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Miguel Valle Ávila

miguelvalleavila@tribunaportuguesa.com

Grande Entrevista with soprano Elizabeth Medeiros Hogue:

"Emotions that strike the soul in a beautiful, touching manner"

Who is Elizabeth Medeiros Hogue? Where were you born and raised? What are your educational and professional backgrounds?

I was born and raised in San Jose, California. I also lived and went to elementary school for a few years in San Leandro, California. My educational background consists of graduating from Five Wounds School (San José, California), Notre Dame High School (San José, California), and attaining a BA in Theatre Arts and an MLS (Library and Information Science) from San José State University. I also attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA for one year studying vocal performance.

Professionally, I incorporated my MLS degree working full time as a reference librarian at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA). Prior to that, I worked as a librarian at San Jose State University and at the University of Southern Maine.

I have also tried to maintain my musical and acting talents during this time, hoping to some day pursue it as my full-time profession. In Maine, I became a member of the Portland Opera Repertory Theatre which is primarily run as a summer opera company. They offered me a position as one of their Young Artists during my second summer with them. This led to singing a small role in the opera, *La Traviata* my third and final summer. In Norfolk, Virginia, I worked with the Virginia Opera under the guidance of Joseph Walsh and Maestro Peter Mark. This is the company that provided me an atmosphere to grow and learn the opera field. From beginnings as a chorister, I advanced into small roles with the company. This led to covering the leading ladies in operas such as *Tosca*, *A Masked Ball*, *La Traviata*, *Die Fledermaus* and *The Merry Widow*. I finally was given the opportunity to sing the major role of the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in November 2003. An opportunity arose last year for me to sing the Queen of the Night again for the Nevada Opera, this time singing the role in the original German language. Recently, I have been singing in concerts making my international debut in Canada last November in Oakville, Ontario and then returning this last May to sing in Toronto. Both of these concerts were for the Portuguese communities in the Toronto area.

What influence did your parents have on your musical upbringing and career?

Both of my parents have musical backgrounds. My father, Aires Medeiros, played guitar with his brothers while my aunt, Fatima Silva, sang the fado. My mother, Barbara, had a beautiful soprano voice and also sang with my father and uncles. My mother encouraged me to learn how to play an instrument first. I took piano lessons and while in elementary school, I learned how to play the clarinet. In my early teens, my parents took me to a children's musical theatre production when I started to show an interest in singing. This started me on my road to singing and taught me how to act on the stage. Another aspect to performing was my involvement in dance at an early age. I remember going to many lessons in ballet and tap dancing which helped me later on in my musical theatre productions.

Describe your experience studying theater at San José State University and music at the New England Conservatory of Music.

Studying vocal performance at New England Conservatory of Music in Boston was my first experience living away from home. I had to grow up very quickly that year. The Conservatory provided me with essential tools for classical singing but I didn't receive enough solo performance time. I had left California performing constantly in either musical theatre or opera for community theatre groups and suddenly I was in an institution that provided me with very little performance opportunity as an undergraduate. Soon, I became frustrated and realized when I came back for the summer break that it wasn't the right step for me. I decided to pursue music at San José State University instead. At the same time, I decided to take an acting class. This was my first experience in actually learning the craft of acting and my professor was a gem. Donamaria Reeds, we called her Dusty, came to be my closest mentor and it was because of her that I decided to switch my major altogether to theatre arts. She saw a raw talent in me that needed to be nurtured and she took me under her wing. Another mentor, Hal Todd, also saw a talent for acting in me and became the person who gave me my first experience in a non-singing role as Lucy in the production of *Dracula*. Of course, the Theatre Dept. used my musical talents primarily in their productions. I performed in all of their musical productions during my time there in roles such as Rizzo in *Grease*, Tzeitel in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha*.

Why did you decide to become a soprano?

