

**SUSANNE MENTZER**  
**MEZZO-SOPRANO**

American mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer has established herself not only as an international singer but also as a writer, teacher and arts advocate. She enjoys a significant opera, concert, chamber music and recital career of over thirty years appearing on four continents with nearly every great opera house and orchestra. She has been a guest artist at the Metropolitan Opera in leading roles since 1989, most recently as Marcellina in the new production of *Le nozze di Figaro* in the fall of 2014. She returned to the Met in February and March of 2016. Projects for this season include Grandmother Buryja in *Jenufa* with Santa Fe Opera and a much-anticipated role debut with Opera Saratoga.

Susanne recently added some new roles to her repertoire; as Mrs. Patrick DeRocher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, the Beggar Woman in *Sweeney Todd* with Opera Theatre St. Louis and Nellie in Carlisle Floyd's *Wuthering Heights*, which has also been recorded for commercial release.



Operatically, Susanne specializes in the music of Mozart, Berlioz, Rossini, and Richard Strauss and is widely admired as a specialist in trouser roles, most notably for her portrayals of Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Idamante in *Idomeneo*, der Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*. She has also appeared in many notable female roles – Dorabella, Despina, Rosina, Adalgisa, and Jane Seymour to name a few.

Susanne's extensive discography includes over 25 CDs of opera, oratorio, and song. Her most recent project is a recording of songs by American opera composer Carlisle Floyd to be released on GPR Records through Naxos. This project was funded by her successful Kickstarter campaign. She has recorded two other recitals she also performs in concert: *The Eternal Feminine*, a recital of music by women composers (Koch International Classics), which includes the premiere of Libby Larsen's *Love After 1950* with her long-time pianist, Craig Rutenberg; and her personal favorite, *Wayfaring Stranger* – a collection of international folksongs arranged for voice and guitar with GRAMMY Award-winning Sharon Isbin. Susanne also received a Grammy nomination for her work as Colombina in Busoni's *Arlecchino*. She is on the recent releases of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* and *Plump Jack* by Gordon Getty. Susanne appears on DVDs of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Opéra de Paris), *Don Giovanni* (La Scala), GRAMMY nominated *The First Emperor* by Tan Dun (Metropolitan Opera), and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Metropolitan Opera). She has appeared numerous times on PBS as part of the *Live from Lincoln Center* and *Live from the Met* programs as well as the *Met Live in HD* Cinema broadcast.

As a recitalist Susanne has appeared on the Great Performers series at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie's Weill and Zankel halls, New York Festival of Song, Tisch Center for the Arts, Morgan Library, Town Hall, Tannery Pond, Schubert Club St. Paul, Kennedy Center, Vocal Arts Society- DC, Spivey Hall Atlanta, Schwartz Hall at Emory, Santa Fe Concert Association, Aspen Music Festival, Aspen Winter Music, Wyatt Artist in Residence Series-Calgary, Ravinia Festival, Ann Arbor University Music Society, Oberlin College, and others.

A proponent of women composers and new works, Susanne's interest in contemporary music has led her to premiere two song cycles by Libby Larsen: *Love after 1950* and *Sifting through the Ruins*. She premiered *Living the Divine* – a cantata for children's choir, percussion and voice, and *The Journey* – 5 songs for strings and voice both by Daniel Brewbaker, Carlisle Floyd's *Citizen of Paradise* – a mono-drama based on poems and letters of Emily Dickinson, and Stephen Bachicha's *New Mexico Fragments*, a work she commissioned in 2010. She also performed Bernard Rand's *Now and Again* with 8<sup>th</sup> blackbird and sang the American premiere of *Stabat Mater* by Italian composer Matteo d'Amico.

As a chamber musician Susanne has collaborated with the Orion, American and Brentano String quartets and appeared with Chamber Music Lincoln Center, Music in the Vineyards, Music from Angel Fire, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, DaCamera Houston, and Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Chicago Symphony Chamber Musicians, Chicago Chamber Musicians, University of Chicago Chamber Music, Rembrandt Chamber Musicians, Music@Menlo, and the NY Philharmonic Chamber Musicians. Additionally, she collaborated with faculty at Rice University and at the Aspen Music Festival.

