

# IDOMENEO

## RE DI CRETA

### AN INTERVIEW WITH SANDRA PIQUES EDDY, IDAMANTE IN BLO'S PRODUCTION OF *IDOMENEO, RE DI CRETA*

A Boston native, Ms. Eddy's professional concert debut was with Boston Baroque in Vivaldi's *Gloria*. Boston audiences have also heard her in various roles with Boston University's Opera Institute, including her signature Cherubino, Nancy in *Albert Herring*, Tieresias in the staged premiere of Merryman's *Antigone*, and, most memorably, as Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito*. Ms. Eddy has also appeared as soloist with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra in *Messiah*, and made her Avery Fisher Hall debut singing *Messiah* with the National Chorale.

**BLO: You graduated from the Boston University College of Fine Arts. Is it particularly meaningful for you to return to Boston? What do you miss the most?**

**SPE:** I miss my family the most! I'm a native Boston girl. I grew up in Somerville and North Easton, MA. I went to Boston Conservatory, taught music in the Needham Public Schools and returned to school to get my Master's in Voice Performance at Boston University. Most of my family and friends are still living in the Boston area. They've been asking me when I was coming back home to sing for years! This is a wish come true for me. Though I'm currently living in Brooklyn, Boston will always be my home.

**BLO: How do you think your perspective on opera and your singing style have changed since graduating?**

**SPE:** I'm constantly trying to be as honest with my acting and musical integrity as I possibly can while I'm practicing, rehearsing and performing. When I was in school, my goal was to become a "singing actress" but now I think the highest achievement would be to become an "artist" in this field.

**BLO: You travel extensively around the world for different opera engagements. What are the most challenging and rewarding aspects of your travels?**

**SPE:** Travel is the best and worst part of the job. I miss lots of weddings and birthdays but I have an incredibly supportive family that understands. I still remember my Boston University College of the Arts application where I had to write my career goals. I wrote that I wanted to support myself teaching and singing in the Boston area. Now, anytime I see a new place and meet new people, I think about how incredibly blessed I am to experience it.

**BLO: How is performing in Boston different than in other major U.S. cities?**

**SPE:** I'll let you know after May 2010! I've had some experience performing in operas/concerts with Boston Baroque and as Kate Pinkerton in [BLO's *Madama Butterfly*] in their 2000-2001 season and also student performances at BU and Boston Conservatory...but I've never sung anything this

prominent there before. Boston is a city rich with musically savvy people. (Think of all the music schools and great performance groups around the area!)

**BLO: How is performing in concert versus full-fledged operas? Which do you prefer?**

**SPE:** Most of my professional experience has been in opera. I've only sung in a handful of concerts. I'd like to do more concerts but at this point I prefer the lights, costumes, drama and fantasy of full-fledged operas.

**BLO: What do you anticipate of BLO's more intimate setting compared to the Met's high profile stage?**

**SPE:** I sing the way I sing no matter where I am. The liberating thing about an intimate setting is the freedom to be a little more subtle with musical and dramatic nuances. When I sang Kate Pinkerton at BLO in 2000, the Shubert Theater seemed huge to me. I'm interested to see how I'll find the space now!

**BLO: Preparing and performing is no small feat. How do you prepare for a role like Idamante?**

**SPE:** I'm in the early stages of preparing for Idamante right now. I'm taking the time to really "marinate" the arias and work with my teacher, Ruth Falcon. My friends tease me about my all my post-it notes and color coded schedules. I think it comes from my education background. I like to break up the opera into small pieces and learn my big arias first and then duets and ensembles. I give special attention to the recitatives in operas. I learned this from my days at Boston University. Sharon Daniels and Bill Lumpkin directed and conducted my first Mozart opera experience, *La clemenza di Tito*. Before the casts sang the [recitatives] we'd speak them in our own words/modern day/slang to really experience the text as if we were saying it. It not only helped us understand the importance of conveying our text but our colleagues' text as well. [Recitatives] are where the story progresses and most of the drama unfolds.

