

Soprano Angela Meade invites opera novices to sample 'Il Trovatore'

Astoria Music Festival midpoint features voices, piano and strings

By **PATRICK WEBB**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

The Astoria Music Festival moves into its second weekend with the world's hottest soprano returning — scheduling her North Coast appearance between opera performances in Berlin, Paris and Moscow.

Angela Meade will sing Leonora in Verdi's "Il Trovatore," Sunday, June 26, the role she sang in her debut at the festival in 2011.

She has just completed five performances of the work at the Berlin Opera after enjoying sparkling reviews as Leonora at the New York Metropolitan Opera.

A bonus for Astoria audiences will be fellow New York professionals joining her on stage at the Liberty Theater.

"I'm especially excited this year because I have brought a cast of my friends and colleagues who are all Met singers with me to perform 'Il Trovatore,' which is one of my favorite operas," said Meade.

While pleased that opera lovers will be buying tickets, Meade invites newcomers to the art form to enjoy the show.

"'Trovatore' is a perfect opera for someone looking to try opera out, because there are so many hummable tunes, as well as lots of visceral singing."

The concert performance will be sung in Italian with English titles.

Keith Clark, artistic director of the festival, is de-

lighted. "We are all honored that she interrupts one of the biggest international careers to come here," he said.

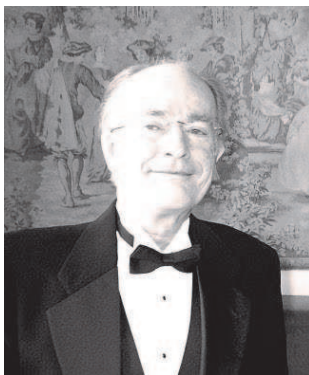
Years ago, he and Ruth Dobson, fellow founder of the Astoria festival, brought Meade to the Portland SummerFest Opera in the Park where she sang for an audience of 5,000.

"She came to us as a young person and we hit it off immediately as colleagues, so we have sought out opportunities to perform together," Clark said.

"She fell in love with what we are trying to do, and she has set aside time," added Clark, noting they are talking about further collaborations two to three years from now.

Meade's often-told story began in Centralia, Washington, where she attended high school and began singing seriously at community college, then attended Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Advanced studies in California and Philadelphia, plus success in 50 musical competitions, propelled her to a professional career.

Olivia Tsui, the California-based violinist and conductor, recalls working at a contest in Los Angeles about 10 years ago and hearing Meade's soprano. "That young lady came in, opened her mouth and I was amazed," she said. "What a voice! It was the only time I said, 'Guys, this is the one to watch.' It is the only time I have said that about anybody."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Portland pianist Cary Lewis will lead a chamber music concert Friday, June 24 with festival all-stars violinist Jeffrey Thayer, violist James Van Valkenburg, clarinetist David Hattner and horn player Susan Welty.

Meade was one of the winners of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a process documented in the film "The Audition." Her professional operatic debut was in 2008 at the Met, substituting for an ill colleague as Elvira, the lead in Verdi's "Ernani," a role she twice reprised in New York.

Despite a world-traveling lifestyle, performing, giving interviews and appearing on magazine covers, Meade is happy to keep Astoria on her schedule as a way of giving back to her home region.

"I always love coming back to the Northwest to bring a bit of the world of grand opera and classical music to those who don't necessarily get to go to the Metropolitan Opera or the other great opera houses of the world," she said.

Meade won't be slowing down once Sunday's show is over.

"I'll be heading off after

WEEK TWO CONCERTS

ASTORIA MUSIC FESTIVAL

At Liberty Theater, Astoria, unless indicated

THURSDAY, JUNE 23

7:30 p.m. "City Girl," 1930 silent movie, shot in Oregon, with live music by Astoria Music Festival Orchestra members, conducted by Oregon composer John Paul. Post-show, meet the composer.

Friday, June 24

7:30 p.m. Chamber Music with Cary Lewis, piano; Jeffrey Thayer, violin; James Van Valkenburg, viola; David Hattner, clarinet; and Susan Welty, horn.

Saturday, June 25

4 p.m. Happy Hour with cellist Sergey Antonov

7:30 p.m. Symphonic Showcase with Festival Orchestra: Ilya Kazantsev,

Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2; mezzo soprano MaryAnn McCormick, Mahler's "Three songs to texts by Friedrich Ruckert;" and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for violin, viola and orchestra, with Thayer and Van Valkenburg.

Sunday, June 26

4 p.m. "Il Trovatore," concert version of Verdi's opera, with soloists Angela Meade, Cameron Schutzta, McCormick, Richard Zeller and DeAndre Simmons. Sung in Italian with English titles.

Wednesday, June 29

7:30 p.m. Young Artists Fellowship Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Olivia Tsui, at Astoria Masonic Lodge, 1572 Franklin Ave., Astoria.

For ticket information and details of remaining concerts, visit www.astoriamusicfestival.org or call the Astoria Music Festival Office at 503-325 9896.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Cameron Schutzta, a tenor, will sing as Manrico in "Il Trovatore" Sunday.

the Astoria Music Festival to make my debut at Teatro Real in Madrid opposite Plácido Domingo in Verdi's "I Due Foscari," where I'll return in the fall to sing "Norma," said Meade, whose rendition of the "Casta diva" aria from "Norma" has been heralded by opera critics as among the best of her generation. She performed the Bellini piece in



SUBMITTED PHOTO

James VanValkenburg, assistant principal viola of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, will perform Friday, June 24 and Saturday, June 25.

Astoria in 2012, her second of four appearances at the festival.

"Later in the fall, I'll be making my debuts in Paris, Lyon and Moscow with

renowned Rossini conductor Alberto Zedda in the title role of Rossini's "Ermione," and then finally to round out the year I'll be making my debut in Seville, Spain, at