in an entirely different way. She was scheduled to perform three Mozart songs, but added a fourth, much to the delight of the audience. The lyrics are obviously in German, but Grant Murphy's expressive face and body language provided a universal translation. Her voice is simply glorious and her control exquisite.

That's when things started to get rearranged. Grant was scheduled to perform



Andre Previn's *Four Songs on Poems of Toni Morrison*. That got scratched and Roman returned to perform Brahms' *Cello Sonata #1 in E minor*, Op. 38, which was supposed to come just after intermission. He explained that the three performers had agreed to make some changes in order to accommodate a new closing number, to be announced after intermission. Need I mention that Roman played the sonata as though Brahms had written it for him? Since I mentioned three performers, it's time to acknowledge Kevin Murphy, who spent the evening accompanying Roman and his wife. He is a master accompanist, an



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underrated skill that is appreciated mainly by soloists. The BFOM audience is sophisticated enough to recognize that kind of talent and Murphy got the chance to rock out a bit during the Brahms sonata. He and his wife are known in New York as classical music's power couple and that's no media exaggeration.

After intermission, our homegrown soprano launched into *Six Poemes*, Op.38, by Rachmaninoff. These pieces enabled her to show off her power and range to go along with that exquisite control. Her warm stage presence captivated the audience again and the power couple demonstrated that a musical marriage works very well indeed.

The surprise ending was a selection from Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachiana Brasileiros*, celebrating the Brazilian composer's love for Bach. The works meld the precision of Bach with the passion of South America and gave all three musicians a chance to show off a bit. Oh yes, they were obviously having fun and so was the audience. The performance ended on a literal and figurative high note that had the audience on its feet.

Heidi Grant Murphy returns for the next BFOM concert on Wednesday. She will be joined by oboist Joseph Robinson, the Festival Orchestra and the Festival Chorus. It looks like a spectacular program and you can get your tickets by calling (360) 650-6146.

Heidi Grant Murphy



FrontRow
A DAILY REVIEW OF THE DALLAS ARTS

May 21, 2010

Dallas Symphony Brings Subscription Season to a Close with Mahler's Romantic Grandiosity

By Wayne Lee Gay

American orchestras traditionally close their main subscription seasons with a choral-orchestral blockbuster. This weekend, the Dallas Symphony and music director Jaap van Zweden continued the custom with Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ("Resurrection"), a mammoth paean to the immortality of the human soul.

Wagner's restless harmonies and Beethoven's expansive architecture—particularly the Ninth Symphony—loom large over this score. Relatively young at the time he created this monument, Mahler borrowed unabashedly from both of those heroes of nineteenth-century music to create a piece that, well over a century after its premiere, relentlessly attacks and coaxes the listener on several levels. In a world in which the latest headlines warn of ecological catastrophe and the ability of a few crackpots to wreak widespread havoc in our ultimately fragile world, a gigantic symphonic work, the gist of which seems to be that everything will be all right in the end, can seem anachronistic. Musically, one might question the value of a work that more or less forces the listener, once trapped in the concert hall, to experience the breathless thrill of music that just keeps getting louder and higher and grander.

Intellectually, the same listener might also apply a little healthy skepticism to a text that, when combined with that endlessly exciting music, tells us to accept its premise just because it makes such a lovely emotional resonance. (The complex and unsettling relationships of text and music in the Requiems of Brahms, Verdi, and Faure, all works roughly contemporary with Mahler's Second, seem much more enduring in the twenty-first century, in spite of the specifically Christian content. In striving to be universal, Mahler at times just becomes as simplistic.)

Still, whether viewed (and heard and read) as a worthy source of emotional strength—or, on the other hand, as an overblown expression of late romantic escapism, valuable mainly as a snapshot of late nineteenth-century psychology and fascination with the gargantuan—Mahler's Second makes for a great live listening experience. Conductor van Zweden successfully combined an aggressive, muscular approach—announced in no uncertain terms in his almost percussive reading of the opening motif—with a constantly engaging, almost meticulous exploration of detail. Ultimately, it was the quiet moments—the extended solo for flute,

the little violin solo, the Schubertian quasi-
lied that introduces the voice three-quarters
of the way through—that made the greatest
impression in Thursday night’s
performance; and that’s as it should be.

The forces at hand Thursday night at the
Meyerson Symphony Center were quite up
to bringing Mahler’s vision and Van
Zweden’s concept to life. The Dallas
Symphony Chorus, trained by interim

director Terry Price and performing from
memory, was both musically and
emotionally on cue. Soprano soloist Heidi
Grant Murphy was radiant as usual, and a
relatively new figure on the vocal scene,
mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, very nearly
stole the show. I never thought that the
consonant “r,” as Cooke delivered it in her
opening phrase in the fourth movement,
could be so beautiful.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The★Star
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

April 11, 2010

Review | Singer shines in intriguing symphony show

By Timothy McDonald

Kansas City Symphony music director Michael Stern consistently puts together imaginative and intriguing programs.

Take Friday night's concert at the Lyric Theatre, which featured three works composed in a 50-year period around the turn of the 20th century in France, Austria and the United States. The compositions presented different challenges and showed off different aspects of the ensemble.

The concert began with a delightful performance of Maurice Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin." The Prelude opened with well-played swirling oboe and English horn lines. While there were a few muddy moments later in the movement, overall the orchestra displayed remarkable precision.

Oboist Mingjia Liu played in superb fashion. He and flutist Michael Gordon effectively opened the Forlane with gently lilting dancelike rhythms. The concluding Rigaudon was playfully delivered, with rapid tempos, crisp articulations and rich-sounding strings.

Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who has an international career on both the

opera and symphonic stage, joined the orchestra for an American composition, Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915." Whether singing a gossamer-thin line of sheer beauty or employing a fuller tone, Murphy's voice was simply ravishing. Technically, she was magnificent, blithely negotiating wide vocal leaps and dissonant intervals. Unfortunately, the relatively lush textures of the work overwhelmed her sound far too often.

Stern has an affinity for the music of Mahler, and in Friday's performance of Symphony No. 4 in G Major, Stern exhibited a flair for Mahler's many moods and frequent changes in dynamics, tempo and texture.

The opening movement was absolutely thrilling. The third movement was somewhat long and sprawling, resulting in frequent shifting in the seats by the audience.

All was forgiven in the marvelous finale, which was alternately exciting and lyrical, folklike and explosive in its intensity. Murphy's singing in the final movement was warm and charming.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The New York Times

THE Arts

November 23, 2009

by Steve Smith

Music Review | 'Il Trittico'

Desperate Woman Times 3



A wife bereft over the loss of her infant son seeks carnal comfort in the embrace of a lover. A nun pines for a child she bore out of wedlock, a disgrace for which she was banished to a convent by her family. A young girl pleads with her father for permission to marry the man she loves. The heroines of Puccini's three one-act operas collectively known as "Il Trittico" have little in common;

small wonder that the parts are rarely played by a single performer.

When the director Jack O'Brien's engaging production was introduced at the Metropolitan Opera in 2007, those characters — Giorgetta in "Il Tabarro," Angelica in "Suor Angelica" and Lauretta in "Gianni Schicchi" — were played by three disparate sopranos.



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When the staging was revived on Friday night, Patricia Racette, a versatile, dramatically astute performer with a proven knack for Puccini, tackled them all.

The nun Angelica, you sensed, was the role Ms. Racette connected with most deeply. She made the character's quiet ache tangible, her mystic final vision and death mesmerizing. Ms. Racette's singing was technically assured and surpassingly sweet; a cracked note near the end of "Senza mamma" was surely meant as dramatic effect, and worked as such.

