

INDIRA MAHAJAN
SOPRANO

Marian Anderson Award-winning soprano Indira Mahajan is in demand by opera companies, orchestras, and recital presenters worldwide. Praised for her “strongly centered, richly textured soprano” by *New York Magazine* and her “poignant soprano” for her moving portrayals by *The New York Times*, the versatile soprano has appeared in venues from Brazil to Malta, Russia to Austria in addition to performing in her native New York City.

One of the finest interpreters of the role of Bess in Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, Indira Mahajan has received international acclaim for her many performances. Of her most recent performance with Fort Worth Opera, *Opera News* wrote, “the incandescent Indira Mahajan as Bess performed an unforgettable performance. Mahajan’s experience shows, not only in her detailed acting, but also in the exquisite way she shapes her vocal lines. It is a wonderful instrument with a sexy throbbing lower register and a thrilling top.”

Performances at the Grand Théâtre in Luxembourg, *The Tageblatt* wrote, “Thanks to her virtuosity in the soaring, vibrant, distinctive striking timbre, Indira Mahajan was absolutely radiant as a graceful, seductive but also vulnerable Bess.”

During the 2020-21 Season Ms. Mahajan adds two new roles to her repertoire: Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni in a 90-minute adaptation of Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci with the New Camerata Opera, New York and Verdi’s heroine Elena in I Vespri Siciliani with New Amsterdam Opera, New York. She will also be presented as a Guest Artis in a virtual Master class series with CAAPA, Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts providing free Master Class for HBCU students. Upcoming performances also include Porgy and Bess with Greensboro Opera, North Carolina and performances of Porgy and Bess with St. Gallen Symphony Orchestra, Switzerland as well as a return to Greensboro Opera in performances of Puccini’s La bohème.

The 2018-2019 season Ms. Mahajan returned to Fort Worth Opera to reprise the role of Bess in Francesca Zambello’s production of *Porgy and Bess* which she premiered with Washington National Opera. She also performed the role in concert in the Czech Republic with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Wroclaw Festival in Poland. Ms. Mahajan returned to the United Nations in New York City where she was invited to perform at the 2019

International Woman's Day Celebration. In concert, she performed Mozart's Requiem in D Minor, K. 626, Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, Op. 80 and Mass in C major, Op. 86 at St. Bartholomew's in New York City. She performed a Benefit Concert for Lincoln Center hosted by the Ambassador of Liechtenstein and the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture. Performances this season also included a concert appearance hosted by the Ambassador of Tunisia, guest soloist with the Morgan Park Summer Festival in New York, soprano soloist in a 9/11 Memorial Concert in New York City and soprano soloist in the complete work of Handel's Messiah, HWV 56.

The 2016-17 season included a return to Carnegie Hall performing excerpts from Verdi's Aida, as well as perform the title role Madama Butterfly with Mid-Atlantic Opera. In concert Miss Mahajan performed Mozart's Requiem in a televised performance at the Co-Cathedral of Saint Joseph's Beethoven's Mass in C, and Handel's Messiah with the Schiller Institute in New York City.

During the 2014-15 season Indira Mahajan performed the role Bess in Porgy in Bess in a series of performances in Russia in the cities of Moscow, Perm and Ekaterinburg. She continued singing the role in performances at The Grand Théâtre de Geneva, Switzerland, The Chassè Theater, Breda, Netherlands and Palais des Festivals, Cannes, France. Ms. Mahajan joined the roster of Lyric Opera of Chicago for their production Porgy and Bess for the role of Bess.

Miss Mahajan added the title role of Verdi's Aida to her repertoire performing with the Dayton Opera where she previously performed the title roles of Puccini's Madama Butterfly, Mimi in La Bohème and Nedda in I Pagliacci. She also performed the role of Bess in a staged production at the Landestheater Linz in Austria and at the Festival de Wiltz in Luxembourg.

Concert engagements during the 2014-15 season for Indira Mahajan included appearances as a guest artist with the Klangvokal Musikfestival Dortmund in a concert entitled, "American Nights" at the Konzerthaus Dortmund as well as performing in a Benefit Concert in Watertown, New York, entitled, "A Night of Broadway and Opera" performing the works of Verdi, Puccini, and American Broadway composers.

