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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

JANUARY-MARCH 2025

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Friends and patrons,

When I took on the role of executive director of CU Presents in August, I knew that I'd be supporting the CU Boulder College of Music in continuing its tradition of excellence and high-quality performances. What I didn't expect was the variety of new experiences I would discover by delving deeper into the programming we create and support.

This fall, I attended an outreach performance of *Hänsel und Gretel* presented by the College of Music's Eklund Opera Program with hundreds of elementary school students, many experiencing their first live exposure to the performing arts. I saw the gravity-defying acrobatics of Circa's *Duck Pond* at the Artist Series. I laughed at a satiric examination of bullying and its consequences in our musical theatre program's *Heathers*, and I was stunned by our Wind Symphony's collaboration with the ~Nois saxophone quartet to present Viet Cuong's *Second Nature*. At each of these events, I was thrilled to join our audiences on impactful and emotionally transformative journeys.

I'm also looking ahead to next fall. One of my great joys is curating the College of Music's longstanding Faculty Tuesdays series along with Dean John Davis. This free recital series highlights the virtuosity and diverse repertory of the college's own faculty and we hope to see you at the series opener on Aug. 26, 2025. The event promises to be memorable, featuring rotating performances by our piano faculty to celebrate the generous gift of a brand-new Steinway grand piano for Grusin Music Hall. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Gregory Silvus and Deidre Ferris for their leadership and generosity in making the lead gift for this Music Advisory Board-led campaign.

If you see me at a performance this spring, please say hello! I love visiting with our valued patrons about what makes our shared experiences meaningful.

Warmly,

Andrew "Metz" Metzroth
Executive Director, CU Presents

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CU ★ PRESENTS

JANUARY-MARCH 2025

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The University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado's flagship university, honors and recognizes the many contributions of Indigenous peoples in our state. CU Boulder acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute and many other Native American nations. Their forced removal from these territories has caused devastating and lasting impacts.

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SPOTLIGHT



Swashbuckling Fun for the Whole Family

By Henry Michaels

*"I am the very model of a modern Major-General,
I've information vegetable, animal and mineral,
I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical."*

An all-time tongue twister, the "Major-General's Song" is the most beloved tune from what is perhaps the most beloved operetta of Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert: *The Pirates of Penzance*. Delivered at breakneck speed and chock-full of wit and humor, this legendary musical number is the very model of the style of Gilbert and Sullivan's lively, quick-witted comedy.

And when the CU Boulder College of Music Eklund Opera Program presents *The Pirates of Penzance* in March, fun will surely abound.

"The feel and vibe of this show is so much fun. I mean, it takes place on a pirate ship, right?!" says Eklund Opera Program Director Leigh Holman.

"It really is a sight to see. We have a luxurious, beautiful set. There's dance, lots of physicality like tumbling and a ton of swashbuckling fun with the pirates.

Then there are the jokes, which just come at you one after the other. It's the greatest of satire. And the music. The music is gorgeous."

The Pirates of Penzance tells the story of Frederic, a young man recently finished with his apprenticeship among a kindly group of pirates. He falls in love—don't they always?—with Mabel, one of the daughters of Major-General Stanley. Hijinks and hilarity ensue as the pirates attempt to find wives and Frederic discovers that his time with the buccaneers is honor-bound to continue because of a Leap Day technicality.

Like many of Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas, *The Pirates of Penzance* is satire, a lampooning of the concept of duty and of Victorian-era norms. The College of Music's production will also feature updates to some lyrics and dialogue, a common practice with Gilbert and Sullivan works.

"Unlike Mozart or Verdi where you would never change anything that they wrote, we know that Gilbert and Sullivan would prefer updates because that was the point of their satire," says Holman. "Gilbert as the librettist wanted to relate to what was going on in the audience's time."

Perhaps best of all, this swashbuckling musical extravaganza is seriously hilarious fun for the whole family. From young to old and everyone in between, *The Pirates of Penzance*—with all its music, its comedy and its dynamism—has something for everyone.