As Giorgetta, the heartbroken wife, Ms. Racette aptly conveyed a complex intermingling of grief and desire. Her Lauretta was all girlish innocence and charm in both voice and mannerisms; a hint of fatigue was understandable after the wrenching ordeal of "Suor Angelica." In each case Ms. Racette cut to the heart of her character, disappearing into each role while sharply differentiating all three.

Ms. Racette was not the only singer to complete a hat trick: the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe reprised the three roles she played in this production's premiere. Despite some fleeting unsteadiness in her highest range, Ms. Blythe deployed her huge, penetrating sound with distinction as a generous Frugola in "Il Tabarro" ("The Cloak"), an imperious Princess in "Suor Angelica" and an uproarious Zita in "Gianni Schicchi."

Few productions test the depth of a company's bench the way "Il Trittico" does; the Met's roster did honorable

work, with a few outstanding highlights. In "Il Tabarro" Zeljko Lucic was an oddly monochrome Michele. But Aleksandrs Antonenko was a robust Luigi, and Matthew Plenk made a strong impression in the tiny role of the Song Seller.

Among the matching wimples in "Suor Angelica," Heidi Grant Murphy stood out as an effervescent Sister Genovieffa and Wendy White was a sturdy Monitor. Jennifer Check, an amusing Sister Dolcina, was better still as Nella in "Gianni Schicchi," part of a scheming trio with Ms. Blythe's imposing Zita and Patricia Risley's fashionably gangly Ciesca. Saimir Pirgu, a light, bright tenor, made an estimable debut as Rinuccio; as Schicchi, Alessandro Corbelli was potent and wily.

The conductor, Stefano Ranzani in his Met debut, drew subtle shades and radiant hues from an orchestra in top form. Mr. O'Brien's huge detailed sets prompted applause each time the curtain rose but never unduly detracted attention from where it belonged: on Ms. Racette, Ms. Blythe and their colleagues.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The New York Times

February 16, 2009

On Day 8: Let There Be Music

Certain great performances can come only from dedicated musicians who commit themselves over many years to a full-time ensemble. Yet inspired music making can also result when young musicians of different backgrounds are brought together for a concentrated period of intensive work.

ANTHONY
TOMMASINI

MUSIC
REVIEW

This is the rationale behind the tuition-free professional training workshops of the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall. And the performance of Haydn's oratorio "Die Schöpfung" ("The Creation"), presented on Saturday night at Carnegie Hall by participants of the institute's latest workshop, if not without flaws, was utterly inspired.

For one week a choir of 60 selected singers, prepared by the choral director Kathy Saltzman Romey, rehearsed intensely with the eminent German conductor Helmuth Rilling to ready a performance of this astonishing Haydn masterpiece, first presented in Vienna in 1798 when Haydn was 66. The Carnegie Hall Festival Chorus, as the choir was called for this occasion, was joined by the Orchestra of St. Luke's. The chorus's vibrant singing was a testimony to what can be accomplished when gifted musicians, guided by a master conductor, immerse themselves in a milestone of the repertory.

Unfortunately two of the three vocal soloists, who sing the music of the angels narrating the bibli-



RACHEL PAPO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Die Schöpfung The Carnegie Hall Festival Chorus, with Heidi Grant Murphy and Helmuth Rilling, above, at Carnegie Hall.

cal story of the Creation, had to be replaced on short notice. Just days before the performance the soprano Susan Gritton took ill. Taking her place as Gabriel was the soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who sang with bright, focused tone and impressive agility in music that suits her beautifully. On Saturday the tenor James Taylor also came down with a cold and was replaced by an emerging young tenor, Nicholas Phan, singing Uriel. Though he had only a short rehearsal with Mr. Rilling the day of the concert at a piano, Mr. Phan brought a sweet-toned lyric tenor voice and crisp German diction to his work. The fine bass-baritone Nathan Berg, as Raphael, performed as scheduled, singing with mellow sound and calm authority.

Mr. Rilling must have been an ideal guide into this Haydn piece. And what a piece. Haydn wrote it after returning from his second trip to London, where, to his surprise, he was treated like a com-

poser colossus. The sheer level of invention in the score is breathtaking, starting from the opening orchestral prelude, a representation of chaos before Creation: strangely isolated and fragmentary lines, unhinged harmonies and spectral instrumental colorings seem to float aimlessly amid a stilled musical cosmos.

The most famous moment in this 115-minute oratorio, one of the boldest strokes of any piece ever, worked its magic again: "Und es ward Licht" ("And there was light"), the chorus sings, relating God's first creative act. And at the word "Licht" the diffuse, halting, tentative music ceased, as the chorus and orchestra broke into Haydn's resplendent, shimmering, sustained C major chord.

By the end of the final chorus of praise and glory, an elaborate and ingenious fugue, the elated choristers looked as if they were ready to sing the whole oratorio again.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

May 1, 2009

by Everett Evans

***Missa Latina's* music is heavenly**

The Texas premiere of Roberto Sierra's inventive and exciting *Missa Latina* lends Event Status to this weekend's performances by the Houston Symphony — especially as it's under the masterful guidance of eminent conductor Leonard Slatkin, who commissioned the work and conducted its much-praised 2006 world premiere with the National Symphony in Washington, D.C.

“Con gran expresión” Sierra has marked his *Kyrie*, second of seven sections in the 85-minute work. Indeed, practically everything about the *Missa Latina* seemed *con gran expresión* at Thursday night's performance — from the orchestra's expansive playing to the rich sound of the Houston Symphony Chorus to the exemplary singing of soloists Heidi Grant Murphy and Thomas Meglioranza.

The “Latin” in the title has a double meaning — referencing both the language of the Roman Catholic mass and the Latin American influences Sierra has incorporated into his composition. Fusing classical music tradition with contemporary elements, the *Missa Latina* puts a secular spin on a sacred concept — as

Leonard Bernstein achieved in somewhat different manner with his *Mass*.

Sierra follows the outline of the traditional mass, with slight variations and additions, stressing passages pleading for peace. That theme is established in the opening *Introitus*, its imploring lines exquisitely sung by Grant and the hushed chorus.

Yet the work quickly establishes its basic pattern of subdued passages punctuated by outbursts from the brass and enlarged percussion section, or alternating reverential expressions with celebratory ones bustling with propulsive Latin rhythms and salsa flavoring.

The overall effect is compounded of luscious harmonies, rhythms layered upon other rhythms, some haunting themes (especially in the *Agnus Dei*) and colorful orchestrations. A hymnlike interlude gives way to a calypso beat. A section stressing the standard symphonic complement of strings gives way to one sparked by xylophone, bongos and maracas. After an inspired *a cappella* passage for Murphy and chorus, the *Alleluia* finale bursts forth like a Caribbean

holiday — a stroke of showmanship that ends the work on an exultant high.

Music lovers may debate whether the *Missa Latina* is ideally shaped or sustains musical inspiration throughout. Yet there's no denying that it's a largely successful synthesis of expressions stately and vivacious, respectful and festive. Sierra's accomplished use of the orchestra, chorus and soloists, his level of invention and genuineness of feeling mark *Missa Latina* as a major achievement.

Slatkin commanded Thursday's performance with insight and energy, marshaling the wide-ranging influences into a cohesive interpretation — and the musicians responded enthusiastically. Murphy used her shimmering, expressive soprano to fine effect. Meglioranza wielded a solid, steady baritone, but

might have summoned greater projection when the massed forces were at full tilt. As prepared by Charles Hausmann, the chorus sustained a full and balanced sound, showing mastery in rhythmically tricky passages.

