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Photo: Joanne Savio

**For Deborah Voigt – The Show Went On In Spite of Her Cold.**

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**RECITAL  
DEBORAH VOIGT  
LOS ANGELES OPERA  
JANUARY 14, 2007**

By: Carol Jean Delmar  
OperaOnline.us

Deborah Voigt was a real trooper on Jan. 14. She walked onto the stage of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion with a tissue box in her hands and announced to the audience that she

had a head cold -- but that didn't stop her. She sang for almost two hours, and if she hadn't said anything, most people would have probably never noticed.

Given her condition, Ms. Voigt proved that her vocal technique is superlative. She was effective in singing "over" her cold without any nasality. Some hoarseness may have been discernible as she attacked some of her dusky lower tones, but the hoarseness was so negligible that it could have probably only been detected by someone with an extremely keen ear.

She looked absolutely terrific in a long black skirt and glittery top, with her hair swirled into a stylish updo. One audience member shouted his approval. The little black dress incident which led to her gastric bypass surgery is still on everybody's mind. Although fired because she was unable to fit into a costume for a Royal Opera House production of "Ariadne auf Naxos" in 2004, the casting director has since invited her back.

Her current recital -- which began in Florida and will travel to Stanford University, Seattle, Toronto, London and Carnegie Hall -- enables her to showcase her operatic talents as well as her crossover abilities. The highlight of the evening was toward the end of the program when she sang Leonard Bernstein's "So Pretty," with lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. It was the only time during the evening that she totally "became" the character that she was portraying -- in this case, the innocent child who was singing the melody. Every syllable was enunciated with clarity, and the anti-war message resonated with the audience because of its relevance today. By the time she'd completed the song, it was as if everyone in the Pavilion was on her wavelength.

She began the evening with "Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls Schöpfer ehrt," K. 619. Written by Mozart the year of his death, Voigt sang the cantata impressively -- but this was Mozart, and her powerful Wagnerian high tones were somewhat piercing and strident. She was much more in her element with the Verdi grouping, which included songs from the composer's "Six Romances." She contrasted the serious "Non t'accostar all'urna" and "Deh, pietoso, oh Addolorata" with the more playful "Brindisi," No. 2.

She is singing the title roles in four of Richard Strauss's operas this season. It was therefore only fitting that she include some Strauss Lieder in her program. Her interpretation of "Schlechtes Wetter," Op. 69, No. 5 (with text by Heinrich Heine) was definitely a collaborative effort between her and her wonderful pianist Brian Zeger. The urgency of the first bars depicting stormy weather gave way to the Viennese waltz music in the style of "Der Rosenkavalier." Zeger couldn't have accompanied Voigt with more precision. He was sensitive to her every breath and utterance while still communicating his artistry.

Voigt's "Lied der Frauen," Op. 69, No. 6 -- about the worrying wives of a sailor, shepherd, miner and soldier -- was intense and gripping, but we heard some excessive vibrato and pitch fluctuation in her selections by Ottorino Respighi.

She concluded the program clearly enunciating songs by Amy Beach and Leonard

Bernstein, most of them from her “All My Heart” CD. The audience seemed to connect to Beach’s “The Year’s at the Spring,” especially when she sang Robert Browning’s famous words: “God’s in His heaven – All’s right with the world!” Everyone wants to hear optimism these days. And her “Ah, Love, but a Day” was also well-received.

Bernstein’s nonsensical “Piccola Serenata” was fun to listen to and sounded like something one might hear in a synagogue because of its Hassidic cadences. “Greeting,” written by Bernstein as a reflection on the birth of his son, was sung with sensitivity. The bluesy numbers were bluesy, and Voigt’s “Somewhere” from “Westside Story” enabled everyone to see that she isn’t always a diva, which was also evident in her encores, especially when she sat down next to Zeger for a duet at the piano. She finally let her hair down. We wanted to hear more of that freedom when she sang Irving Berlin’s “I Love a Piano.” What was needed was a little more of Liza Minnelli’s energy in that one.

Ms. Voigt did sing expressively, but there was always a sense of reserve as if the music stand on the stage was holding her back from truly connecting the music to the text. It is difficult when singing art songs and Lieder to know when to break the onstage fourth wall and when not to. The result on Jan. 14 was an enjoyable recital -- one that left the audience satisfied, but disengaged.