**BLO: How much research went into studying the role of Idamante? Did you delve into classical mythology or were you already familiar with the story?**

**SPE:** For the last five months or so I've been listening to every recording I can get my hands on and watching lots of YouTube clips of past *Idomeneo* performances. I've gone to the Brooklyn Public Library now about three times to read up on some history...for instance....I found this VERY interesting...Did you know that the United States Premiere of *Idomeneo* was in Lenox, MA at Tanglewood in August 4, 1947?? I didn't know this! Another point for MA!

**BLO: How is singing Italian different that singing French, German or English? Which do you prefer? Which do you find the most challenging?**

**SPE:** Italian has been my favorite language to sing in because of the beautiful open vowels and natural rhythm of the language. I find French challenging because there are so many opinions on which way is the correct way.

**BLO: How is singing Mozart different than works of other composers?**

**SPE:** Mozart is incredibly exposed. Sometimes the melodies are so beautifully simple that the listener is deceived about how much technique and control is required. Singing Mozart is also very rewarding. I've sung Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* more than any other role on my resume and yet I'm still always finding new favorite parts to that opera. I never grow tired of it. Another wonderful aspect is the drama in the music. Mozart made choices regarding the action, mood and the characters in the orchestral music, the line and with specific instrumentation.

**BLO: What is your take on the role of Idamante? Can you relate to him in any way? How do you feel about the choices he makes throughout the opera?**

**SPE:** Idamante is tormented, lost and just wants to do the right thing. I think he is a noble and heroic character and his heart is good. Can't we all relate to feeling a little hopeless when our wheels are spinning round and round and we feel like we can't get anywhere despite doing the right thing?

**BLO: Luminaries have taken on Idamante and made it their own. How will you make your mark on Idamante?**

**SPE:** I'm so looking forward to singing in this opera not only because of the Boston connection but also because I've had the pleasure of working with some of the members of this production. Jason [Collins, Idomeneo], Caroline [Worra, Elettra] and Camille [Zamora, Ilia] are not only great artists but great people. I hope because of our history together we can really create something special with lots of chemistry. David Angus is one of my all time favorite conductors and I'm so looking forward to singing my first Idamante with him. I've covered in [stage director] Lillian Groag's Glimmerglass/NYCO production of *Agrippina* as a young artist. I've never worked with her personally but I've always been impressed by her ideas and passion. This *Idomeneo* has the makings of an incredible collaboration and a fantastic night of musical theater!!

**BLO: What do you hope to achieve in this performance?**

**SPE:** I hope I can make the audience forget I'm a woman!

**BLO: What would you like the audience to take away from your performance?**

**SPE:** I'd love it if first time opera fans fall in love or at least become interested in learning more about opera. I'd love it if opera novices tell their friends to try it out. It's an art form for everyone.

**BLO: Are there any particular roles you hope to play in the future?**

**SPE:** So many!!! I love roles that are equally satisfying dramatically and musically. I have a huge crush on Handel, so I'd love to sing Ruggerio in *Alcina* or Sesto in *Giulio Cesare*. Also, I'd love to sing Erika in Barber's *Vanessa*, Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*, and Lucretia in *Rape of Lucretia*. I've covered Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* and never performed it, but would love to. I just started venturing into *Carmen* territory and it feels so great.

**BLO: When did you first fall in love with opera?**

**SPE:** I fell in love with opera a little later in life. In freshman form and analysis class, our professor played a recording of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. When I heard Dido's lament I was hooked! I went into the school library later and played it over and over. My boyfriend (now husband, Bill Eddy) was in the chorus of Boston Conservatory's production of *Dido and Aeneas* later that semester...that sealed the deal. Nothing like a guy in a toga to get a girl interested in opera.

**BLO: If you weren't an opera singer, what do you imagine you'd be doing instead?**

**SPE:** I have a teaching background and I love it. I've taught chorus in Needham Public Schools and church choirs in Framingham and Wellesley. I was also a choral director for the young women's ensemble at Handel and Haydn Society for three years. While I was studying at BU, I was a part of the outreach program, Opera to Go, and that was so much fun...I get a charge out of seeing children discovering opera and falling in love with it! It's inspiring!!