The 2012-13 season, Miss Mahajan performed the role of Bess in Gershwin's Porgy and Bess at the Teatro di San Carlo in Italy, in concert at the Malta Arts Festival as well as performances of the role for the first time in South America when she joined conductor Marin Alsop, in her inaugural season as Music Director of the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São

Paulo, for performances of the Porgy and Bess Suite. She was also heard in recital at Kentucky State University with pianist Cliff Jackson.

The Washington Post reviewed her first performances of the role as “sung with brilliance and ardor,” in the Francesca Zambello production at the Washington National Opera and the Los Angeles Opera. Of her appearance in the Dallas Opera production, *Opera News* wrote “Bess, Indira Mahajan, looked sassy and sexy in her red dress and hit high notes with accuracy and daring.”

As Bess, she has also received international acclaim travelling to Europe for performances in France at the Opéra Comique in Paris and the Théâtre de Caen; to Germany for performances at the Staatsoper Hannover, Opera Frankfurt, Deutsches Theater München, Oper Leipzig, Kölner Philharmonie, Komische Oper Berlin, and the Congress Centrum in Hamburg; to the Benelux countries for appearances at the Koninklijk Theater Carré in Amsterdam and at the Grand Théâtre in Luxembourg, as well as festivals in the Canary Islands, Granada, Romania and Tokyo, Japan.

The soprano has appeared in the title role at theaters throughout Italy including the Teatro Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Teatro Lirico Giuseppe Verdi in Trieste, Teatro Lirio in Cagliari, Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania and the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples.

She has also performed the title role in concert with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the Orchestra Sinfonica Giuseppe Verdi, and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. The soprano has performed Gershwin concerts with the Baltimore Symphony, the San Diego Symphony and with Bobby McFerrin in her debut with the New York Philharmonic. She also joined Sir Willard White in a New Year’s Eve Gala at the Mikhailovsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Bernstein and Gershwin program was conducted by Vasily Petrenko.

George Gershwin was influenced by the music of ragtime composer Scott Joplin. Indira Mahajan was featured in *Opera News* for her performances of the title role in Joplin’s full-length work Treemonisha. Having first performed Treemonisha in Costa Rica, she also appeared in the role with The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra at both the Stern Grove Festival in San Francisco and at the Carlsen Center in Kansas.

Miss Mahajan’s orchestral repertoire extends from works in the Baroque and Classical periods to the foremost composers of today. Her recent performances of Steven Stucky and

Gene Scheer's riveting oratorio August 4, 1964, with the Dallas Symphony, at Meyerson Symphony Hall in Dallas and at Carnegie Hall as part of the inaugural Spring For Music Festival, were memorable. A recording of the work, conducted by Jaap van Zweden, was just released and is being distributed by Naxos.

In demand as a concert artist by internationally celebrated orchestras, she performed Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 with Gustavo Dudamel's Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra in Caracas and with the Korean Broadcast Symphony Orchestra at the United Nations, and Beethoven's Mass in C with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica.

The soprano performed repertoire ranging from Handel's Messiah to an all-Gershwin program in performances with the Colorado Symphony. The Sioux City Symphony also engaged her for the Messiah, with a re-engagement for a chamber concert including Brahms' Liebeslieder Waltzes, op. 52. New York audiences have enjoyed her performances of Bach's B minor Mass (BWV 232) and the Magnificat (BWV 243), the Brahms and Fauré Requiems, Mozart's "Coronation" Mass in C (K.317) and Exultate, jubilate (K. 165), as well as Orff's fiery Carmina Burana. She was invited to be the featured guest artist in the Alabama Symphony's festive New Year's Eve Gala. With the Colorado Chamber Orchestra, the soprano gave her first performances of Harbison's The Flight into Egypt and Previn's Honey and Rue, a work that she repeated in a piano-version as part of her debut recital at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Indira Mahajan has also appeared in recital at Kentucky State University and in a benefit recital for Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS in New York.