The program opened with Beethoven's "little" (as he called it) Symphony No. 8, appealingly modest in comparison to its more imposing siblings Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 9. Slatkin and the orchestra conveyed the work's playfulness and exuberance. Especially enjoyable were the novelty of the second and third movements — the one with its ticktock rhythm kidding the chronometer (forerunner of the metronome), the other with its elegant minuet punctuated by boisterous outbursts. The insistent finale rang out with vigor and dash, with Slatkin guiding a particularly skilled handling of its extended, not done yet! coda.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The New York Times

January 12, 2009

As Gluck's Mythic Hero, a Mezzo-Soprano Takes Command With Bolts of Melody

With each performance the American mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe gives, it becomes increasingly apparent that a once-

**ANTHONY
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**MUSIC
REVIEW**

in-a-generation opera singer has arrived. Ms. Blythe's latest triumph came on Friday night at the Metropolitan

Opera: a vocally commanding and deeply poignant portrayal of Orfeo in a revival of Mark Morris's 2007 production of Gluck's sublime masterpiece "Orfeo ed Euridice." This was Ms. Blythe's first performance of Orfeo, a touchstone trouser role for many mezzo-sopranos, and she already owns it.

Returning to the podium from the production premiere, James Levine elicits an articulate and majestic performance of this landmark work, presented here in its original 1762 version, running a compact 90 minutes without break. The rising lyric-coloratura soprano Danielle de Niese is lovely, vulnerable and vocally refined as Euridice, Orfeo's beloved wife.

Yet this is Ms. Blythe's show, as Mr. Levine acknowledged during curtain calls when he prodded her to take an extra solo bow to acknowledge the ecstatic ovation.

An opera singer determined to have a long career must analyze the nature of her voice and make



Danielle de Niese, left, as Euridice, and Stephanie Blythe as Orfeo, in the Gluck opera at the Met.

sensible repertory choices. But Ms. Blythe seems able to sing anything. In recent years at the Met she adapted her powerhouse voice to the florid demands of Handel with an exquisite account of Eduige in "Rodelinda," gave a vocally chilling performance as Ulrica in Verdi's "Ballo in Maschera" and was an indomitable Fricka in Wagner's "Walküre."

Orfeo might not seem a natural choice for a singer whose voice is a force of nature. The production was conceived with the elegant Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in mind as Orfeo. When she died in 2006, the role was reassigned to the countertenor David Daniels, who gave an impassioned and sensitive performance.

In crucial ways Ms. Blythe resembles Hunt Lieberson, whose singing seemed a miraculous amalgam of voice, sound, color, text and expression. Similarly, in Ms. Blythe's Orfeo there is no separation between vocal and dramatic gesture. Ms. Blythe's power is such an intrinsic component of her voice that she can concentrate on singing with lyricism, intimacy, volatility or whatever the moment calls for and let her sound take care of itself. Even during fortissimo outbursts her voice is rich and beautiful.

From the opening scene, a gravely beautiful chorus of nymphs and shepherds lamenting Euridice's death, Ms. Blythe could easily have sent Orfeo's an-

guished cries of "Euridice" soaring over the chorus and orchestra. Instead, trusting in the rich carrying power of her sound, she called to her beloved with a subdued intensity that expressed real and wrenching pain.

And when Orfeo, tired of wallowing in grief, determines to storm the underworld and retrieve his wife, Ms. Blythe sang with fearless impetuosity. Gluck's heightened recitative and bolts of melody came across as if Ms. Blythe had been seized with reckless resolve and was making the music up on the spot.

Ms. Blythe commands the stage and though she has a big body, moves with agility and grace, exudes charisma and conveys piercing emotional subtleties with every glance and phrase. Dressed in a long gray coat, vest and slacks, her hair trimmed short and a guitar slung over her shoulder, Ms. Blythe embodies Orfeo, the mythic poet-singer whose music had magical powers to charm all listeners. When Orfeo approaches the gates of Hades, and furies and ghosts try to bar the determined husband's path, their ominous choral cries of "No" seemed impotent against Ms. Blythe's unrattled singing of Gluck's steadfast melody.

In this fanciful and affecting production, which Mr. Morris



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both directed and choreographed, a roster of dancers in casual modern dress, courtesy of the designer Isaac Mizrahi, portray the various nymphs, ghosts, furies and heroes who encounter the opera's three characters. The chorus is turned into a cavalcade of historical figures who watch and comment on the unfolding drama from a three-tiered, semi-circular set, designed by Allen Moyer.

It is hard to resist trying to identify the witnesses. I spotted (I think) both Queen Elizabeths, Gandhi, Lincoln, Lillian Russell, Jimi Hendrix and a New York Yankee (perhaps that opera buff Joe Torre). Yet it is touching to see these historical heavyweights leaning over railings as they follow the plight of the mythical lovers. And the chorus sang splendidly.

The soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, as Amor, the god of love, who facilitates Orfeo's journey to the underworld, descends from on high, suspended by wires. Looking like an impish Ellen DeGeneres, she sings with perky vitality and bright tone.

Ms. de Niese is marvelous during the crucial scene in a dark labyrinth, when Orfeo, following Amor's orders, tries to lead Euridice to the upper world without looking at her. Ms. de Niese's clear, shimmering voice blends wondrously with Ms. Blythe's darker, heavier tones. Ms. Blythe sings Orfeo's great aria of lament, "Che farò senza Euridice?," magnificently, though I missed hearing the more elaborate ending Gluck fashioned for later productions.

Who knows what roles Ms. Blythe might take on next. I would hear her sing absolutely anything. How about a new opera written expressly for this exciting artist who is just entering her prime?

September 9, 2008

Proms 70: Saint Francis of Assisi at the Albert Hall/Radio 3

by Geoff Brown



Maybe it was the prospect of four solid hours in the company of St Francis of Assisi. Maybe, late in the Prom season, audiences had succumbed to Messiaen centenary fatigue. In the vast Albert Hall we seemed very few. But Netherlands Opera's vibrant and gripping concert performance of the French composer's single, epic, amazing opera should ring in our ears for ever.

True enough, some patience was required over the drier stretches of the vocal lines or the lengthier theological discussions. But Messiaen's mosaic fresco structure soon became hypnotic, and the sounds resonated through the domed space with a splendour that felt not of this Earth. Weird gurglings from winds and brass; cooing turtle-dove flutes; a humming chorus overlaid with glockenspiel; slashing piccolos; secret glints of three ondes martenot: every shining, adventurous texture gave evidence of Messiaen's regenerated vocabulary in this most personal and ambitious work of his old age. The hard-working conductor Ingo Metzmacher and the Hague Philharmonic luxuriated in the composer's magic garden.

At first glance Francis and his white-shirted band of brothers seemed to serve

as the magic garden's brick wall. Where the orchestra glittered, they chanted. But as the frescos advanced and perspectives adjusted, you soon felt the lively character of Metzmacher's cast, fresh from staged performances in Amsterdam. As he journeyed towards death and paradise, Rod Gilfry's St Francis was no holy wimp: he sang with real fibre, always intense, alight with conviction. Hubert Delamboye's Leper jollied up his big scene no end with his cantankerous vigour; so did Donald Kaasch's Elias, the monk displeased at being disturbed, even by an angel's knock.

The sole woman soloist, Heidi Grant Murphy, undertook angelic duties with gleaming, simple beauty; she was clearly audible even from her position by the hall's organ console. Let's praise the chorus too, who never tired of waiting patiently, shouting "François", or bursting with a lovely crescendo.

Did we miss much by not seeing it staged? I don't think so. We had benches, a cross: quite enough props. Everything vital was in the music: birds, devotion, humility, radiance, and above all, the joy of wonder.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The Dallas Morning News

December 11, 2007

Artistry with a capital 'A'

CLASSICAL REVIEW: Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy soars at Caruth

By **SCOTT CANTRELL**
Classical Music Critic
scantrell@dallasnews.com

We've gone whole years without a single art-song recital around here. But in the last week we've had two, by two pretty prominent opera singers. Last Thursday it was the up-and-coming young baritone Mariusz Kwiecien. On Monday evening, at Southern Methodist University's Caruth Auditorium, it was soprano Heidi Grant Murphy.

