

STORMING THE SYMPHONY

Portland singer Storm Large stars in *The Seven Deadly Sins*

Signing up Portland singer Storm Large as the star of *The Seven Deadly Sins* might seem like typecasting. After all, Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's scorching 1933 satire tells the story of two sisters, Anna I and Anna II, who venture to a septet of cities, each representing one of the biblical mortal transgressions.

And speaking of transgressions: Large's acclaimed 2007 one-woman show at Portland Center Stage, *Crazy Enough*, and her subsequent memoir, along with her past service as lead singer of The Balls — where her vocal power proved as ample as what she called her "\$2,000 growth spurt" — certainly revealed her first-hand experience with many of the deadly sins. Who else would brag (in the hit "8 Miles Wide") about her (metaphorical) vagina's capacity for variety?

"I am enormous / get used to it ... my vagina is 8 miles wide / absolutely everyone can come inside."

But Large's presence is no gimmick. After erupting to national fame a decade ago via the CBS show *Rock Star: Supernova*, Large revealed that her artistic ambitions transcended rock stardom. Her funny, often moving theater piece, which ran for months, offered the first clue.

Large's versatility only expanded on subsequent appearances with the Oregon Symphony (including *Seven Deadly Sins*), as well as during her stint with the decidedly non-rocking Portland band Pink Martini and even on her new album on Pink Martini's Heinz Records, *Le Bonheur*, which mingles American songbook standards like Cole Porter's "I've Got You Under My Skin" and Richard

STORM LARGE



PHOTO BY LAURA DOMELY

Rodgers's "The Lady Is a Tramp" with Black Sabbath and her own heartfelt originals.

It's appropriate, then, that *The Seven Deadly Sins* requires her to play two characters; Large's personality is big enough for both. Weill and Brecht's sometimes awkward but powerful and too seldom performed masterpiece also requires Large's rock-star charisma to hold the stage, leaning on her ability to sing a variety of music forms (waltz, foxtrot, madrigal and more), with Weill assigning a different one to each sin.

Large will be accompanied by the excellent vocal quartet Hudson Shad and orchestra. The program also features an overture by the hottest young American composer, Mason Bates (who moonlights as a DJ), Aaron Copland's classic *Appalachian Spring* ballet music and more.

It's a tremendous challenge for any singer, but Large loathes complacency and relishes the opportunity to broaden her artistic horizons. "My philosophy is to Follow The Yes," she wrote in an email. "I have fought my theatrical and dramatic leanings for more than 15 years because I thought they weren't cool or rock 'n' roll. Singing with the symphony and Pink Martini, writing love songs where nobody dies at the end, is the next step in my artistic evolution. It forces me to be soft, vulnerable and feminine ... qualities that, a few years ago, I would consider to be the most humiliating to ever take on. I have learned to love being terrified, artistically ... and I am in mad rapture in all of these weird twists my career has taken. Luckily, audiences seem to dig it too!"

They certainly have in Portland, and now, thanks to the Oregon Bach Festival, Eugene gets to experience a star whose talent is as big and wide and strong as her ... name. — Brett Campbell

Seven Deadly Sins: Storm Large runs 7:30 to 9:30 pm Friday, June 26, in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall; \$15-\$58.

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