Indira Mahajan's operatic repertoire spans an equally wide range; from Italian chestnuts to contemporary American opera. Puccini heroines have played a significant role in the soprano's career. Miss Mahajan was named both the New York City Opera Debut Artist of the year and the Maria Callas Debut Award recipient from the Dallas Opera for her portrayal of Musetta in La bohème. As a result, the soprano was also invited to sing; 'Quando me'n vo' in the prestigious Richard Tucker Gala at Lincoln Center. She also performed the role in staged productions at Orlando Opera, Opera Omaha, with Houston's Opera Ebony and on a national tour under the auspices of the New York City Opera's National Company. Miss Mahajan was invited to perform the role at Royal Albert Hall in the United Kingdom. The production of La bohème was directed by three-time Olivier Award-winning director Francesca Zambello and conducted by David Parry. The soprano has also performed the title roles in Puccini's Madama

Butterfly at Arizona Opera and Cedar Rapids Opera where it was recorded live in HD by Iowa Public Television and Suor Angelica in Jay Lesenger's production at Chautauqua Opera. Opera audiences also enjoyed a New York City performance of Lauretta in Puccini's Gianni Schicchi.

Critics reported that as Lucia di Lammermoor, "Indira Mahajan, was no ordinary singer at all, but one of those extraordinary performers who, as they say, have 'got it all together'...Most impressive, Mahajan has that rare ability to make each vocal flourish, each musical embellishment seem an extension, even a revelation, of Lucia's poetic, tormented character. Moreover, the lady sings from her heart." She performed Verdi's Violetta in La traviata for the first time at the Ash Lawn Festival and repeated the role with the Bridgeport Symphony conducted by the distinguished conductor Gustav Meier.

Indira Mahajan, a native of New York City, began violin studies at the age of five. Creating and performing leading roles in contemporary operas has drawn upon her extensive musical studies. The soprano created the featured role of Mordeen in the first fully staged production of Frank Lewin's opera Burning Bright in Princeton, New Jersey. She performed excerpts of Richard Strauss' Capriccio and Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin at the Colorado Music Festival, roles that she anticipates performing in their entirety in future seasons. Early in her career she performed Teresa I in Virgil Thompson's Four Saints in Three Acts and performed leading roles in two Metropolitan Opera Guild productions in New York: Different Fields by Mike Reid and First Up Opera. While an apprentice, she was cast as Moppet in the Glimmerglass production of Paul Bunyan. The Britten opera was eventually mounted by the New York City Opera and telecast nationwide "Live from Lincoln Center."

Miss Mahajan first came to public attention as a graduate student at Mannes College of Music in New York City performing Sandrina in La Finta Giardiniera. *The New York Post* reported that she handled "Mozart's vehement demands confidently."

She later performed Mozart's Donna Elvira at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, at Virginia Opera, and at Dallas Opera in Don Giovanni performances conducted by Music Director Graeme Jenkins. Additionally, she performed Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro at both Virginia Opera and Opera Carolina. In the Baroque repertoire, she has portrayed the title role of Esther in New York performances of the rarely performed Handel opera, and appeared in Semele in performances conducted by the late Joel Revzen.

Indira Mahajan was born in New York City to a South Asian father born in Dalhousie, India, and African American mother born in Raleigh, North Carolina. She first began her musical studies at the age of 5 as a violinist and later continued her musical studies with her mother and first voice teacher, Barbara Mahajan.

She holds a Bachelor's degree from Oberlin College, Master of Music degree and Advanced Professional Studies degree from Mannes College of Music, and a diploma from the Accademia Musicale Ottorino Respighi.

Winner of the prestigious Marian Anderson Award Miss Mahajan performed in recital at the Kennedy Center. She dedicated the Award to her mother, mezzo-soprano Barbara Mahajan, and her mentor the late Betty Allen, opera singer and President of The Harlem School for the Arts. She is also the recipient of the New York City Opera Debut Artist of the Year Award, Dallas Opera's Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year Award, Richard F. Gold Award, winner of the Eastern Division of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Jensen Foundation Award, as well as a Van Lier Fellow. She is listed in Who's Who in Black American-Classical Singers, and Who's Who is South Asian Women's Network.

September 2021
2,241 Words