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HOPE AND GRAVITY

By Michael Hollinger

Nine lives entangle in delightfully surprising and comical ways when an elevator crashes in a major American city. Michael Hollinger's comedy is a reminder that there are only a few degrees of separation between all of us.

Jan. 23 - Feb. 16

The Savoy | Denver

Feb. 21 - Feb. 23

The Nomad Playhouse | Boulder

THE WHITE CHIP

By Sean Daniels

Straight from its critically acclaimed run off-Broadway, *The White Chip* is the true story of one man's journey from alcoholism to recovery in a play *The New York Times* described as "laugh-out-loud funny and gasp-inducing, self-inflicted tragedy."

Apr. 10 - May 4

The Dairy Arts Center | Boulder



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UPCOMING EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

CU PRESENTS

ARTIST SERIES



Renée Fleming
Voice of Nature
Jan. 31, 2025



Kodo
One Earth Tour 2025:
Warabe
Feb. 15, 2025



Sweet Honey in the Rock
Feb. 28, 2025



**Martha Graham
Dance Company**
April 26, 2025

COLLEGE OF MUSIC



The Pirates of Penzance
By Gilbert and Sullivan
March 14-16, 2025



Big Fish
By John August and
Andrew Lippa
April 24-27, 2025

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FACULTY TUESDAYS SPRING 2025

- Hsiao-Ling Lin, piano** | Jan. 14
Dan Silver, clarinet | Jan. 21
David Korevaar, piano | Jan. 28
Suyeon Kim, piano | Feb. 4
Doug Walter, percussion | Feb. 11
Andrew Garland and Jeremy Reger | Feb. 18
Sterling Tanner, trombone | Feb. 25
Side-by-Side Chamber Music | March 4
Wind Faculty Showcase | March 11
Mutsumi Moteki, piano | March 18

7:30 P.M. | GRUSIN MUSIC HALL
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**VISITOR
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- Loft Theatre (University Theatre Building)

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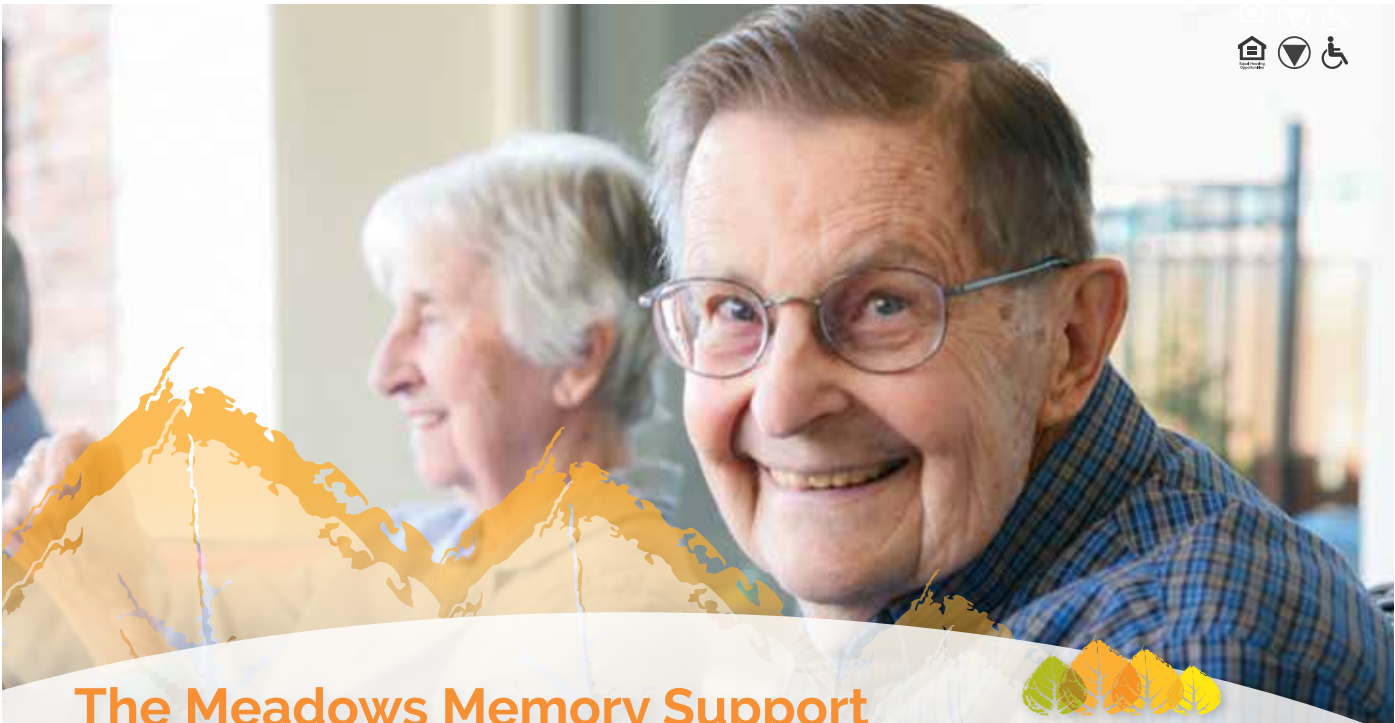
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SPOTLIGHT



