

Joyce Castle

Mezzo-soprano

An extraordinarily versatile mezzo-soprano whose repertoire extends from Strauss and Wagner to Bernstein and Sondheim, Joyce Castle is recognized internationally for her unique combination of a “richly nuanced voice, profound dramatic skills and a superb sense of musicianship.”

In recent seasons, Miss Castle’s portrayal of leading roles in contemporary opera has brought her singular success. Characterized as “a compelling actress in both comedy and pathos” in Michael Torke and A.R. Gurney’s world premiere opera Central Park at Glimmerglass Opera (televised nationwide on WNET – Channel 13 and recorded for release by Ecstatic Records), acclaimed for her “poignant” portrayal of the Mother in Menotti’s The Consul (performed at Berkshire Opera, Arizona Opera, and recorded for Newport Classics), heralded as a “chillingly malevolent” Madame Flora in The Medium (performed at Opera Delaware and recorded and released by Cedille Records), and recognized for her “marvelously sardonic” Claire Zakanassian in the New York premiere of Von Einem’s The Visit of the Old Lady (in a New York City Opera production directed by Joanne Akalaitis which was mounted for her), Joyce Castle has employed her formidable vocal and theatrical gifts to sculpt distinctive and memorable characterizations. Praised in the *Denver Post* for her performance as Elizabeth I in the American stage premiere of Britten’s Gloriana, the critic wrote; “...Castle rules the show. Her voice is authoritative with a dark edge to it that makes Elizabeth the commanding presence on stage that she is.” She continued her exploration of the operas of Benjamin Britten with Seiji Ozawa at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Italy in performances as Mrs. Sedley in Peter Grimes. Miss Castle performed Mrs. Bertram in Jake Heggie’s new opera The End of the Affair at Seattle Opera in fall 2005 in a Leonard Foglia production conducted by Yves Abel. She will repeat the role this spring at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City in performances to be conducted by Artistic Director Ward Holmquist.

Joyce Castle was an American in Paris for a number of years, and as a result she is in demand as an interpreter of the French repertoire. Recently the multi-talented singing-actress had the unique distinction of appearing concurrently in two modern French-based works at Lincoln Center: Les Dialogues des Carmélites at the New York

City Opera contrasted with an original work written by Martha Clarke and Charles L. Mee titled Belle Epoque at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater. Miss Castle performed the Prioress in the Tazewell Thompson production of Poulenc's opera at the New York City Opera reprising her Glimmerglass Opera performance. She has also performed the role at Central City Opera and has previously performed Mother Marie at Seattle Opera. In Martha Clarke's theatrical work, Miss Castle portrayed a cabaret singer who inspired French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and performed a selection of songs heard in and around the Moulin Rouge nightclub.

Prior appearances in standard French operatic repertoire include Madame de la Haltière in Cendrillon which she first performed at the Washington National Opera. This role has since provided her introduction to the Teatro Regio di Torino, the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse and at De Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp, all in a Robert Carsen production. She will repeat the role in her return to the New York City Opera in Fall 2007. At the Washington National Opera and the Florida Grand Opera she was seen as the Marquise in La Fille du Régiment.

Her achievements in American opera are noteworthy. She performed Madame d'Urfe in the heralded New York premiere of Dominick Argento's Casanova, the Old Lady in Candide (performed at the New York City Opera and recorded on a Grammy Award winning disc for the New World label), Mrs. Lovett in Hal Prince's critically acclaimed production of Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd (in both Houston and New York), and Alla Nazimova in Dominick Argento's newest opera The Dream of Valentino at the Washington National Opera. Outstanding in her American opera experience, are her now legendary performances as Augusta Tabor in Moore's The Ballad of Baby Doe. Having performed the role in seven productions, and perhaps more than any other mezzo in the history of the work, she has been acclaimed from coast to coast for her portrayal of this complex character. Writing of her appearance in the Seattle Opera production, the *Seattle Times* reported "Castle's Augusta in Doe is superb... the Augusta of Mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle is the definitive show-stopper of this production. Castle has every nuance of the role clasped in a fist of iron, and she knows how to command your sympathy for this character of missed opportunities. Vocally persuasive, emotionally compelling, this is a portrayal for the books - one in which every note and every gesture

is so right that you want to salute her.” Joyce Castle performed the role again on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opera’s première at Central City Opera House. Reviewing her performance *Opera News* wrote “Joyce Castle made a magnificent Augusta, her three-dimensional characterization marked by superb timing, crystalline diction and sovereign phrasing- an inspiring example for the company’s young artists.” Miss Castle has performed the Baroness in Barber’s Vanessa at the Washington Opera and was also invited to perform the role at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam under the auspices of VARA Radio.

