

REHANNA THELWELL
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell has been applauded for her “superb and expressive power” by the South Florida Classical Review while her “dynamic presence” has been noted by the Washington Post. Her performances have been described as having “thrilling commitment and dramatic intelligence” with “hair-raising intensity” by the Washington Classical Review and KDHX. In the 2020-2021 season, Ms. Thelwell makes her Opera Philadelphia debut as Jocasta in Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* and her mainstage debut with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute*.

The New Jersey native returns to the Cafritz Young Artist program of Washington National Opera for their 2020-2021 season after a successful first year in which she appeared as Third Lady in the Young Artist production of *The Magic Flute* as well as Conchetta in the American Opera Initiative new work, *Night Trip*. Along with her mainstage roles, Thelwell had the opportunity to workshop new works with Esperanza Spalding for *Iphigenia* and Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek for *The Listeners*.



Thelwell returned to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2019 as Giovanna in *Rigoletto* and Ruby in their newly commissioned opera, *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. During the 2018 season, she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Exigence Vocal Ensemble led by Dr. Eugene Rogers. Earlier that year, Thelwell had the immense pleasure of performing alongside Talise Trevigne and Morris Robinson in The University Musical Society’s *Porgy and Bess* as Maria. That summer, she joined the Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute for a second time in their production of the *Götterdämmerung* prologue as the 2nd Norn. In her first year with the Wagner Institute, Thelwell had the privilege of sharing the stage with soprano Christine Goerke and bass-baritone Alan Held for their rendition of “The Ride of the Valkyries.” She was also invited to sing with the Kenai Peninsula Orchestra for their performance of Prokofiev’s *Alexander Nevsky* in Anchorage, Alaska and returned to perform a concert series through the Kenai Musical Society in 2019.

Thelwell was actively involved with the University of Michigan Opera Theatre and Northern Arizona University Opera Theatre where she performed the roles of Carlotta Vance in Bolcom’s *Dinner at Eight*, La Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* and Ježibaba in *Rusalka*. Through the University of Michigan Opera Theatre, Thelwell had the opportunity to premiere the San Francisco Opera workshop production of Bright Sheng’s *Dream of the Red Chamber* as Lady Wang.

Thelwell began her studies in 2009 at Northern Arizona University under the instruction of Deborah Raymond. In 2014, she was accepted into the Graduate program at the University of Michigan and in 2016 returned for her specialist degree. During her time at the University of Michigan, Thelwell studied with Professor Nadine Washington and Professor Daniel Washington. She has also had the pleasure of working with multiple professors in their respectable fields including Kathleen Kelly, Timothy Cheek, Martin Katz, Dr. Jerry Blackstone, and Dr. Eugene Rogers. Thelwell resides in Silver Spring M.D.

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OPERA

Jocaste	Oedipus Rex	Opera Philadelphia	2021
Mother	The Consul	Washington National Opera	2020
Third Lady	<i>The Magic Flute</i>	Washington National Opera	2019
Giovanna	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2019
Ruby	<i>Fire Shut Up in My Bones</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2019
Berta	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2018
Addie (cover)	<i>Regina</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2018
Maria	<i>Porgy and Bess</i>	University Musical Society Concert Series	2018
Carlotta Vance	<i>Dinner at Eight</i> (Bolcolm)	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2017
2 nd Norn	<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute	2017
Dame Quickly	<i>Falstaff</i>	OperaMODO	2017
Erda	<i>Das Rheingold</i>	Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute	2016
Florence Pike	<i>Albert Herring</i>	OperaMODO	2016
Lady Wang	<i>Dream of the Red Chamber</i> (Sheng)	University of Michigan Opera Workshop	2016
Cornelia	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2015
Zita	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2015
La Principessa	<i>Suor Angelica</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2013
Schwertleite	<i>Die Walküre</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2014
Ulrica	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2012

CONCERT & RECITAL

Ursule	Berlioz: <i>Nocturne Duet</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, cond. Stephen Lord	2018
Alto Soloist	Mahler: <i>Symphony No. 2</i>	South Bend Youth Symphony Orch, cond. Robert Boardman	2018
Featured Artist	<i>Glory</i> (Common)	Carnegie Hall, cond. Eugene Rogers	2018
Alto Soloist	Prokofiev: <i>Alexander Nevsky</i>	Kenai Peninsula Orchestra, cond. Tammy Vollom-Matturro	2017
Alto Soloist	Mahler: <i>Symphony No. 2</i>	University of Michigan, cond. Kenneth Kielser	2017
Alto Soloist	Heredia: <i>Virginia</i>	University of Michigan, cond. Jerry Blackstone	2016