Sweet Honey in the Rock Continues to Find Hope in the Darkness

By Adam Goldstein

For more than 50 years, the vocal ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock has worked to address the ills of the world through the power of song.

Dozens of vocalists have brought their talents to the ensemble since Bernice Johnson Reagon, a teacher with the Black Repertory Company, formally founded the group in 1973. Since then, the all-female group has tackled myriad social issues through their a cappella musical stylings including civil rights, domestic violence, immigration and—on their 2016 album *#LoveInEvolution*—the toll of gun violence in the United States including those claimed by police violence and by the school shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

“Since we started writing this piece, we’ve had to keep adding names and sadly, we’ll be adding more before things change,” founding member Carol Maillard says of “Second Line Blues,” the track from the album that directly addresses the crisis.

That unflinching approach to society’s most dire issues is nothing new for the storied ensemble which has long examined contemporary society through a musical lens that draws from the rich tradition of Black female music in the United States. With strains of Gospel, spiritual and traditional hymns, the group in its current quartet form never shies from the world’s woes and will surely offer topical depth during its performance at Macky Auditorium on Feb. 28.

Even so, the note that shines through in the group’s music is full of hope and positivity and has always offered promise. The very name of the group hints at a better world—Sweet Honey in the Rock refers to a New Testament psalm that speaks of a world so abundant that even the rocks offer honey when split open. It’s a vision of a world that offers justice, peace and equality.

Through the group’s different iterations, which have featured more than 20 vocalists, that push toward a better world has remained consistent. The current lineup—which consists of members Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, Louise Robinson and Carol Maillard, as well as featured musician Romeir Mendez—continues the musical mission that has earned the group three Grammy Award nominations and spots on some of the world’s most prominent stages.

The group continues to strive for access and equity, whether it’s through their original compositions, their unique interpretations of music from artists ranging from Marvin Gaye to Bob Dylan or the way that they present their art. The group has long offered American Sign Language interpretations during its shows, a feature that will be part of the group’s performance at Macky.

It’s an artistic approach that offers solutions, even in the face of struggle, injustice and darkness.

“We are very forward-thinking as an organization, constantly re-evaluating how we can express concepts to uplift and create change through our music and concerts,” Maillard says. “*#LoveInEvolution* has a more contemporary sound and feel because as people in the group grow and change, we want to hear different things, feel different things and bring fresh elements to our presentation.”

The performance is sponsored by the Center for African and African American Studies (CAAAS) and the Colorado Association for the Deaf.

