



October 5, 2019

**MEGAN MARIE HART
IN THE OPERNMAGAZIN-PORTRAIT**

Sometimes, it happens: one hears a voice in an opera house and is instantly fascinated and taken by it, in a way one cannot put into words right away. That happened to me when I attended the premiere of LUISA MILLER at the Landestheater Detmold a few months ago. On stage, amidst an appealing and thought-provoking staging, a leading woman, who was vocally present from the first moment on. Who breathed life into this soprano role with her warm voice, often reminding me of legendary singers Leontyne Price and Marilyn Horne. Every time she sang in the lower registers of the part, this indescribable moment seemed seizable. It was not until some time later that I learned that she had been a student of the great mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne and had met her many times, even in her house on a cliff in California. And how she loves and admires Leontyne Price, one of the most important sopranos of the last decades. The fact that she reminded me of these two singers was therefore no coincidence, without her even remotely seeming like a copy of the two singers. She has just what Price and Horne had in their time: a highly recognizable voice, with those impressive highs, and that certain gentle, yet powerful, strong low in the voice that can touch people in the opera house so deeply. Not only I was



*Soprano Megan Marie Hart with her
dog Maggie Moo, September 2019*

inspired by Megan Marie Hart, and everyone who was as lucky as I to experience her as AIDA at the same place, will surely agree that there is a very special voice to be experienced here, one that is virtually created to sing roles like Luisa Miller and Aida. It makes one wish to hear much more of her, in many more big roles of her Fach. It will come with time. Absolutely! But now is the time to introduce this soprano to my readers.

Music, Music, Music

With a twinkle in her eye, she tells me how her parents got to know each other through music.

That was in California in the time of the flower generation. The very same time that coined the term “hippies” and stood, and stands, for a life style defined by the joy of living and music. Back then, her father was already playing classical guitar very well, and her mother sang. Megan Marie mentions often during the conversation that her mother had an exceptionally beautiful voice. “Music was everywhere with us,” she says. And that her mother listened to nearly every radio broadcast from the world famous MET, the legendary New York opera house, and with that she was also able to inspire her daughter Megan Marie. Back then her mother was also taking voice lessons. She imparted her love for opera on to her daughter. And she surely will rejoice to experience what her daughter has made of this love affair.

Megan Marie Hart was born in Santa Monica, in California, the “golden state.” She lived there until the age of six; that’s when her parents moved with her to Eugene in the US State of Oregon. There Megan Marie grew up, went to school, and also had her first voice lessons, at age seventeen. During a youth program at the Oregon Bach Festival, the decision to study singing and to make it her life and profession grew in her. Beginning in 2001, she studied with the american tenor and vocal pedagogue Richard Miller in Oberlin, Ohio. And shortly after came remarkable intermediate way-points, that first brought her to Salzburg in 2003, where she attended the summer academy. In the same year and in the following year, she



*Megan Marie Hart and her dog Maggie
Moo in Seattle, November 2010*
Photo: © Paul Dahlquist

attended the Elysium Summer Academy in Bernried on Starnberger Lake. Back in the US, she earned her Bachelor of Music degree at the Conservatory of Music in Oberlin in 2005, and already in the following year the academic degree of Master of Music.

Fateful Encounter

During a master class in Oberlin in 2005, she first met the woman who was to mark her further years as an opera singer, and to whom she is still connected today personally and as a student. Marilyn Horne. One year later, she met her future voice teacher a second time. And in 2010, she won the song competition named after Marilyn Horn.

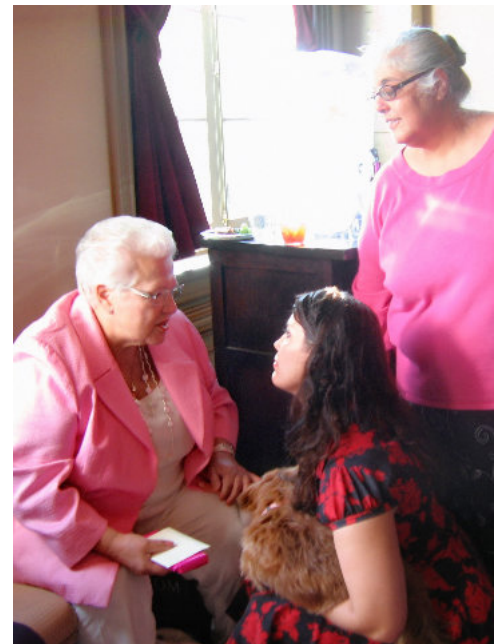


*Marilyn Horne and Megan Marie Hart
in Santa Barbara, August 2010*

This at once marked the beginning of a lasting and formative collaboration, with the great mezzo-soprano teacher, and soprano Megan Marie Hart as her student.

Marilyn Horne, who has set the standards for possibly all subsequent generations of singers in the demanding and almost forgotten Fach of coloratura mezzo-soprano, became a sought-after vocal pedagogue after her extremely successful world career. Her master classes are famous.

But she is also known for her humorous and human nature and is popular with her students. Her impressive voice has been captured for eternity in many recordings and she is already a world-renowned opera legend in her lifetime. Her international career began in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, and she advised Megan Marie to also take the plunge to Germany and its stages. When Megan Marie Hart talks about Horne, her admiration, her respect, but also her affection for the singer can be heard from every word. Marilyn Horne would certainly have recognized very quickly, what vocal talents her student had to offer, and how expressively the high but also the low registers of her soprano suited her. The collaboration with the great US american singer has become a matter of the heart for Megan Marie. And that she participates from the experience and knowledge of Marilyn Horne is clearly audible in her voice as well. Then the departure to



*Marilyn Horne and Megan Marie Hart
with mother Claudia*

Germany in 2012. First stop in Munich, later she lived in Frankfurt, where she participated intensively in German language courses in the *Volkshochschule*. In Frankfurt, she also met her husband. But before that she made her debut at Carnegie Hall in January of 2012, and collaborated in the following years as concert singer with various German orchestras.

