



Press Release

March, 2008

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“Believing in Your Dreams: Part 1”

Verdi’s *Requiem*, Civic Opera House, featuring Northwestern University Choruses, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Concert Choir and guest soloists Nancy Pifer, soprano; Stacy Eckert, mezzo-soprano; Noah Stewart, tenor; and Charles Robert Austin, bass

Saturday, April 26, 2008

WHAT: Midwest Young Artists’ (MYA) Symphony Orchestra celebrates the end of their 07-08 Concert Season with a collaborative performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* at Chicago’s Civic Opera House (20 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL) on **Saturday, April 26, 2008 at 7:30 PM**. The concert features both MYA’s Chorale and Symphony Orchestra with Northwestern University Choruses and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Concert Choir. MYA welcomes guest artists Nancy Pifer, soprano; Stacy Eckert, mezzo-soprano; Noah Stewart, tenor; and Charles Robert Austin, bass; as soloists for this grand work. Tickets are \$15 for students and seniors and \$25 for adults. Tickets are available at www.mya.org or by calling 847-926-9898.

GUEST ARTISTS: Equally at home in both concert and operatic repertoire, soprano **Nancy Pifer, soprano**, has performed with many ensembles and Opera companies worldwide. With the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Miss Pifer recently sang the role of Ascagne in *Les Troyens*, by Hector Berlioz, with Zubin Mehta conducting. She has also appeared in the role of Schlepptägerin in Daniel Barenboim’s production of Richard Strauss’ *Elektra* both in Chicago, and in New York at Carnegie Hall. At the Ravinia Festival, she was heard in Schumann’s *Scenes from Goethe’s Faust*, under the direction of Christoph Eschenbach. Ms. Pifer is a winner of the Friedrich Schorr Memorial Prize in Voice and is a recipient of the prestigious Scholl Career Grant.

Stacy Eckert, mezzo-soprano, combines her full, warm voice with a stunning stage presence to create superb concert and opera performances. Ms. Eckert has recently covered the role of Waltraute in Wagner’s *Die Walküre* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. In addition to performing the title role in Bizet’s *Carmen* with the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, her portrayals include Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Flora in *La Traviata* and Giuletta in *Les contes d’Hoffman*. Upcoming engagements include *Carmen* with City Opera Company of the Quad Cities, Mozart *Requiem* with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, Verdi’s *Requiem* with the Muncie Symphony Orchestra and Beethoven’s *Symphony No.9* with Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra.

New York native and **tenor, Noah Stewart**, made his San Francisco Opera debut in last summer’s production of *Der Rosenkavalier* as the Faninal’s Major-domo and returned this season as the Philistine Messenger (*Samson and Delilah*), Malcolm and Macduff (*Macbeth*) and as T. Morris Chester in the world premiere of Philip Glass’s

Appomattox. Stewart won second prize in the Leontyne Price Competition and the George London Competition; his other awards include the Marian Anderson Encouragement Award, an Opera Index Award, a Licia Albanese–Puccini Foundation Study Grant, and first prize in the Florida Grand Opera Competition. Upcoming engagements include *Peggy McArthur's Home for the Holidays* with The Sacramento Choral Society and *The Prince in A Flowering Tree* conducted by John Adams with Chicago Opera Theatre.

"*Possessor of a strikingly beautiful voice*" and "*Completely commanding on stage*" are but two of the powerful phrases used by critics and writers to describe the voice and stage talents of **Charles Robert Austin, bass-baritone**. Mr. Austin has performed in concert at some of the most renowned venues world wide including Carnegie Hall (New York) where he performed Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Great Mass in C*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and *Missa Solemnis*, and Verdi's *Nabucco*; Avery Fisher Hall (New York) where he performed Mozart's version of Handel's *Messiah*; Alice Tully Hall (New York) where he performed Haydn's *Creation* with the Mostly Mozart Festival and Schubert's oratorio *Lazarus* with the New York Chamber Orchestra; and the Kennedy Center (Washington DC) where he performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Washington Choral Society.

WHERE: Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL

WHEN: Saturday, April 26, 2008, 7:30 PM.

PROGRAM: *Requiem* G. Verdi
Guest Soloists: Nancy Pifer, soprano; Stacy Eckert, mezzo-soprano; Noah Stewart, tenor; Charles Robert Austin, bass
Northwestern University Choruses, Robert Harris, Director
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Concert Choir, Chet Alwes, Director
MYA Chorale, Jeff Nelson, Director
MYA Symphony Orchestra, Allan Dennis, Director

SPONSORS: The Illinois Arts Council & Michael Becker Fine Violins



Nancy Pifer, soprano



Stacy Eckert, mezzo-soprano



Noah Stewart, tenor



Charles Robert Austin, bass

WHO: With a vision to create an exceptional environment for young musicians, **Midwest Young Artists** (878 Lyster Road, Highwood, 847-926-9898) was founded in 1993. Currently reaching over 600 students from 74 cities in the metropolitan Chicago area, with students ranging in age from 2nd through 12th grades, MYA strives to provide the highest quality music experience for young musicians nationwide. MYA expects the best out of its students and provides a supportive and nurturing environment. It is a place where students are able to grow with their peers in a competitive, yet friendly atmosphere. MYA has 5 youth orchestras, more than 60 chamber music ensembles, 3

choral groups, an all-inclusive jazz program, and classes in music theory and history. Students have the opportunity to travel abroad and to perform in major venues throughout Chicago and around the world. Leading the nation in chamber music instruction, MYA graduates are accepted at the most selective conservatories, universities and colleges in the country.

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Photographs, videos, and additional materials available.

The Mission of the Midwest Young Artists (MYA) is to build a home with the power of music to enrich the lives of our students and community.