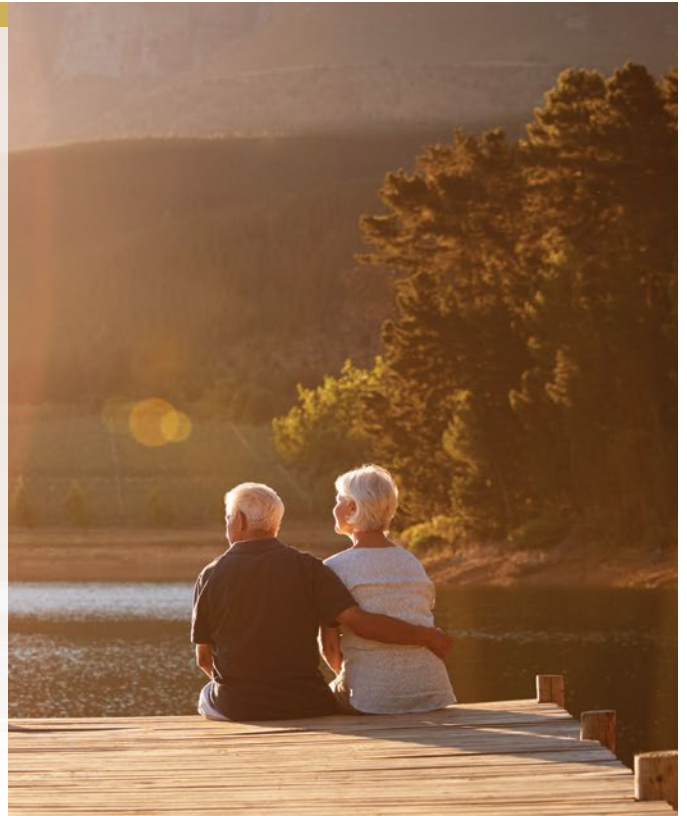
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Sweet Honey in the Rock® Feb. 28



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SPOTLIGHT



2024-25 Ekstrand Graduate Student Competition winners announced

By Kathryn Bistodeau

We are thrilled to announce the winner of the 2024-25 Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition: The Koa String Quartet!

The College of Music's current graduate string quartet in residence—comprising violinists Kisa Uradomo and Leah Pernick, violist Thomas Chafe and cellist Heewon Lee—studies with the Takács Quartet. On Nov. 19, the Koa Quartet performed selections from works by Joseph Haydn and Kevin Lau, and was awarded \$2,000 for their Ekstrand win.

“We are so happy to have started our residency at CU Boulder on such a positive note! It was an incredible opportunity to perform onstage alongside so many of our talented peers,” Pernick says. “Thank you so much to the Takács Quartet and string faculty for their mentorship, and to

the Ekstrand family for their generous support of students.”

Lee shares, “Our main goal of the performance was to have fun and keep up the good energy. I think us dancing backstage helped with that. But in all seriousness, we’re super thankful for the win!”

Second prize (\$1,000) went to saxophonist Joel Ferst, who also won the audience favorite prize (\$250). This year's other Ekstrand finalists (\$500 each) include pianist John-Austin King, baritone Andrew Konopak and violinist Laura Pérez Rangel.

This year's esteemed panel of judges were **Jason Bergman**—Associate Professor of Trumpet, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; **Courtney Hershey Bress**—Principal Harpist, Colorado Symphony; Adjunct Professor of Harp, University of Denver

Lamont School of Music; and Lecturer of Harp, University of Wyoming; and **Cameron Stowe**—Chair, Collaborative Piano, New England Conservatory; and Director, Collaborative Piano, Aspen Music Festival and School.

The Ekstrand Competition was launched by previous College of Music dean Robert Fink, and later renamed to honor the late Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and psychology professor Bruce Ekstrand. The competition invites top graduate students to compete for cash prizes for professional development. This year's faculty judges for the semi-final competition were Renee Gilliland, Jeremy Reger and Branden Steinmetz.