Ms. Murphy's recital was an unusual excursion for Dallas Chamber Music, but it was certainly a feast of exquisite lyric-soprano vocalism. In an age when "singing" so often equals "belting," it was refreshing to hear such honeyed tones simply freed to glow and float in Caruth's warm acoustics.

Not that there was anything "simple" about the singing. This was vocal artistry with a capital "A," note leading onto note, phrase onto phrase, with the loveliest of taperings and shadings.

But vocal beauties were bought

at the price of consonants, which were more gummed than projected; they may have been audible in the first three rows of the hall, but only intermittently beyond. Given that vocal music is half words, half music, that was a serious demerit.

Start to finish, pianist Kevin Murphy, Ms. Murphy's husband, but also head of the Paris Opera music staff, gave a first-class demonstration of art-song accompaniment. This was pianism finely etched, flawlessly responsive and, without making a fuss about it, beautifully expressive.

The program was full of surprises, starting with Mozart in rarely heard — and surprisingly proto-Schubertian — art-song guise. Then came six songs from Lili Boulanger's collection *Clarières dans le ciel*.

The younger sister of the famous French composition teacher Nadia Boulanger, frail Lili was only 24 when she died. Maybe in a longer life she would have found a voice more distinctive from the early

20th-century *lingua franca* of Fauré and Debussy. But that's not to dismiss the voluptuous beauties of these *mélodies* (as the French would call them).

More voluptuous beauties surfaced in three songs by Strauss: the quicksilver "Ständchen," the dreamy "Morgen," the "Cäcilie" all aquiver. Still more were supplied by Rachmaninoff's Op. 38 set of six songs. Here piano writing that would fit right into the composer's preludes and *études-tableaux* was almost more compelling than the vocal lines.

Piano rustles evoked Lethé's waters of forgetfulness in "To her"; piano shimmers captured the "white silken wings" of "Daisies." Ms. Murphy deliciously personified the flirtatiousness of "The Pied Piper," the excitability of "Au!" Finally came a group of musical-theater numbers, including a delightful Berlitz-lesson nonsense French song from *A ... My Name Is Alice* and "Vanilla Ice Cream" from *She Loves Me*.



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January 24, 2008

REVIEW ASO Plays Songs of Innocence and Experience

Washing everything that preceeds it away, the last words of Mahler's hour-long Symphony No. 4 — "Dass alles fur Freuden erwacht," And everything awakens in joy — is one of the most poignant, bittersweet, regrets-laden, hold-back-the-tears moments in music.

Thursday in Symphony Hall, soprano Heidi Grant Murphy sang those words, barely above a whisper, loaded with sweetness and sorrow — just the right touch.

Mahler's Fourth filled the second half of a tightly argued, beautifully symmetrical program, where the ending reflected back on the beginning and forced listeners to think anew about the whole evening as we walked out the door. What you thought you thought turned out to be only part of the picture.

The evening's themes involved classical proportion and restraint. It also explored ideas of child-like innocence and wonder which, from the adult perspective of the composers, seems like a cruel reminder of the harshness of the world as it actually must be lived.

This sort of balanced, conceptual

programming — devoid of flashiness or any sort of novelty for its own sake — is typical of Roberto Abbado, a regular Atlanta Symphony Orchestra guest conductor.

The evening began with Murphy, in mellow voice, singing Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915." Her diction here was almost ideal, with a folksy, easy-manner delivery — as if just talking, just telling a story, just reminiscing.

And "Knoxville," which premiered in 1947, is surely Barber's most perfect score, setting James Agee's prose poem remembering his boyhood. The orchestra doesn't so much elaborate or offer psychological insights into the texts as paint colors around the words, like an Edward Hopper painting turned into music. The work's determined innocence, and thus its perpetual, easy-access optimism, are likely quintessential American traits, although Abbado's pairing of "Knoxville" with Mahler Fourth darkened that message considerable.

Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 15 sat in the middle of the concert. The originally scheduled soloist, Andreas



Haefliger, cancelled due to recurring hand problems. In his place at the keyboard sat distinguished Irish pianist John O'Connor.

Hunched over the instrument, O'Connor is a musician of a mid-20th century classical school that's now almost completely lost. Its best proponents, like O'Connor's mentor Wilhelm Kempff, played with Olympian reserve, playing Mozart as marbled, unblemished, "perfect."

O'Connor's playing Thursday was sturdy, unadorned, dapper and never less than sincere and convincing. While his playing held my attention moment by moment, he never quite seemed to give the performance a reason for being.

The Mahler symphony is basically a tender 10-minute song for soprano and orchestra — a child's song in heaven, perhaps — preceded by a three-movement, 50-minute introduction. Abbado led the Mahler with a suave, knowing discipline that the ASO musicians respond to. (He's got the sort of baton precision and emotionally neutral style of former ASO music director Yoel Levi, but with more interpretive depth.)

Yet there wasn't much personality in Abbado's Mahler, and despite often sensational contributions from individual musicians, especially acting concertmaster William Pu, playing a devilish fiddle tune in the scherzo — it seemed to come from no place in particular.

The New Criterion

January 2008

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center staged a noteworthy concert—only it wasn't at Lincoln Center. Alice Tully Hall, CMS's home, is undergoing renovation (like much of the Lincoln Center campus). So this concert was at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, a few blocks away at Sixty-fourth Street and Central Park West. You might consider this a temple of humanism, and it is beautifully built—with abundant wood. In gilt letters over the stage is a small-s scripture: "The Place Where People Meet to Seek the Highest Is Holy Ground." Under such a banner, one has almost a duty to play well.

And the St. Lawrence String Quartet plays well. They are a group from Canada, as the name should tell you, and, in 2006, they made an outstanding recording of three Shostakovich quartets (for EMI Classics). Their guests in the CMS concert were Heidi Grant Murphy, the celebrated soprano from Washington state, and her husband, Kevin Murphy, a pianist and conductor associated with both the Metropolitan Opera and the Paris Opera. The first work on this program was the *Chanson perpétuelle* for soprano and piano quintet by Ernest Chausson. He is the French composer who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century and died—in 1899—at the age of forty-four. *Chanson perpétuelle* sets a poem by Charles Cros, a contemporary of Chausson. And this is the composer's final work (completed work). It's a wonderful piece, melancholy but serene,

blending words and notes with mastery, and offering a dose of the fantastic.

"HGM," as the soprano is sometimes known, and the piano quintet performed this work very well—exquisitely. "Exquisite," in whatever form, can be a bad word, suggesting perfume and daintiness—an overprettiness. But the exquisiteness of this performance was that of good, French taste. The performers maintained an intensity, never becoming too soupy, cautious, or delicate. HGM is perpetually described as "luminous," or "radiant," and that she was. The piece was like a dream, taking you to a distant place, and not even car horns outside could invade the atmosphere.

The St. Lawrence String Quartet, without the Murphys, continued with Franck, the Belgian, his Quartet in D, from 1889. This is widely considered a masterwork, although I am not quite onboard: I find it markedly inferior to Franck's Violin Sonata, for example. And I believe that the quartet suffers from an excess of length. But it must be acknowledged that Franck has done all right in the world without me or my advice. And the SLSQ gave a fine account of his quartet. They were often not pure or neat, and they would not have won prizes for sound. But they were committed, passionate, and sincere. The main problem with this performance is that it lapsed into a monotony, indeed a dullness. Whether this was more the piece or the players, I can't say with total confidence.



