

REHANNA THELWELL
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell is quickly becoming known for her magnetic performances and expressive vocal power in a wide variety of repertoire. She recently made her mainstage debut performing the title role of *Carmen* at Washington National Opera, in a performance Parterre Box hailed as, “a stupendous Carmen,” whose “top-flight voice is distinctive and rangy, the center lithe, silky, and clear, and her chest voice voluptuous and authoritative. She’s a gutsy, energetic actress and her take on Carmen favors high-spirited immediacy.”

A recent graduate of the Washington National Opera Cafritz Young Artist program, Ms. Thelwell’s busy 2022-2023 season includes her debut at Dutch National Opera as Girlfriend/Congregant 3 in Jeanine Tesori’s *Blue*, roles which she will reprise later in the season at Washington National Opera. She also makes her role debuts as Dinah/Anna I in Madison Opera’s double-bill of *Trouble in Tahiti/The Seven Deadly Sins*, returns to South Florida Symphony for Bruckner’s *Te Deum*, joins Bangor Symphony for Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, debuts with The Washington Chorus for Undine Smith Moore’s *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr* and the Duruflé *Requiem*, and reprises *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr* with Exigence Ensemble (Detroit, MI).



In 2021-2022, her final year as a Cafritz Young Artist, Ms. Thelwell was featured in a performance of the title role in *Carmen* at The Kennedy Center. She also appeared with Lyric Opera of Chicago as Ruby/Sinner Woman in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, a role she premiered with Opera Theatre St. Louis in 2019, for which Opera News praised her as a “standout” among the supporting cast. Additionally, she made her debut with Opera Philadelphia as Jocasta in Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* and joined the South Florida Symphony Orchestra for Handel’s *Messiah*. Other roles at WNO included Third Lady in the Young Artist production of *The Magic Flute* as well as Conchetta in the American Opera Initiative new work, *Night Trip*. Along with her mainstage roles, Thelwell had the opportunity to workshop new works with Esperanza Spalding for *Iphigenia* and Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek for *The Listeners*. Additional engagements for 2020-2021 included joining the National Symphony Orchestra as the Narrator *Portrait of a Queen*, recording *Blue* with Washington National Opera, her mainstage debut with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Aunt Lou in *Highway 1, U.S.A.*, and *Opera in the Park* with Madison Opera.

Thelwell returned to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2019 as Giovanna in *Rigoletto* and Ruby in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. During the 2018 season, she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Exigence Vocal Ensemble led by Dr. Eugene Rogers. Earlier that year, Thelwell had the immense pleasure of performing alongside Talise Trevigne and Morris Robinson in The University Musical Society’s *Porgy and Bess* as Maria. That summer, she joined the Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute for a second time in their production of the *Götterdämmerung* prologue as the 2nd Norn. In her first year with the Wagner Institute, Thelwell had the privilege of sharing the stage with soprano Christine Goerke and bass-baritone Alan Held for their rendition of “The Ride of the Valkyries.” She was also invited to sing with the Kenai Peninsula Orchestra for their performance of Prokofiev’s *Alexander Nevsky* in Anchorage, Alaska and returned to perform a concert series through the Kenai Musical Society in 2019.

Thelwell began her studies in 2009 at Northern Arizona University under the instruction of Deborah Raymond. In 2014, she was accepted into the Graduate program at the University of Michigan and in 2016 returned for her specialist degree.

REHANNA THELWELL

MEZZO-SOPRANO

OPERA

Girlfriend 3	<i>Blue</i>	Washington National Opera	2023
Anna I	<i>The Seven Deadly Sins</i>	Madison Opera	2023
Dinah	<i>Trouble in Tahiti</i>	Madison Opera	2023
Girlfriend3 /Congregant 3	<i>Blue</i>	Dutch National Opera	2022
Carmen	<i>Carmen</i>	Washington National Opera	2022
Ruby/Sinner Woman	<i>Fire Shut Up in My Bones</i>	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2022
Jocaste	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	Opera Philadelphia	2022
Aunt Lou	<i>Highway 1, U.S.A.</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2021
Mother	<i>The Consul</i>	Washington National Opera	2020
Conchetta	<i>Night Trip</i>	Washington National Opera	2020
Third Lady	<i>The Magic Flute</i>	Washington National Opera	2019
Giovanna	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2019
Ruby	<i>Fire Shut Up in My Bones</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2019
Berta	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2018
Addie (cover)	<i>Regina</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	2018
Maria	<i>Porgy and Bess</i>	University Musical Society Concert Series	2018
Carlotta Vance	<i>Dinner at Eight (Bolcolm)</i>	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2017
2 nd Norn	<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute	2017
Dame Quickly	<i>Falstaff</i>	OperaMODO	2017
Erda	<i>Das Rheingold</i>	Miami Music Festival Wagner Institute	2016
Florence Pike	<i>Albert Herring</i>	OperaMODO	2016
Lady Wang	<i>Dream of the Red Chamber (Sheng)</i>	University of Michigan Opera Workshop	2016
Cornelia	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2015
Zita	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	University of Michigan Opera Theatre	2015
La Principessa	<i>Suor Angelica</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2013
Schwertleite	<i>Die Walküre</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2014
Ulrica	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i>	Northern Arizona University Opera	2012