Susanne is also a writer and contributes regularly to the Huffington Post. Her outspokenness about vocal health earned her the VERA Award 2013 (Voice Education Research Awareness) from The Voice Foundation. Past awardees include Julie Andrews and Diane Rehm.

Ms. Mentzer is a mentor to young singers and as she continues to actively perform she feels a kinship with her students. She recently relocated to the San Francisco area where she maintains a private voice studio and will begin teaching at the San Francisco Conservatory in August 2016. Previously, she spent twelve years in academia as a Professor at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and DePaul University in Chicago. She also served as faculty at the Aspen Music Festival and School and has been a guest teacher at the San Francisco Opera Merola program, the Castleton Festival, and frequently gives master classes in conjunction with her engagements. Additionally, she joins the faculty of Songfest at Coburn in Los Angeles each June. Susanne regularly adjudicates competitions and serves on the Board of Directors of The Sullivan Foundation and The George London Foundation which each give awards to promising young singers.

Susanne was born in Philadelphia and raised in Maryland and Santa Fe, NM where she fell in love with opera. She received her Bachelor and Master degrees from The Juilliard School and was trained in the Houston Opera Studio, studying with Rose Bampton and Norma Newton, respectively. She received the Alexian Brothers USA Thelan Award for her help in raising over one-million dollars through gala concerts for the AIDS cause in Chicago and continues to participate in charitable events.

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RECENT CRITICAL ACCLAIM

**Jenufa – Santa Fe Opera (2019)**

"The delightful Susanne Mentzer was Grandmother Buryjovka, the retired mill owner who occasionally hit the offending not-so-gentle man with her purse."  
– Broadway World

**Le nozze di Figaro – Michigan Opera Theater (2017)**

"The Marcellina, Susanne Mentzer, and Bartolo, Matthew Burns, were a perfect pair, complementing each other vocally while they took evident delight in their devious characters."  
– Opera News

**Hamlet – West Edge Opera (2017)**

"There were more ferocious contributions from the great Susanne Mentzer in a no-holds-barred performance as Gertrude — luxury casting if ever there was — and the redoubtable bass Philip Skinner as Claudius; the duet between these two, a haunting pas de deux of guilt, recrimination and graveyard-whistling, was a high point of the performance."  
– San Francisco Chronicle

"Gertrude, played by Susanne Mentzer. . . rose to the occasion. From one movement to the next, she took charge. Her smallest gesture — hands, feet, tilt of head — took effect. And she kept it up, cold, metallic raincoat and two-toned platinum/black Goth hair-do and all. She showed the anguish Gertrude felt when confronted by Hamlet, daring him to kill her, and, the shock of recognition that the morally tuned-in son blankets her with. It was satisfying theater here, musically and dramatically, the confrontation cutting deeper than much of the depiction thus far. Her rich mezzo voice allowed us to be sympathetic to her, if not approving. Even her stroking of King Hamlet's head in the opening scene hot tub — a perhaps another California touch — brings us closer to what she blinded herself to when she goes "off" with Claudius."  
– OperaWire.com

**The Ballad of Bay Doe – Central City Opera (2016)**

"With her Maggie Smith-like facial expressions, mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer could hardly have been better as Augusta, conveying the character's steeliness and hurt in both voice and manner."  
– Opera News

"As the third part of the story's love/power triangle, Susanne Mentzer emphatically held her own as the determined, staunch, till-death-do-us-part wife Augusta Tabor. To her great credit, Ms. Mentzer finds every cranny of nuance in an often unsympathetic personage. She wisely invests the role with as much dignity as outrage, balancing the overt self-righteousness with an abiding sense of loss. She is an attractive woman, her handsome bearing able to suggest severity as well as noble suffering. She has an incisive, throbbing mezzo-soprano, and her technique is rock solid, reveling in a freely ringing top and upper middle, while wisely negotiating lower passages with savvy dramatic flair. Ms. Mentzer also excels portraying the character's physical deterioration, dramatically and vocally. When she appears as her youthful self in Horace's final hallucination, she is stunningly renewed: sassy and fresh-voiced."  
– Opera Today

"Mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer is an imposing, but dignified Augusta. It would have been easy for Moore and Latouche to write the character out of Act II, after Horace leaves her for Baby Doe, but thankfully they did not. Mentzer makes the most out of her final scenes, where she rejects help for the now-destitute Horace and where she, as an apparition, guides him through the review of his life before he dies penniless. Yet her Act I numbers, particularly the office scene where she confirms the affair, do not lose in impact either."  
– Boulder Daily Camera