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And after intermission, Schumann, his String Quartet in F, Op. 41, No. 2. This is a not-terribly-famous work by a terribly famous composer—and, of course, a distinguished work. Schumann being Schumann, he can't help including a song or two in his string quartet. He wrote songs as naturally as other people write e-mails—actually, more naturally, probably. Eighteen-forty was his legendary “Year of Song,” during which he wrote between 130 and 150 of them (tallies differ). But every year, for him—no matter what he was writing—was a year of song, really.

The Chamber Music Society concert ended with a new work—of songs, in fact. This was *Songs from the Diaspora* for soprano and piano quintet by Roberto Sierra, a Puerto Rican-born composer in his mid-fifties. He studied with Ligeti, among others, and has long taught at Cornell. In CMS's program notes, Christopher Costanza, the St. Lawrence cellist, wrote something interesting. You could even say that he confided it. Originally, he said, the SLSQ “programmed the piece in that safe ‘new music’ slot, before intermission, with meaty, intense quartet repertoire filling the second half.” But when they spent a little time with the *Songs*,

we realized that we had a true *tour de force* on our hands—a beautiful, varied, inspired, creative, and memorable work nearly 30 minutes in length. There was only one place on the program for such a profound work, we decided: it would have to close the program. What a huge compliment to Roberto Sierra that his remarkable new piece has proven to be, over several performances . . . , a fully successful program closer!

You may want to remember what this cellist has said next time you see a recent composition placed right before intermission: “Ah, the safe new-music slot!”

And I can endorse what he has said about the Sierra work: It is beautiful, varied, creative—all that. There are seven songs here, all using Spanish texts. Singers from every nation love to sing in this language, a most musical—and singer-friendly—language. In the course of Sierra's songs, we get some Hebraic wailing and other features of Sephardic music. “Mi suegra la negra” (“My Mother-in-Law the Evil One”!) is terrifically high-spirited, viperous. It may remind you of something out of Falla's *Siete canciones populares españolas* (speaking of cycles with seven songs). Of special note is Sierra's “El rey de Francia tres hijas tenía” (“The King of France Had Three Daughters”). I have said that the *Chanson perpétuelle* is dream-like, or can be. This song, too, is a dream, relating a dream. Where the text says, “she became sleepy,” the music follows admirably.

As I listened to this new cycle, I thought of how the late Victoria de los Angeles would have enjoyed singing these songs. But Roberto Sierra would be hard-pressed to find a better advocate than Heidi Grant Murphy. She sang them luminously, purely, seamlessly, but also with plenty of character—with flavor and bite. There are a lot of Sephardic songs in the world; de los Angeles sang many of them. But they keep coming, and Sierra's work deserves a proud place among them.

Heidi Grant Murphy

The New York Times

December 3, 2007

Repentance As the Key To Open Pearly Gates

Lumped by history with Schumann's other large-scale vocal works, "Das Paradies und die Peri" has suffered guilt by association. "Genoveva," his only finished opera, demon-

**BERNARD
HOLLAND**

**MUSIC
REVIEW**

strates a great man's stubborn ineptitude in theatrical matters. "Scenes From Goethe's 'Faust'" sets out to be an opera, then loses heart and retreats into a kind of oratorio. Beautiful music in both cases is squandered on unsustainable formats.

The oratorio "Das Paradies und die Peri," which the Philadelphia Orchestra brought to Carnegie Hall under Simon Rattle on Friday, is another matter. Exotic in subject matter, naïve for its starry-eyed moralizing, but suffused musically with the fresh-picked quality of Schumann's best work, this hour-and-a-half piece gives "The Arabian Nights" good Lutheran advice on how to get to heaven. Who knew, or how many of us have forgotten, that Schumann could write choral music of such loveliness, not to mention sustain long narrative arcs?

The Peri of Persian myth is a creature hovering somewhere between human and angelic status, and here she seeks entry into paradise. Sent back on a kind of spiritual scavenger hunt, she returns first with the blood of a martyred soldier and second with the last sigh of a dying maiden. Both are rejected. The tears of a reformed villain do the trick.

Pearly gates open to general rejoicing.

"Das Paradies und die Peri" was a hit in 1843, Schumann's first. It remained popular for years, then faded, perhaps victim of a didactic sentimentality trying to function in an increasingly hip world. Intended to carry a religious message of sacrifice and redemption, its 26 numbers end up telling us more about that deathless German yearning for bluer skies and warmer weather. Goethe marched south and embraced all things Italian. Schumann did not stop until he got to the Middle East.

"Das Paradies und die Peri" is at its best at its most gentle. The calm, rolling choral textures that end Part 2 are simply breathtaking. Mr. Rattle nicely exploited the sophisticated skills of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The Philadelphia Singers Chorale did well at times, but too often sounded as if it were reacting to Mr. Rattle and his players rather than joining them at the music's forward edge.

Heidi Grant Murphy, heartfelt as the Peri, threw herself bravely at the desperately difficult soprano passages at the end. Mark Padmore was the fine, clear tenor in a part reminiscent of Baroque music's evangelist-narrators. Bernarda Fink was the first-rate mezzo-soprano. Other singers were Christine Brandes, Joseph Kaiser and Luca Pisaroni, all effective.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

The Washington Post

October 6, 2007

PERFORMING ARTS

Opera Lafayette

Ryan Brown led Opera Lafayette at Strathmore on Wednesday in the first modern performance -- a brilliant one -- of "Zélindor," a French tale of romance gone right. The story line is related totally in metaphoric language, a coded tongue understood more by baroque audiences than by today's. Composed by longtime allies Francois Rebel and Francois Francoeur to a libretto by Francois-Augustin Paradis de Montcrief, the opera tells of Zélindor (tenor Jean-Paul Fouché, court), king of the sylphs, who -- breaking all the rules -- engages in a delicate courtship with a mortal, Zirphé (soprano Heidi Grant Murphy). Donning a magical cloak of invisibility, the king tests Zirphé's faithfulness, she answers "correctly" and all ends well.

As the main protagonists, the Sylphs and Nymphs represent nature enticing yet innocent -- unlike the ancient mythological sirens and other sprites whose allure spells bad news. Though given without staging and singers in costumes, the performance was enlivened by the brightly dressed and

masked members of the New York Baroque Dance Company, imaginatively choreographed by Catherine Turocy. As nymphs, salamanders and other creatures of nature, the dancers leapt and twirled across the stage with stately grace and formalized baroque gestures -- coy curtsies and other mannered poses honoring Louis XV, France's reigning monarch of the day.

The vocal soloists captured the essence of baroque style -- melodies couched in endless trills and embroidered cadences. Fouché court's voice resonated with concentrated energy; Murphy sang with vibrancy and nuanced phrasing; and baritone William Sharp gave depth to the role of Zulim, Zélindor's sagacious fellow sylph. As the Nymph and Sylphide, Ah Young Hong's soprano was glistening and resilient. Issuing words of wisdom, the chamber chorus sang with a gusto matched by the orchestra's rhythmic pungency. The text, in French and English, was given in the program but was hard to follow in this age of surtitles.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

August 13, 2007

'Schubertiad' rings true at Sherwood

By Valerie Scher

CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

In Franz Schubert's day, a "Schubertiad" was a gathering in which his music was performed, sometimes followed by food, drink and even dancing, with the composer at the piano.

Yesterday, La Jolla Music Society SummerFest provided its own all-Schubert program — titled "A Schubertiad" — at La Jolla's Sherwood Auditorium in the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. There was no food (other than what was available at the outdoor concession stand) and certainly no dancing.

Instead, the nearly sold-out event supplied prime examples of Schubert's chamber music and songs, splendidly performed by such accomplished musicians as soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, violist Cynthia Phelps and cellist Ralph Kirshbaum.

It was an affectionate and artistically rich tribute to the Austrian composer who died in 1828 at age 31.