CONCERT & RECITAL

Alto Soloist	<i>Scenes from the Life of a Martyr</i>	The Washington Chorus Exigence Ensemble (Detroit, MI)	2023
Alto Soloist	Beethoven: <i>9th Symphony</i>	Bangor Symphony Orchestra	2023
Alto Soloist	Bruckner: <i>Te Deum</i>	South Florida Symphony	2023
Alto Soloist	Handel: <i>Messiah</i>	South Florida Symphony Orchestra	2021
Soloist	<i>Opera in the Park</i>	Madison Opera	2021
Soloist	<i>Portrait of a Queen</i>	National Symphony Orchestra	2021
Ursule	Berlioz: <i>Nocturne Duet</i>	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, cond. Stephen Lord	2018
Alto Soloist	Mahler: <i>Symphony No. 2</i>	South Bend Youth Symphony Orch, cond. Robert Boardman	2018
Featured Artist	<i>Glory (Common)</i>	Carnegie Hall, cond. Eugene Rogers	2018
Alto Soloist	Prokofiev: <i>Alexander Nevsky</i>	Kenai Peninsula Orchestra, cond. Tammy Vollom-Matturro	2017
Alto Soloist	Mahler: <i>Symphony No. 2</i>	University of Michigan, cond. Kenneth Kielser	2017
Alto Soloist	Heredia: <i>Virginia</i>	University of Michigan, cond. Jerry Blackstone	2016

AWARDS & COMPETITIONS

George Shirley Excellence in Opera Performance	University of Michigan	2018; 2016
Graduate Winner	Friends of Opera, University of Michigan	2016
2 nd Place	California Regionals, Metropolitan Opera National Council	2015

REHANNA THELWELL

MEZZO-SOPRANO

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Carmen – Washington National Opera

"There are five performances remaining of Washington National Opera's season-closing production of *Carmen*. Only one, however, is worth your time: Rehana Thelwell will sing the title role once more, on May 27, and she is, in her role debut, a stupendous Carmen. WNO's Cafritz Young Artist Program, which frequently offers some of its singers a chance to perform leading roles in a performance or two of each of their productions, as was the case on Sunday, is not known for minting stars. Yet Thelwell is one of the singular talents to emerge from it in the past six years. Her top-flight voice is distinctive and rangy, the center lithe, silky, and clear, and her chest voice voluptuous and authoritative. She's a gutsy, energetic actress and her take on Carmen favors high-spirited immediacy rather than aloof fatedness. With a bit more time. . . she has the makings of a superior Carmen." -Parterre Box

Ruby – Fire Shut Up in My Bones – Lyric Opera of Chicago

"Standouts in the large ensemble included Rehana Thelwell's Ruby" -Opera News

Jocaste – Oedipus Rex – Opera Philadelphia

"The sheer beauty of Rehana Thelwell's sound. . . her distinctive presence suited Queen Jocasta well. The evening came alive in her reading of "Nonn' erubeskite, reges" and subsequent scene of guilty recrimination with Burden's Oedipus." - Bachtrack

"Rehana Thelwell's imperious, smug Jocasta followed a similar downward trajectory, as her haughty dismissals of the oracle's revelations were gradually replaced by horror, if not exactly remorse. Regal becomes Thelwell both dramatically and vocally, as did the Verdian style in which Stravinsky composed Jocasta's aria." - Seen & Heard International

Opera in the Park – Madison Opera

"Rehana Thelwell, a mezzo-soprano in a stunning golden gown, showed off her range too, from a delicate rendition of Elgar's "Where Corals Lie" to vocal growls and broad humor in "When You're Good to Mama" from the musical "Chicago."" - The Capital Times