AWARDS & COMPETITIONS

George Shirley Excellence in Opera Performance	University of Michigan	2018; 2016
Graduate Winner	Friends of Opera, University of Michigan	2016
2 nd Place	California Regionals, Metropolitan Opera National Council	2015

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Specialist in Music, Vocal Performance	University of Michigan	2018
Master of Music, Vocal Performance	University of Michigan	2016
Bachelor of Music, Vocal Performance	Northern Arizona University	2014

MASTER CLASSES

Christine Goerke
Renée Fleming
Thomas Hampson
Alan Held

VOICE TEACHERS

Deborah Raymond
Nadine Washington

VOCAL COACHES

Jerry Blackstone
Timothy Cheek
John Greer
Martin Katz
Kathleen Kelly
Kenneth Kiesler
Stephen Lord
Shari Roads

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Conchetta - Night Trip - Washington National Opera AOI

"The singers, from the WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, were excellent. . . Thelwell's dynamic presence made the strongest impressions on this reviewer, but everyone had superb moments, without a weak link."

- The Washington Post

"Simon's score opens with a frenetic collage of influences from the period, mixing snippets of Jazz, Motown, and martial motifs for the veterans. These are not reserved solely for the orchestra, however—the substantial opening aria for Conchetta tasks the singer (the tremendous Rehanna Thelwell) with handling these stylistic shifts vocally as well. . . The most impressive turn of the evening was reserved for Rehanna Thelwell in Night Trip, who brought a thrilling commitment and dramatic intelligence to the bravura solo scenes that bookended the piece."

- The Washington Classical Review

"Thelwell embodied the role of Conchetta, a young Black teenager, who is being driven from Chicago by two uncles to visit her family in Tennessee. . . The free physical expression of this performer, her clarity with putting across language, and her accessibility to deep emotional pools demonstrates the most important aspect of any performance art form. She's got it all. Thelwell carries the arc of the piece perfectly from radiant innocence to what becomes for us all a heartbreaking "knowing" of the real world."

- DC Theatre Scene.com

"I saved the best for last; mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell was riveting as Conchetta. She first appears commanding the stage, full of life, singing beautifully, and by the end, commanding the stage, singing knowingly."

- OperaGene

"Rehanna Thelwell is going to be a star singer. I've seen very few young singers in Young Artist programs who can walk out on a stage, open their mouth, and own the room the way she can. The ones who come to mind from the past dozen or so years are Nadine Sierra, Ailyn Pérez, Heidi Melton, Leah Crocetto, and Pene Pati. Thelwell is that good, so pay attention to her."

- A Beast in a Jungle.com

Concert Work - Washington National Opera Riffs and Relations

"Where all that energy led was to another booming performance, this one by American mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell in Louis Moreau Gottschalk's "O Loving Heart, Trust On." It's impossible not to compare Thelwell's titanic sound to that of another big-voiced American mezzo, the late Jessye Norman. Thelwell sang the wistful work with tenderness, but her thunderous delivery was more reminiscent of gospel singing than it was a quiet meditation on faith. That's okay. Given Thelwell's level of craft, it was great."

- DC Metro Theater Arts

Ježibaba - Rusalka - Opera Theatre of St. Louis Center Stage

"Blažsko returned with the duet "Tvoje moudrost vsechno tusi" from Dvorak's "Rusalka," with Lyle as the lovestruck title character and mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell as the most gleefully wicked Jezibaba since Dolara Zajick."

- St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"There were some immensely appealing rarities in the evening, such as the scene from Dvorak's "Rusalka" in which the sorceress Jezibaba (mezzo Rehanna Thelwell in a performance of hair-raising intensity) cons poor Rusalka (beautifully sung by soprano Greer Lyle) into giving up her voice so she can become human and wed her prince." - KDHX

Ruby - Fire Shut Up in my Bones - Opera Theatre of St. Louis

"In a remarkable ensemble, Gerdine Young Artists Katerina Burton and Rehanna Thelwell stand out."

- St. Louis Post Dispatch

Concert Work - Miami Wagner Institute

"Rehanna Thelwell's rich, deep contralto and striking vocal presence illuminated "Weiche, Wotan, weiche" from Das Rheingold. . . She made the earth goddess Erda's warning to Wotan to flee the ring's curse come alive. Thelwell showed superb vocal control and expressive power and is a singer to watch."

- South Florida Classical Review