In 1824, for instance, Schubert wrote a sonata for a six-stringed instrument he referred to as an "arpeggione." Though the arpeggione long ago disappeared from concert life, the sonata nicknamed "Arpeggione" was transcribed for cello and became a beloved classic.

Cellist Kirshbaum pinpointed its appeal: melodies that were irresistible, whether solemn or soaring. Deftly supported by pianist Orion Weiss, Kirshbaum gave them a velvety smoothness that was enhanced

by expert phrasing. Though tasteful, intricate sections were sometimes a bit of a struggle, his command of the cello's upper register was evident in the opening movement's hauntingly beautiful high notes.

While Schubert wrote only one "Arpeggione" sonata, he composed approximately 600 songs. Soprano Murphy and her husband, pianist

Kevin Murphy, performed a pleasingly varied selection that illustrated Schubert's genius for combining words and music. In "Auf dem Strom" ("On the river"), they and French horn player Richard Todd vividly conveyed the tale of a heart-sick lover caught in a storm.

No less affecting were the songs for voice and piano alone. In "Litaney for the Feast of All Souls" (as the German text was translated), Murphy sang about granting peace to those who have suffered. With hands clasped and a beatific expression, the soprano made the performance an almost prayerlike experience as her voice radiated a supple purity and power.

Yesterday's concert also offered a double treat. It included Schubert's popular song "Die Forelle" ("The Trout"), which soprano Murphy sang with winning spirit and clarity, as well as a wonderfully cohesive performance of the "Trout" Quintet by violinist David Chan and bass player Chris Hanulik as well as violist Phelps, pianist Weiss and cellist Kirshbaum.



Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy captured the genius of Franz Schubert in an evening dedicated to his music.
Christian Steiner

The musicians were precise but never pedantic, vigorous without being vulgar. And they brought out the charm of the variations that are based on the song's theme. The strings were unfailingly sonorous as they joined together for the melody. The variations allowed ample opportunities for individual virtuosity, as in pianist Weiss' showy trills.

All of which helped make this "Schubertiad" shine.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

San Jose Mercury News

August 11, 2007

Music@Menlo salutes folk music's influence on major composers

By Richard Scheinin

Mercury News

When trying to explain what the music they play is all about, classical musicians sometimes liken the great composers — Bach, Beethoven, Schubert — to prophets and philosophers. These amazing beings, it's said, are mysteriously able to channel all the expressive forces of the universe so that we, the listeners, in the course of mere minutes, can experience everything from utter tenderness to absolute terror.

Sounds pretty heavy, right? And it's true: This music can deliver a powerful message. But then there's this other fact about great composers: The "prophets" stay in touch with their roots. They often channel the folk music of their times, which was the point of Music@Menlo's Thursday program at the Menlo School's Stent Family Hall in Atherton.

An Atherton ballroom isn't the place where you would most expect to hear an old Scottish ballad, but there was soprano Heidi Grant Murphy singing this sentimental verse: *There's not a lady in the land/ That's half so sweet as Sally,/ She is the darling of my heart/ And she lives in our alley.*

And guess who set the verse? Beethoven. His Scottish Songs, Opus 108, includes settings of 25 traditional Scottish tunes, and Murphy, accompanied by a pianist (Kevin Murphy, her husband), violinist (Erin Keefe) and cellist (Colin Carr) sang five of them to begin this final festival pro-

gram.

My favorite was "Sally in our Alley," which was charming, wistful and tender and stuck close to the original song. Apparently, Beethoven didn't feel the need to dress it up in anything too cosmic.

The program (first performed Wednesday and repeated Thursday night, ending the three-week chamber music festival) was titled "Borrowed Cultures," a reference to the cross-cultural musical borrowings of many composers. The Menlo audience heard from Aaron Copland (drawing on a Jewish folk theme), Marc Neikrug (Pueblo songs), Maurice Ravel (the blues) and Johannes Brahms (Eastern European Gypsy music).

Copland's "Vitebsk: Studies on a Jewish Theme" received the best performance.

A stingingly obsessive, churning brew, it mines a Jewish folk song from the Belarusian town of Vitebsk. Copland heard the song 1927 at a theatrical performance in Manhattan. The play was "The Dybbuk" — in Jewish folk tradition, a restless spirit that possesses a living person — and Thursday's performance conveyed restlessness, pain and haunted frustration: "Let me out!" the dybbuk cried.

Pianist Wu Han, violinist Keefe and cellist David Finckel grappled with this weird world of ghost melodies, acid angularities and fire-dances, in which the players seemed to chase one another's tails through the flames.

Copland asks the violin and

cello to play quarter-tones (notes that fall between the half-steps of a piano), and it was remarkable hearing how precisely Keefe and Finckel matched their scorched "off-pitch" notes. The three players also grew eerily rhapsodic in a way that ties "Vitebsk" to Manhattan in the Jazz Age.

Neikrug composed his "Pueblo Children's Songs" in 1995 on a commission from soprano Murphy, honoring the birth of her son Christopher. With her pianist-husband, she performed them Thursday: three "chants," inspired by Pueblo naming ceremonies for infants; a mischievous number about chipmunks, recalling Ives; and a lullaby.

The effect was ritualistic: time suspended; sung notes plucked from the air and set against tamped-down notes inside the piano or Messiaen-like chords, luminously mysterious. The textures, and the performance, were boiled down and beautiful.

The mood was overturned by Ravel's Violin Sonata (with its famous "Blues" movement), which received an exciting performance from violinist Ian Swensen and pianist Gilbert Kalish. They took huge liberties with Ravel's tempo and dynamic markings — and brought down the house.

As did Swensen, Kalish, violinist Paul Neubauer and Carr with Brahms' Piano Quartet in G minor, with its whirlwind Gypsy-inspired finale. The performance was a little unrelenting, but also celebratory, an appropriate way to end this terrific festival's fifth season.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

The Sun

September 22, 2006

Maazel Tackles Mahler

by Fred Kirshnit

When Lorin Maazel stepped out onto that podium at Avery Fisher Hall on Wednesday evening to lead the New York Philharmonic in Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4, he undoubtedly did so with a sense of history. Not only was the local Phil the orchestra of the composer, who conducted here in the last years of his life, but this ensemble, first under Dmitri Mitropoulos and then Leonard Bernstein, was in the vanguard of Mahler dissemination through the relatively new medium of LP recordings. It is not too much of an exaggeration to state that it was Bernstein who first made Mahler a star. Therefore, it was altogether fitting that Maestro Maazel should produce such an excellent realization.

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC Avery Fisher Hall

But first, a rollicking run-through of the Overture to Oberon by Carl Maria von Weber. This was decidedly the opera house version, filled with colorful effects and a mad sense of acceleration that was infectiously pleasurable. When Mr. Maazel let the trumpets and lower brass loose at the end, he was going for the most visceral of the thrills of the pit, not the decorum of the concert hall. There were problems, however, most notably a badly botched solo by the new principal oboist, Liang Wang. And the Philharmonic horns were, well, the Philharmonic horns.

Soloist for the evening was the intelligent soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, who was extremely impressive in Mozart's liturgical motet "Exultate, jubilate." Keeping her bell-like tones on the soft side, she achieved vocal power through well thought-out and controlled crescendos. This is a piece writ-

ten for the church, after all, and does not need the exaggerated pyrotechnics often bestowed upon it by less confident singers. The Alleluja is often excerpted for recitals and encores and sometimes oversung. Ms. Grant Murphy remained remarkably pure throughout, as Mr. Maazel kept the now quite small orchestra, augmented by harpsichord, in check.