Actually, a person doesn't have much of a choice as to what voice classification one becomes. It is a matter of how you are built vocally that will determine if you are a soprano, tenor, mezzo, etc. However, why a classical singer? It took me a long time to discover what I really wanted to sing and in what type of music I sang



Elizabeth Medeiros Hogue performing in Queen of the Night in the Virginia Opera production.

best. I tried singing all types of music from Broadway to classical to pop to rock to world. It all came down to what my voice sounded best in singing. My basic vocal training was in classical music so that is where I have finally laid roots and eventually came back to singing. I have a rare voice type that is called the dramatic coloratura which means that I can sing fast passages very high but still maintain a dramatic thrust to the vocal sound even as I sing higher notes. You won't hear a light bird-like sound but rather a bigger sound that has lyrical points to it.

What and where was your musical debut? How did you feel about it?

I remember, way back when, I believe I was about ten years old, when I sang in front of an audience for the first time. It was for some sort of Portuguese gathering at a social hall. My father had arranged for me and my cousin to each sing a song. My song was "O Minha Mãe," and it was also the first time I sang with a microphone and with the guitars. I remember feeling nervous but mostly hoping that I wouldn't forget the words to the song. It did go over well and I remember seeing smiling faces of the people looking at me.

What has been your most memorable performance so far?

My most memorable is also my most exciting and that was opening night of *The Magic Flute* singing the Queen of the Night for Virginia Opera. My parents, husband, and son were in the audience as well as many friends and well-wishers. It was so exciting to have an audience cheer and sustain the clapping after my second act Vengeance Aria in which I have to sing four high F's over high C. It actually stopped the show for a bit. The maestro even put his baton down to wait for the audience's reaction to subside before continuing. It helped that I was the "local gal making good" and there were a lot of people in attendance that weren't sure if I could do it or not.

When and why did you decide to launch your website (www.elizabethhogue.com)?

The website came to be first as a school project for my brother, Aires Joseph, who was attending the New England Institute of Technology at the time. He designed the website and does all of the revisions and updates. It was launched in 2002 and is used as one of my promotional tools. It is a way for fans to see my calendar and keep up with my engagements. Also, it is a way for perspective employers to see what I have done, listen to me vocally, and get an initial picture of what I can do.

You have decided to keep a dual Portuguese-US citizenship. Why?

My Portuguese heritage has always been an important part of my life growing up. I attended and graduated from Five Wounds School in San José, California. I played clarinet for the San José Portuguese Marching Band. I spent many weekends at the Portuguese festas and events throughout the Bay Area. All of these things are a part of me which is why I want to share my talents with the Portuguese people in the Azores and Portugal and having my dual citizenship will make it easier to do so. My only regret growing up is that I didn't learn the Portuguese language fluently. I have tried to remedy that by taking a course at Old Dominion University but the best way to learn is to actually have a chance to go to Portugal and speak it more often.

Why did you decide to accept the invitation to perform at the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption in Turlock, CA in August?

This will be my second time performing



Devon Cass

at the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption. I also sang for their classical concert last August. I initially decided to accept the invitation because it had been such a long time since I had been back to California. It had been over twelve years. I thought it would be a great opportunity for those who had known of me in the past to hear me again after such a long time. I also love to have an opportunity to share classical music to those who may not have the chance or opportunity to hear it. It is exciting to see people who may not have understood or had misconceptions about classical music in the past come and hear my concert. I think people don't realize what they are missing until they hear it for themselves in a live venue. The human voice is such an amazing instrument and the strength and beauty is shown very clearly in the pieces that I chose to sing. I guess I think of myself as a sort of "Ambassador to Classical Music" when I do these type of concerts. I believe that Fr. Manuel is providing a great service to the people in his community by including a classical music concert as part of the festa.

What other involvement do you have in the Portuguese-American community?

At the moment, my involvement is in these types of concerts. I hope that my involvement will continue to grow with more classical concerts for the Portuguese-American community. However, I can't do it on my own and I need more sponsorship so that I can continue to share my talent.

What message do you want to leave for the readers of The Portuguese Tribune?

I do hope that they will try and come to hear the concert. I will be singing the Portuguese songs from my new CD, "Singing Arias with Passion." Classical music is a different style of music than what most are accustomed to hearing but it has all of the emotions that can strike the soul in a beautiful and touching manner. There is nothing out there that can beat it.