Semi-finalists included:

- Voice: Sidney Grimm, soprano; Andrew Konopak, baritone; James Robinson, baritone
- Piano: John-Austin King and Luca Pompilio
- Strings: Julian Bennett, cello; Koa String Quartet; Laura Pérez Rangel, violin
- Woodwinds: Joel Ferst, saxophone; Dylan King, saxophone; Harold Gomez-Montoya, clarinet
- Brass + percussion: Mark Bennett, trombone; Sydney Hoehl, trumpet; Connor Johnson, trumpet

Congratulations to the Koa String Quartet and all participants in this year's competition, as well as their teachers—the Takács Quartet, Andrew Cooperstock, Andrew Garland and Nathan Mertens in the final round. Our special thanks also to collaborative pianists Runze Li, Hsiao-Ling Lin, Matthew Sebald—and all other pianists, mentors and teachers involved in the previous rounds of this competition.

Partially funded by the Ekstrand Competition Endowment Fund, this annual event is the premier performance competition for the College of Music's most outstanding graduate students.



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Their current roster includes vocalists **Carol Maillard**, **Louise Robinson**, **Aisha Kahlil**, **Nitanju Bolade Casel** and **Rochelle Rice**, with **Romeir Mendez** on upright acoustic/electric bass and American Sign Language interpreter **Barbara Hunt**.

Throughout five decades the ensemble members have worked to create engaging and socially conscious music that consistently takes an active stance toward making our planet a better place for all in which to live. Their musical landscape embraces multiple genres / generations and addresses civil and human rights, women's issues, gun violence, death, love, spirituality, children's songs and so much more.

Connecting to the ever-evolving cultural and political landscape, they were the featured performers at the 125th anniversary of Paul Robeson and the 50th anniversary of the Ms. Foundation, and were among the performing artists for the Harry Belafonte 95th birthday celebration. They have also lent their voices to the Jane Fonda-led "Fire Drill Fridays" on Capitol Hill highlighting the urgency of the threats of global climate change, and their music has been included in the soundtracks of *Freedom Song*, *Mercy*, *Dear Mama* and the HBO special *My Family*.

On June 19, 2020, (Juneteenth) Sweet Honey became one of the first artists to address the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown by connecting with her audience through an innovative livestream performance at the historic Lincoln Theatre in Washington D.C. Performing live without an audience and separated onstage by individual plexiglass panels, the ensemble employed large video monitors which were filled with the faces of its' virtual audience.

This unique set-up allowed for a two-way interaction between the performers and the audience, which also served as a benefit for the Equal Justice Initiative and was viewed by over 150,000 people worldwide.

In fall 2021, the ensemble co-wrote and performed their first theatrical piece, *When Day Comes*, in collaboration with Ricardo Khan, the Founding Director of Crossroads Theatre in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Sweet Honey in the Rock® ... their voices have graced so many of the world stages: Carnegie Hall (more than 30 times), Sydney Opera House, Royal Albert Hall, The Kennedy Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center—just to name a few—and they have performed extensively on every continent (except Antarctica—just waiting for the invitation!).

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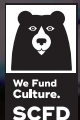
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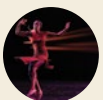
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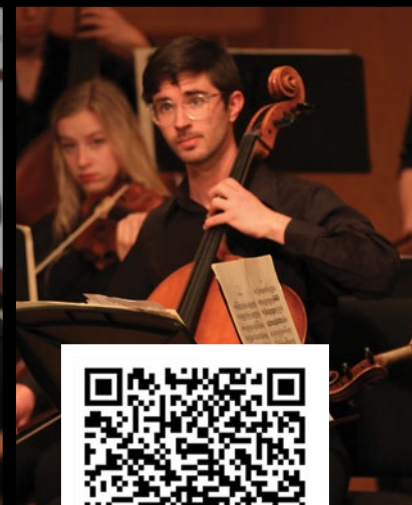


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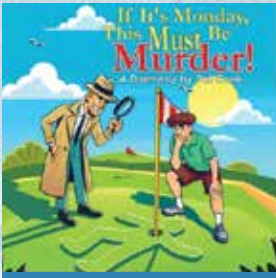
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LEIGH HOLMAN TO LEAD COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY AS NEW MARSHAL

By Greg Swenson

Leigh Holman, director of CU Boulder's Eklund Opera Program, has been named the new commencement marshal.

