



Julia Bullock, soprano

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Soprano Julia Bullock Gives a Virtuoso Recital

Sarah Bryan Miller | St. Louis Post-Dispatch | March 31, 2016



Photo: Dario Acosta

Soprano Julia Bullock returned to her hometown on Wednesday to give one of the finest vocal recitals heard here in years.

The main auditorium at the Sheldon Concert Hall was filled with an enthusiastic audience. They weren't disappointed. Bullock is the complete package, with a lovely rich voice that's well-trained and intelligently used; commanding stage presence and consistent connection with the audience; rock-solid languages and musicality; an attractive person; a thoughtfully chosen program that consistently entertained and, at times, challenged the listener; and a clear passion for what she does.

The program opened with a setting by Henry Cowell (1897-1943), "How Old Is Song," an unusual but captivating piece that had the excellent accompanist, Renate Rohlfing, playing the piano's strings as if it were a zither.

From there, they moved on to "Cinq melodies populaires grecques (Five Popular Greek Melodies)," a varied group of songs by Ravel (1875-1937); a two-song Scandinavian group by the Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927) and the Norwegian Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), with texts by Hans Christian Andersen and Henrik Ibsen; and a group of four songs by Kurt Weill (1900-1950), two in German, two in English, and all quite different from what went before.

After intermission, the pair returned with "She Is Asleep," a nifty piece by John Cage (1912-1992),



Julia Bullock, soprano

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Soprano Julia Bullock returns to her hometown with a recital

Sarah Bryan Miller | St. Louis Post-Dispatch | March 27, 2016

After intermission, the pair returned with "She Is Asleep," a nifty piece by John Cage (1912-1992), in which Bullock sang on vowels and Rohlfing played percussion on the piano. A set of songs by Samuel Barber (1910-1981) and Cowell that ranged from the slightly surreal (Barber's "Nuvoletta," setting a portion of James Joyce's "Finnegans Wake," called on the soprano to sing into the piano, to exceedingly cool effect) to the touching (Cowell's "Where She Lies") to the hilarious (Cowell's "Because the Cat").

The last official group was a powerful one, devoted to two settings of poems by Langston Hughes (1902-1967), by William Grant Still and Ricky Ian Gordon, and a pair of deeply felt spirituals, "City Called Heaven" and "Deep River."

Bullock provided witty, informative spoken program notes. If an operatic role allows an artist to cover a broad canvas, a song recital is like a series of miniatures, each different, each demanding detail. Bullock is a remarkable recitalist, investing all her gifts in every song, limning each stroke for its best effect. She is an artist on the cusp of a great career.

This is the part of the review where the accompanist usually gets a few words about her sensitivity and support. Rohlfing is much more than supportive, a true collaborator in the joint venture that is a recital. She stepped out and faded back as appropriate to each piece, shone in a variety of styles, and displayed a ready musical wit in songs like "Because the Cat" and easy virtuosity throughout.