Twentieth-century German repertoire has also served as a vehicle for the mezzo. Miss Castle gave her first performances as Herodias in Salome in the acclaimed Washington National Opera production by Sir Peter Hall. Since then she has performed the role at the Calgary Opera where she was cited as the “ideal Herodias”, at Manitoba Opera, Opera Columbus, Austin Lyric Opera, Arizona Opera and Seattle Opera. She performed the role in a Willy Decker production at De Vlaamse Opera. The mezzo gave her first performances of Klytemnestra in Elektra at the Florentine Opera in Milwaukee where *Opera News* characterized her performances as “a gloriously sung, spellbinding portrait of this guilty queen.” She will return to Milwaukee as Herodias in winter 2008. Other Strauss operas in which she has appeared include Der Rosenkavalier (Annina) at the Metropolitan Opera and Die Schweigsame Frau (the Housekeeper) at the Santa Fe Opera. In addition to von Einem’s The Visit of the Old Lady mentioned previously, she performed Zeresh in the New York premiere of Hugo Weisgall’s Esther, performed Weill’s Emma Jones in Street Scene, and appeared in Zimmermann’s Die Soldaten, all at the New York City Opera. She has also been seen as Begbick in Mahagony at the Washington National Opera, a role that she will repeat this winter in her Boston stage debut in Opera Boston’s production which will be conducted by Artistic Director Gil Rose and directed by Sam Helfrich. At Seattle Opera, Miss Castle gave her first performances of Fricka and Waltraute in The Ring with great success. She also appeared as Fricka at L’Opera de Montreal.

The mezzo-soprano participated in the world premiere of Dream of Valentino by Argento, mentioned previously, and the American premieres of A Night at the Chinese Opera by Weir, The Black Mask by Penderecki, and The King Goes Forth to France by

Sallinen at the Santa Fe Opera and the world premiere of Where's Dick at the Houston Grand Opera (directed by Richard Forman). Miss Castle has appeared in the North American premieres of Poul Ruder's opera The Handmaid's Tale (role of Serena Joy) with a libretto by Paul Bentley, based on the acclaimed novel by Margaret Atwood at Minnesota Opera, and the American premiere of Bohuslav Martinu's Comedy On The Bridge (role of Eva) at Chicago Opera Theater. She has also performed Baba the Turk in The Rake's Progress (NYCO), Mrs. Grose in The Turn of the Screw (Seattle and Fort Worth Opera), and Fata Morgana in The Love for Three Oranges (NYCO).

At the Metropolitan Opera, Miss Castle has performed many of the roles in the standard repertoire for her voice including Die Fledermaus (Orlovsky), Hansel and Gretel (Witch), Il tabarro (Frugula), Gianni Schicchi (Zita), Boris Godounov (Innkeeper), Eugene Onegin (Larina), Andrea Chenier (Countess), Susannah (Mrs. McLean), Götterdämmerung (2nd Norn) and Die Walküre (Waltraute), a number of which were broadcast and telecast from the theater. She has also performed Orlovsky at the Santa Fe Opera in the Charles Ludlam production, at the Seattle Opera, and in the John Copley production at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. In the Italian repertoire, she has also performed Mistress Quickly in Falstaff at The New Israeli Opera and made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as the Principessa in Suor Angelica and Zita in Gianni Schicchi. Miss Castle added Jezibaba in Dvořák's Rusalka to her repertoire at the Seattle Opera.