Holman, a CU Boulder alumna who has been with the university for 15 years, replaces Bud Coleman who has led the spring commencement ceremony since 2018.

"On behalf of our entire college, we're proud of Leigh Holman assuming the role of the university's next commencement marshal," said College of Music Dean John Davis, also noting Holman's transformative role as director of the college's highly regarded Eklund Opera Program and New Opera Workshop (CU NOW).

"Leigh's work advances our mission to develop multiskilled, multifaceted universal musicians with flexible career options, thereby also amplifying momentum toward more interdisciplinary collaborations across our campus. In that spirit, as commencement marshal, Leigh perfectly represents not only the College of Music, but also our increasingly interconnected campus community."

The role of commencement marshal is mostly behind the scenes, until the day of the ceremony when Holman will be front and center on stage before thousands of graduates and their guests. It's a role she relishes and is excited to take on.

"As a performer, I feel comfortable being on stage. And part of the job of being commencement marshal is emceeding the event, so I feel very comfortable in that role," she said. "The main thing I'm excited about is being a part of this special day for our

students, a day that hopefully they'll never forget."

Holman took some time to talk with CU Boulder Today about herself, her time at CU Boulder and her new role as commencement marshal.

DIRECTOR, EKLUND OPERA PROGRAM

I am the director of opera for the College of Music, and that means I'm the director of the program administratively, but I'm also the resident stage director. I am in charge of working with my team to cast shows, choose the operas we will be performing and, more importantly, I come up with the vision for the show ... what it's going to look like, what it's going to feel like and what the characters will be like.

So I'm really a storyteller, and I use acting and visual elements on stage to tell that story. That's what a stage director does, and that's my role here at CU.

NEW OPERA WORKSHOP

In the summer we have a program that I started called the New Opera Workshop (CU NOW). It's a really exciting program where we bring in opera composers who are working on new projects and pair them with our wonderfully talented students who then bring the opera's characters and the music to life. So the composers get to work on their project in a beautiful setting here in Boulder, and our students get the opportunity to work with some of the most renowned creators of opera in the world.

ROAD TO CU BOULDER

My grandparents went to CU Boulder in the 1920s. After graduating—my grandmother graduated too, which was almost unheard of back then—

they moved to Tennessee. When I was growing up, we lived in Tennessee but my grandparents had moved back to Colorado, so we went to visit them every summer.

After completing my undergraduate and graduate degrees and working for a while, I decided that I wanted to teach voice and direct operas. I had a few schools on my list, and CU was one of them. So, in my 30s, I went back to school and got my doctorate. After teaching at the college level for a few years and working with Opera Colorado, I came to work at CU Boulder. I feel very lucky to have my dream job. It's pretty awesome to be a teacher where my grandparents went to college.

PASSION FOR SINGING AND OPERA

I've been a singer since birth. I think the first time I ever sang in public I was 4 years old, and I sang the song "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head." I'll never forget it. I was a voice major in college where I studied classical music. I am a mezzo soprano, which is fun because it is one of the lower soprano voices, so you get cast in roles such as witches. So I sang, went to college to study voice and started doing opera. And then after college, I did opera professionally.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW...

I think people would be surprised that I ride a motorcycle. One other thing ... When I was in high school, I was a Congressional page in Washington, D.C. I was from this little rural town in Tennessee, and I was asked by my Congressman to come to D.C. to be a page. I served during the end of the Carter administration.



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