

Entertainment*

Aimée Puentes is always ready to hit the road for her music

By Glenn Pillsbury

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“I love what I do, and I’ve been willing to drive the miles for it,” she said.

Even to Idaho, where last month she participated in a production of Puccini’s “La Bohème” that only had the budget for a single performance. Still, something good came out of it.

“It seems sometimes a shame to do just one performance,” Puentes said. “But, you know, I’d never been to Boise.”

In addition to the wilds of Idaho, her opera resume boasts repeated roles much closer to home with groups such as Opera San Jose and San Francisco Opera. She also has extensive concert music experience with several regional orchestras from Santa Cruz to Vallejo to Sacramento.

It’s that kind of repertoire that brings her to town for two performances with the Stockton Symphony as the vocal soloist in Mahler’s Symphony No. 4. Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 opens the program. Peter Jaffe conducts.

Puentes last performed in Stockton a few years ago as the soloist at the symphony’s Holiday Treasures program.

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Concert preview

Stockton Symphony with Aimée

Puentes, soprano

When: 8 p.m. today and 6 p.m. Saturday

Where: Atherton Auditorium, San Joaquin
Delta College

Program: Mozart: Symphony No. 40;
Mahler: Symphony No. 4

Admission: \$8-\$48

Information: (209) 951-0196

“She’s a very versatile, talented singer and a marvelous human being,” Jaffe said. “I really love working with her and it will be great to have her back.”

Raised in a musical household - her mother was her first vocal teacher - Puentes studied classical performance at San Francisco State University.

“I started singing when I was very little, and my parents recognized that and always tried to reinforce that desire,” she said.

While singing in her high school choir, the decision to pursue formal voice studies was spurred by her interest in singing more intricate music.

“I thought it was more challenging to sing in different languages,” Puentes remembered, “and it was a completely different technique.”

Over the years, Puentes has balanced operatic performances with pops and concert material and finds little difference in the amount of work required in each role to be successful. Concert pieces like the Mahler symphony call for the same kind of intense study.

“A lot of people think with orchestra, you just sit there and you sing,” she said. “There’s much more to it than that. I will have my character within, but I still want to communicate that with my facial expressions or the colors of my voice.”

The soprano solo role in Mahler’s symphony was written several years before the rest of the piece, though it only appears in the symphony’s final movement. What started as a simple song with piano accompaniment was later expanded and orchestrated to be part of the composer’s third symphony before being removed and used instead to anchor the fourth symphony.

“(Mahler) was very much enamored of singing,” Jaffe said. “And a lot of his symphonies were infused with music that was related to this text.”

Contact Glenn Pillsbury at features@recordnet.com.

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