The first movement of the Mahler was just sublime. The piece is all about the contrast between the jagged rhythms of dotted staccato and the long, fluid line of endless legato. Mr. Maazel has always had a particular flair for Mahler, and he paced and shaped this movement expertly. Taking off the summer may have been a good thing, as the strings sounded much better than they have in several years: Every nuance, every percussion accent, every inner voice was spot on.

Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow did a fine job in the second movement, performing on two separate violins, one employing the Baroque device of *scordatura* (being tuned differently from the rest of the orchestra). He was able to establish two distinct characterizations, with the oddly tuned fiddle signifying the instrument of death himself. I have heard better live — especially the ghostly incantations of William De Pasquale of the Philadelphia Orchestra — but this was still arresting artistry.

What is the most beautiful movement in all of Mahler? I would be hard-pressed to give a definitive answer, but the composer himself had no difficulty proclaiming that it was the Poco Adagio of his Fourth Symphony. Here Mr. Maazel ran into a brick wall.

As good as the Phil strings were this evening, they are simply not in the top echelon of the world's ensembles and just did not have the technique to deliver a top performance of this ravishing music.

Ms. Grant Murphy was back for the final section and once again spun her diaphanous web of mezzo-piano delicacy. Adopting a childlike personality so fitting for this text about a billowy, comforting heaven, she dazzled with the sheer campanilian quality of her marvelous instrument — a human glockenspiel of unwavering pitch control. I would have wished for more of a slide at the end of the line "Sanct Ursula selbst dazu lacht," but then again, I'm a bit old-fashioned.

One last point about Ms. Grant Murphy's physical, rather than musical, entrance in the Mahler: The soprano does not sing until the final movement, so there are three ways to get her onstage. First, she can sit quietly through the first three movements. Second, she can make a grand entrance during the fanfare near the conclusion of the third movement. Third, and least desirable, she can opt for what she did this night and simply walk out from the wings after the conclusion of the third movement.

This turned out to be quite disturbing because, up to this point, maestro had done such a professional job of making this rendition seamless, pausing only briefly between movements with his hands raised to command silence. Coming to a dead stop to allow the singer to position herself led only to an inevitable coughfest in the crowd. For a moment it seemed like the Phil was holding open auditions for the lead in an upcoming concert version of "La Traviata."

Heidi Grant Murphy

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

February 19, 2007

Murphys in song, at piano simply brilliant

Couple graces Royce with awesome artistry, unique song selection

by Jeffrey Kaczmarczyk

REVIEW

Heidi Grant Murphy

★★★★ (out of four stars)

In a Kaleidoscope Series concert in St. Cecilia Music Society's Royce Auditorium, the soprano was accompanied by pianist Kevin Murphy.

Murphy's program was a genuine evening of art song, a somewhat rarefied recital for a rarefied audience. Though she sang music by Mozart and Richard Strauss, not a note was from "The Marriage of Figaro" or "Der Rosenkavalier," two of the operas in which she's made a name for herself, as Susanna in the former and Sophie in the latter.

Even when she wound up her program with a set of songs from American musical theater, Murphy chose seldom-heard songs such as "I Have to Tell You," from Harold Rome's "Fanny," which was sung by none other than Florence "Carol Brady" Henderson when the show debuted on Broadway in 1954.

Murphy's exquisite pianissimo is her stock-in-trade, her poised performance of Mozart's "Un moto di gioia" ("An Emotion of Joy") gave full flower to the range of her vocal skills, from soft and sweet



PRESS PHOTO/DELBRIDGE LANGDON JR.

Great touch: Heidi Grant Murphy performs Saturday.

to energetic and spirited. Whether singing high or low in her sizable range, Murphy was a pleasure to hear as well as to watch.

A set of songs from "Clairières Dans le Ciel," by the gifted French composer Lili Boulanger, who died prior to her 25th birthday, gave Murphy ample opportunity for thoughtful, considered singing. Songs such as "Parfois, je suis triste" ("Sometimes I Am Sad") was delicious.

Selections from Sergei Rachmaninoff's Songs, Op. 38, pushed the envelope for her. Some of the climaxes took her right to the edge of her ability to hurl her sound up and out. But even with the taxing Rus-

sian enunciation, Murphy sang with sensuous softness with a voice that seemed to slip beyond the limits of time and space.

Kevin Murphy spent some 14 years on the staff of the Metropolitan Opera as an assistant conductor and keyboardist. Last September, he joined Paris Opera in a similar capacity. He accompanied his wife with great taste, anticipating her direction at every turn. He played with the lid on the Steinway grand piano fully raised, yet he had no trouble easing the instrument below her voice as needed.

St. Cecilia Music Society's annual Great Artist Series concert is a little over two weeks away. But if an evening with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy doesn't also count as a "great artist" program, I'm not sure what does.

St. Cecilia's three-concert Kaleidoscope Series this season is, in effect, a "great artist" series, with the Tokyo String Quartet in October and guitarist Sharon Isbin in November all appearing in Royce Auditorium.

Murphy, who last appeared here with the Grand Rapids Symphony in April 2002, returned to West Michigan Saturday for a recital with her husband and accompanist, Kevin Murphy.

It was an enchanting program.

The lyric soprano, whose albums include "Lullabies from Around the World," has one of the most beautiful pianissimos in the business, a will 'o the wisp tone that shimmers in the air.

"Quiet Night" from "On Your Toes" may not be the best song Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart ever wrote, but Murphy's ethereal singing, plus a chorus of ethereal humming, made for a captivating performance.



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Heidi Grant Murphy

THE PLAIN DEALER

November 19, 2005

Chorus fulfills in every way

by Donald Rosenberg

Group's voices
bring sensitivity
to warm selections

It is never too early to give thanks for those we cherish. So let's raise a glass to the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus.

Each year, the volunteer singers of this ensemble devote countless hours to their art in preparation for performances at Severance Hall with, well, you know who. Even the Cleveland Orchestra probably would concur that the choristers, as well as director of choruses Robert Porco and two exceptional guest soloists, are the stars of this week's subscription program.

Oh, and Gabriel Fauré, Francis Poulenc and Ralph Vaughan Williams, the composers whose works provided a resplendent blanket of warmth Thursday to counter the cold breezes outside. These pieces focus on the human voice, spirituality and love with distinctive beauty and imagination.

Fauré's Requiem is one of the most captivating creations in the choral repertoire — no, make that *any* repertoire. The

REVIEW

Cleveland Orchestra

score's seven movements bask in heavenly sonorities, rather than the darker sides of the Requiem Mass. Fauré's ineffably exquisite use of the orchestra — the violins don't arrive until the third movement — and voices make it a singular sonic experience.

Porco led a performance that honored the music's serene generosity, gauging dynamics carefully and achieving fine balances between instruments and vocal cords. The choristers were in gloriously cohesive form. Words could be heard at every dynamic, and the various shadings were treated with glowing sensitivity.

And will we ever hear "Pie Jesus" sung with more mesmerizing ethereality? Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy floated the soft phrases from magical vocal regions. The tempo was slow, providing plenty of space for Murphy to lavish her special artistry on the delicate phrases. In his Cleveland Orchestra debut, Brett Polegato brought smooth nobility to the baritone solos.

The moods in Poulenc's "Glo-

ria" often veer strikingly from what might be considered religious. The French composer seems to have his tongue planted so firmly in cheek that you wonder whether he'll get back on sacred track. But he always does, to sublime and buoyant effect.

Murphy, who last was heard with the orchestra singing the offstage part of the Forest Bird in Wagner's "Siegfried" in 2002, managed Poulenc's difficult leaps and hushed lines with stunning control. The work's choral intricacies held no terror for the Cleveland contingent, which poured forth streams of fresh sound under their director's elastic baton.