Aunt Lou – Highway 1, U.S.A. – Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

"Mezzo Rehana Thelwell brought plenty of warmth to the role of Mary's sympathetic Aunt Lou." -Opera News

"Rehana Thelwell is superb as Aunt Lou, who spends a night or two with Mary while Bob is away on a trip. Mary has long been a second daughter to Lou, whose first child died young. It's an intimate scene, and Thelwell fills it with warmth-her voice rich and lovely." - Broadway World

"Mezzo-soprano Rehana Thelwell was great as Aunt Lou, delivering a particularly striking aria in conversation with Mary ("The first day I saw you")." - St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"Mezzo Rehana Thelwell has a brief but impressive cameo as the wise Aunt Lou" - KDHX

Conchetta - Night Trip - Washington National Opera AOI

“The singers, from the WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, were excellent. . . Thelwell’s dynamic presence made the strongest impressions on this reviewer, but everyone had superb moments, without a weak link.”

- The Washington Post

“Simon’s score opens with a frenetic collage of influences from the period, mixing snippets of Jazz, Motown, and martial motifs for the veterans. These are not reserved solely for the orchestra, however—the substantial opening aria for Conchetta tasks the singer (the tremendous Rehanna Thelwell) with handling these stylistic shifts vocally as well. . . The most impressive turn of the evening was reserved for Rehanna Thelwell in Night Trip, who brought a thrilling commitment and dramatic intelligence to the bravura solo scenes that bookended the piece.”

- The Washington Classical Review

“Thelwell embodied the role of Conchetta, a young Black teenager, who is being driven from Chicago by two uncles to visit her family in Tennessee. . . The free physical expression of this performer, her clarity with putting across language, and her accessibility to deep emotional pools demonstrates the most important aspect of any performance art form. She’s got it all. Thelwell carries the arc of the piece perfectly from radiant innocence to what becomes for us all a heartbreaking “knowing” of the real world.”

- DC Theatre Scene.com

“I saved the best for last; mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell was riveting as Conchetta. She first appears commanding the stage, full of life, singing beautifully, and by the end, commanding the stage, singing knowingly.”

- OperaGene

“Rehanna Thelwell is going to be a star singer. I’ve seen very few young singers in Young Artist programs who can walk out on a stage, open their mouth, and own the room the way she can. The ones who come to mind from the past dozen or so years are Nadine Sierra, Ailyn Pérez, Heidi Melton, Leah Crocetto, and Pene Pati. Thelwell is that good, so pay attention to her.”

- A Beast in a Jungle.com

Concert Work - Washington National Opera Riffs and Relations

“Where all that energy led was to another booming performance, this one by American mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell in Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s “O Loving Heart, Trust On.” It’s impossible not to compare Thelwell’s titanic sound to that of another big-voiced American mezzo, the late Jessye Norman. Thelwell sang the wistful work with tenderness, but her thunderous delivery was more reminiscent of gospel singing than it was a quiet meditation on faith. That’s okay. Given Thelwell’s level of craft, it was great.”

- DC Metro Theater Arts

Ježibaba - Rusalka - Opera Theatre of St. Louis Center Stage

“Blazsko returned with the duet “Tvoje moudrost vsechno tusi” from Dvorak’s “Rusalka,” with Lyle as the lovestruck title character and mezzo-soprano Rehanna Thelwell as the most gleefully wicked Jezibaba since Dolora Zajick.”

- St. Louis Post-Dispatch

“There were some immensely appealing rarities in the evening, such as the scene from Dvorak's "Rusalka" in which the sorceress Jezibaba (mezzo Rehanna Thelwell in a performance of hair-raising intensity) cons poor Rusalka (beautifully sung by soprano Greer Lyle) into giving up her voice so she can become human and wed her prince.” - KDHX

Ruby - Fire Shut Up in my Bones - Opera Theatre of St. Louis

“In a remarkable ensemble, Gerdine Young Artists Katerina Burton and Rehanna Thelwell stand out.”

- St. Louis Post Dispatch

Concert Work - Miami Wagner Institute

“Rehanna Thelwell’s rich, deep contralto and striking vocal presence illuminated “Weiche, Wotan, weiche” from Das Rheingold. . . She made the earth goddess Erda’s warning to Wotan to flee the ring’s curse come alive. Thelwell showed superb vocal control and expressive power and is a singer to watch.”

- South Florida Classical Review