Vis-à-vis with an Angel

In the middle of the 2014/15 season, Megan Marie Hart began her engagement as a member of the ensemble of the renowned Landestheater Detmold. And that proved increasingly successful. This summer she was awarded with the Detmold Theater Prize, as she had been in the previous year. This time especially for her striking achievement as Luisa Miller in Verdi's eponymous opera.



*Soprano Megan Marie Hart after the award ceremony
of the Detmold Theater Prize 2019
Photo: Jo Herzberg (CC-BY-SA 4.0)*

The general and artistic directors of the Landestheater Detmold have shown a lot of knowledgeable sense and foresight by entrusting this part, which seems to be tailor-made to Hart's voice and vocal range, to the young soprano. A role that cannot often be experienced on German opera stages. The Detmold Luisa Miller with Megan Marie Hart will reopen in October. Attendance can only be recommended on my part.

The dates can be found at:

<https://www.landestheater-detmold.de>

In the course of our conversation, which took place in the special atmosphere of the cafeteria of the Landestheater Detmold, where a continual (but in no way disruptive) coming and going of actors from *Maria Stuart* took place, we came to talk about the roles that Megan Marie Hart had already sung and also about those roles she really wants to tackle soon. One role was the topic several times: "Butterfly. I love this role. I really want to sing the role on stage soon," she told me. Certainly a role that will fit her register and vocal color a lot. For Megan Marie Hart commands the talent to carry and convey big human emotions to the listener with her singing.

A similarly big desire of hers is to finally interpret *Violetta* (*LA TRAVIATA*). But exposed roles such as *Abigaille* (*NABUCCO*) or *ELEKTRA* are on her internal role-plan too. The part she had so longed to sing in the past but also dreaded a bit — the role of *AIDA*, she was given the opportunity to sing now in Detmold for the first time. And how!



Ornament on the front of the Fremdenloge, formerly called Fürstenloge, in the Landestheater Detmold

In past years she made successful debuts as, amongst others, TOSCA, Donna Anna (DON GIOVANNI), Gilda (RIGOLETTO) and also as Mimì (LA BOHÈME). And she made her debut in ELEKTRA as well – she sang Chrysothemis. If one listens to Hart in her current Verdi-roles Luisa Miller and Aida on stage, the desire to be allowed to experience her in further roles of the Italian master is immediately present. Amelia (BALLO IN MASCHERA) and also especially Leonora (LA FORZA DEL DESTINO) instantly sound in my internal ear, when I think of this voice, her voice.

Architecturally, the Landestheater Detmold is a little gem. The Theater (built by Prince Leopold II, opened in 1825, with red seats, and side and front boxes typical for its time period) has still retained its very special flair and has confirmed its major reputation time and again over the years, especially in the opera sector. When the artists act on stage either in an opera or a classic stage play, they look towards the biggest box

of the auditorium right in front of them. The *Fremdenloge*. From there, the view of the stage is a very special one. The theater's walls are richly decorated, and below the Fremdenloge there is an angel. "Whenever I stand on stage, I look to this angel," Megan Marie tells me. And this little angel seems to grant her the safety and calmness she certainly needs for strenuous roles. It is known that many singers often focus on a fixed point in the theater. For Megan Marie it is an angel. In my opinion, a very touching anecdote from our conversation.

In addition to the Verdi roles already mentioned, she will take part in two further opera productions in the current season in Detmold. First, there is the Queen in Ernst Toch's musical fairytale DIE PRINZESSIN AUF DER ERBSE, which will premiere on March 20, 2020, and then on May 15, 2020 the curtain rises for Mozart's DON GIOVANNI, with Megan Marie Hart as Donna Anna, one of her signature roles.

"Opera is my life!"

A sentence from her, that simply stems from deepest conviction and expression of her love for the privilege of what she is able to do professionally. And this sentence fell many times. She, the opera singer, is also an ardent opera fan herself. This was also confirmed by her husband



Landestheater Detmold, inside view

Photo: © Rainer Worms

who accompanied her to the interview. Opera, with its wonderful combination of music, singing, acting and emotion, is always present in the daily life of Megan Marie Hart. And not just on stage. Also in her private life, opera has a very prominent role. Her enthusiasm, especially for the great voices of the past, is so honest, so authentic, and stirring at once. And somehow this sentence of hers is also her own personal credo.



*Landestheater Detmold / LUISA MILLER /
Megan Marie Hart (Luisa), Caroline Lusken (La Morte)*

Photo: © A. T. Schaefer

All that remains for me is to wish this sympathetic artist good luck and much success. Combined with the wish that she will reach her self-imposed goals as soon as possible, and maintain her enthusiasm. I do not doubt it.

I thank Megan Marie Hart for the interview!

- *Portrait by Detlef Obens © DAS OPERNMAGAZIN 10/2019*
- *Official website of Megan Marie Hart: meganmariehart.com*
- *Videos of Megan Marie Hart: youtube.com/meganmariehart*
- *The artist on Facebook: facebook.com/meganmariehart*
- *The artist on Twitter: twitter.com/MMHSoprano*
- *The artist on Instagram: instagram.com/megan_marie_hart*
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by Detlef Obens

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