In Vaughan Williams' ecstatic "Five Mystical Songs," it was Polegato's turn to show his expressive stuff. The score abounds in lyrical and dramatic statements, many influenced by British folk traditions, and Polegato applied his suave baritone vibrantly to the songs' emotional needs. The choral utterances alternated between the enchanting (hums) and the stirring (outbursts).

Kudos to all. The program repeats at 8 tonight and 3 p.m. Sunday.

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**Heidi Grant Murphy
Repertoire**

Orchestra

Adams	El Niño	Atlanta Symphony/Spano
Bach	B Minor Mass	Atlanta Symphony/Shaw
Bach	Cantata “Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen”	San Francisco Symphony/Weil
Bach	St. John’s Passion	Cleveland Orchestra/Dohnányi
Bach	St. Matthew’s Passion	Atlanta Symphony/Spano
Barber	Knoxville Summer of 1915	San Francisco Symphony/Tilson Thomas Detroit Symphony/Itzhak Perlman Houston Symphony/Paavo Järvi Atlanta Symphony/Abbado Kansas City Symphony
Beethoven	Symphony No. 9	Madrid Symphony/López-Cobos St. Louis Symphony/Robertson
Brahms	Ein deutsches Requiem	National Symphony Orchestra/Klas New York Philharmonic/Masur Philharmonia/Maazel
Carissimi	Jephte	Cincinnati Symphony/Conlon
Fauré	Requiem	Cleveland Orchestra/ Porco
Górecki	Symphony No.3	Grand Rapids/Lockington
Grieg	Peer Gynt “Solweig”	Montreal Symphony/Dutoit
Golijov	Three Songs	Atlanta Symphony Orchestra/Spano
Handel	Messiah	Atlanta Symphony/Shaw Philadelphia Orchestra/Biava St. Louis Symphony/Seaman Columbus Symphony/Jenkins
Handel	Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day	New York Philharmonic/Masur
Haydn	Creation	Munich Philharmonic/Levine Atlanta Symphony/Shaw Carnegie Hall/ Rilling Florida Orchestra/Sanderling
Haydn	Harmoniemesse	Handel & Haydn/Norington

Honegger	Jeanne d' Arc	New York Philharmonic/Masur
Humperdinck	Hänsel und Gretel	Milwaukee Symphony/Delfs
Kernis	Garden of Light	Minnesota Orchestra/Kreizberg
Lancino	Requiem	Orchestra Philharmonique de Radio France/Inbal
Mahler	Symphony No. 2	Los Angeles Philharmonic Boston Symphony/Ozawa Vienna Philharmonic/Ozawa Dallas Symphony /Litton Bergen Philharmonic/Litton
Mahler	Symphony No. 4	New York Philharmonic/Maazel Verbier Festival Orchestra/Levine Los Angeles Philharmonic/Krivine Metropolitan Opera Orch./Levine Orchestre de Paris/Eschenbach Los Angeles Philharmonic/Rattle Dallas Symphony/Litton Bergen Philharmonic/Litton Kansas City Symphony/Stern Minnesota Orchestra/Litton
Mahler	Symphony No. 8	London Philharmonic/Levine Chicago Symphony/Levine San Francisco Symphony/Blomstedt
Mendelssohn	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Los Angeles Philharmonic
Mendelssohn	Elijah	Florida Orchestra/Sanderling
Mozart	Coronation Mass	Peoria Symphony/Stelluto
Mozart	Exsultate Jubilate	New York Philharmonic/Maazel
Mozart	Mass in C Minor	Met Orchestra/Levine Munich Philharmonic/Levine Boston Symphony/Ozawa Houston Symphony/Eschenbach
Mozart	Requiem	Toronto Symphony/Oundjian Boston Symphony Orchestra/Graf San Francisco Symphony/Tilson Thomas Houston Symphony/Honek
Orff	Carmina Burana	Cleveland Orchestra/Morell Minnesota Orchestra/de Waart Pittsburgh Symphony/Bernhardt
Penderecki	Symphony No. 8	BBC Symphony/Bělohlávek
Pierné	Le croisade des enfants "Alice"	National Symphony/Slatkin
Poulenc	Gloria	San Francisco Symphony/Tilson Thomas Detroit Symphony/Järvi Cleveland Orchestra/Porco
Saariaho	Cinq reflets de "L'amour de loin"	Chicago Symphony Los Angeles Philharmonic

Schmidt	The Book of the Seven Seals	Cleveland Orchestra/Welser-Möst
Schubert	Mass No. 5 in A-flat Major	San Francisco Symphony/Weil
Schumann	Das Paradies und die Peri	Staatskapelle Dresden/Sinopoli Philadelphia Orchestra/Rattle
Sierra	Missa Latina	National Symphony/Slatkin Casals Festival/Delfs Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra/Delfs Houston Symphony/Slatkin
Sierra	Beyond the Silence of Sorrow	Seattle Symphony/Schwarz
Sierra	Navidad en la montaña	Detroit Symphony/Slatkin
Thomas	<i>Gathering Paradise: Emily Dickinson Settings</i>	New York Philharmonic/Maazel Chicago Symphony/Maazel
Vaughan Williams	Dona Nobis Pacem	East Carolina Symphony

Opera

Britten	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Titania	Madrid Opera
Donizetti	L'Elisir d'amore	Adina	Paris Opera
Gluck	Orfeo	Amor	Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Humperdinck	Hänsel und Gretel	Gretel	Milwaukee Symphony/Delfs
Messiaen	St. Francis of Assisi	Angel	Orchestra Radio France/Chung Brooklyn Philharmonic/Spano Netherlands Opera/Metzmacher
Mozart	La clemenza di Tito	Servilia	Paris Opera/Bolton Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Mozart	Don Giovanni	Zerlina	Seiji Ozawa Opera Project (Japan) Ravinia Festival/Conlon Tanglewood/Ozawa
Mozart	Idomeneo	Ilia	Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Mozart	Il Re Pastore	Elisa	Mostly Mozart Festival/McGegan Philharmonia Baroque/McGegan Tanglewood/Levine Ravinia Festival/Conlon
Mozart	Lucio Silla	Celia	Salzburg Festival/Cambreling Frankfurt Opera/Cambreling
Mozart	Mitradate, re di Ponto	Ismene	Salzburg Festival
Mozart	Le Nozze di Figaro	Susanna	Paris Opera Metropolitan Opera Minnesota Orchestra/Tate
Mozart	Die Zauberflöte	Pamina	Metropolitan Opera/Levine American Sinfonietta/Michael Palmer (Concert Version)

			Santa Fe Opera/Spiano
Monteverdi	L'incoronazione di Poppea	Drusilla	Netherlands Opera/Rousset
Poulenc	Les Dialogues des Carmélites	Sister Constance	Metropolitan Opera/Conlon Metropolitan Opera/Nagano
Puccini	Il Trittico	Genoveva/ Suor Angelica	Metropolitan Opera/Ranzani
Puccini	Suor Angelica	Sueur Genevieve	Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Rameau	Les Boréades	Semire/Nymph	Salzburg Festival/Rattle
Rameau	Les Indes Galantes	Zaïre/Emilie	Paris Opera/Christie
Ravel	L'enfant et les sortilèges	Princess	Los Angeles Philharmonic/Rattle
Sondheim	Sweeney Todd	Johanna	New York Philharmonic/Litton
Strauss	Der Rosenkavalier	Sophie	Paris Opera Metropolitan Opera/Levine Metropolitan Opera/Thielemann Salzburg Festival/Maazel
Stravinsky	The Rake's Progress	Anne Truelove	Netherlands Opera/de Leeuw
Verdi	Un Ballo in Maschera	Oscar	Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Verdi	Falstaff	Nanetta	Boston Symphony Orchestra/Ozawa (Concert Version) Metropolitan Opera/Levine
Wagner	Siegfried	Waldvogel	Metropolitan Opera/Levine