Very convincing in 'cross-over' repertoire, audiences have enjoyed Joyce Castle's performances of Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd, Meg in Brigadoon, Katisha in The Mikado, Buttercup in HMS Pinafore and Ruth in Pirates of Penzance in venues from New York to Vancouver. She performed cello-playing Lady Jane in Patience at Glimmerglass Opera and will return to Cooperstown in summer 2007 for the role of Public Opinion in Offenbach's Orpheus and the Underworld. A noted performer of the works of Leonard Bernstein, Miss Castle sang the first performance of Leonard Bernstein's Arias and Barcarolles with Maestro Bernstein and Michael Tilson-Thomas. She made her Israeli debut with the Jerusalem Symphony in Songfest, and performed the same work with Seiji Ozawa at Tanglewood. She appeared in an all-Bernstein program with David Zinman and the Baltimore Symphony, with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival and at the Columbus Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony and the

Phoenix Symphony Orchestras. Joyce Castle performed Candide with the London Symphony Orchestra in her U.K. debut, and On The Town in her San Francisco Symphony debut. She made her Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Bryant Park (NYC), Performing Arts Chicago, Wisconsin Union Theater, and her Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona) debuts with Kurt Ollmann in a popular program that included Bernstein's Arias and Barcarolles, and appeared as soloist in a festival of American works (including Bernstein) sponsored by the Wolf Akademie of Stuttgart. Miss Castle and Mr. Ollmann repeated the Bernstein program they gave in Barcelona at the Library of Congress in Washington DC in spring 2004 and they look forward to reprising the program at Northwestern University in Chicago in 2007. She performed Arias and Barcarolles with the Jacksonville Symphony led by Music Director Fabio Mechetti last season. Miss Castle appeared at Carnegie Hall as a soloist in the New York City Gay Men's Chorus AIDS Benefit, which was a tribute to Leonard Bernstein. She also joined the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra in a Gilbert & Sullivan concert with Raymond Leppard. The University of Kansas commissioned a monodrama for Joyce Castle from heralded composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer. Statuesque, which is composed for small chamber ensemble was premiered in December 2005 at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. Subsequent performances at Roosevelt University and Chicago's Cultural Center in Chicago, as well as at the Spencer Museum of Art in Kansas were scheduled for the fall of 2006. Reviewing the premiere performance, *Opera Now* reported that "the confluence of words, music and performance were well augured...Statuesque was an invigorating set with Castle confidently conveying its sense of serious fun."

In demand as a concert artist, she was heard as guest soloist in an all-Kurt Weill program with the Baltimore Symphony (David Zinman, conductor). Miss Castle also gave the New York premiere of Schnittke's Cantata Seid Noechtem Und Wachet with the American Symphony Orchestra at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. She also performed in chamber music programs featuring the work of Charles Ives at the Bard Festival and performed and recorded Wolpe's Drei Lieder von Bertolt Brecht and Greenbaum's Psalter with the contemporary ensemble Parnassus. Her New York Philharmonic debut performing the challenging Aventures et Nouvelles Aventures by G. Ligeti in the first performances of this work at Lincoln Center. European concert

performances have included concerts with Radio France, and at the Accademia de Santa Cecilia in Rome.

Joyce Castle has recorded a wide variety of twentieth century music. Her recording of the Mother in Menotti's The Consul has recently been released on Newport Classics and The Medium (title role) was released by Cedille Records. Miss Castle may also be heard on the Grammy Award-winning New World Records recording of Candide as the Old Lady, the Book-of-the-Month recording of Sondheim (singing "Send in the Clowns" and Sweeney Todd selections), the Koch recording of The Music of Stefan Wolpe, and the Albany Records album of the Vocal Music of Joseph Fennimore. Michael Torke and A.R. Gurney's opera Strawberry Fields, which was recorded with Miss Castle in performance with the Albany Symphony, has just been released on the Ecstatic Records label. A recording with Jake Heggie and Gene Sheer's chamber work Statuesque will be made with the composer at the piano in January 2007. The recording, which will be produced by Americus Records, will be distributed by Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS as a fundraiser for Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS.

She is a graduate of the University of Kansas and the Eastman School of Music. She was honored to receive the 2004 Distinguished Alumni Award from Eastman School of Music and to give their commencement address. She is a frequent adjudicator of the Kurt Weill Foundation's Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers. While continuing to pursue her performing career, Miss Castle serves on the faculty of the University of Kansas as an Artist in Residence.