**George London Foundation Gala (2016)**

"Radvanovsky and Susanne Mentzer—who had recently completed a run of Marcellinas at the Met—joined in a gutsy "Mira o Norma" that marked the first time the two had sung together anywhere. On her own, Mentzer delivered a full-blown "Sein wir wieder gut" from *Ariadne auf Naxos* that brought back memories of the many fine Composers she sang at the Met."  
– Opera News

**Recording Review – Wuthering Heights (2016)**

"Mezzo Susanne Mentzer is unexpectedly empathic as the maid and confidante Nelly" – Opera News

"The other cast members get their moment, and Susanne Mentzer particularly stands out as a strong Nelly the housekeeper and very much a foil for Jarman's Cathy."  
– PlanetHugill.com

"Veteran mezzo-soprano Suzanne Mentzer turns in a great rendition of the old serving woman Nelly Dean."  
– TheaterByte.com

#### **Miami: Seraphic Fire, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (2015)**

"Mentzer's mezzo-soprano has grown darker but it is still impressive. Her evocation of heartbreak in autumn was spun with warmth and fervor and she captured the joy and darker subtext of the song about maidens picking flowers. In the final setting's farewell to life, *Der Abschied*, her voiced soared as she conveyed in supple, radiant tones the anguish and loneliness of the protagonist. Deeply emotional and expressive, Mentzer uttered the final lines almost in a whisper over the tinkling celesta".  
–Miami Herald

#### **Recording Review – Libby Larsen's "Circle of Friends" (2015)**

"The vividness of the terrible events that have inspired it are beautifully expressed by the pristine mezzo-soprano of Susanne Mentzer, an inspired choice for both the purity of her voice as well as the register of its range."  
– JazzDaGama

#### **Recording review – "Letter to the World"**

"Mentzer's singing is sincere and robust, and she manages extremes of range with technical expertise, bringing evenness and clarity to both highs and lows with smoothness and lyricism. She enjoys the often thorny poetry without ever over-intellectualizing."  
– Opera News

#### **Dead Man Walking with Madison Opera**

"Susanne Mentzer's performance as Joseph's mother was heart-wrenching. Mrs. De Rocher is not an educated woman, and plainly not of the same socio-economic class as the families of the victims, but she eloquently speaks at her son's pardon hearing, wondering how his death can make anything right for anyone. She firmly wants to believe her son is not guilty, and will not listen to his apologies. And Ms. Mentzer sings the role with confidence and beauty." -Huffington Post

"Susanne Mentzer, as De Rocher's confused, heartbroken mother, pleads for her son's life before the parole board. It's a moving portrayal, beautifully sung."  
- The Cap Times

#### **Dido and Aeneas with Chicago Opera Theater**

"[Susanne Mentzer] invested Dido's desolate lament, 'When I am laid to Earth,' with vibrant intensity and a tragic pathos that made her imperious fury when scorned as palpable as the fierce pride she unleashed when the conflicted Aeneas recanted his decision to leave her."  
– The Chicago Tribune

#### **Ariadne auf Naxos with Pittsburgh Opera**

"Susanne Mentzer embodied the overly sensitive Composer in hilarious fashion, while her elegant voice set the tone for the entire opera."  
– Opera News

"The fabulous mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer sang the Composer. She excels at trouser roles, where her character is male. Mentzer...is superb regardless of the gender of her roles because she uses beautifully colored voice with dramatic insights and acts with a vivid range that includes many levels of subtlety."  
– Pittsburgh Tribune

#### **In Recital – New York's Zankel Hall**

"The mezzo's vocally impeccable, emotionally compelling performance proved that she is among the premier art-song interpreters of our day. Her rich, vibrant sound retains its warmth from top to bottom and throughout its broad dynamic range, and she draws the listener into the spirit of each song with a deep internal connection that creates distinctive characters with a minimum of outward display."  
– Opera News

#### **Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* – Atlanta Symphony**

"Mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, as the naïve lover Marguerite, sang with darkly luminous tones, delivering a rapturous 'Romance' song – perhaps foremost among the evening's highlights."  
– The Atlanta Journal-Constitution