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Modern Dickinson

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Sonja Tengblad

Commended by the Boston Globe for her "crystalline tone and graceful musicality", soprano Sonja DuToit Tengblad is a versatile performer with credits spanning the Renaissance era through the most current composers of our time.

Recent highlights include Vivaldi's *Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernis bolbarie* (Abra and Ozias), Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (La Fortuna and Giunone; Grammy-nominated recording with Linn Records) and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (First Lady) with Boston Baroque; appearances with the Handel and Haydn Society in Bach's *St. John Passion* (soprano soloist), Purcell's *King Arthur* (Cupid) and Handel's Samson (Israelite Woman); Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with the Blue Hill Bach Festival (Galatea); Knussen's *Symphony No. 2* for high soprano with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and her Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center debuts, both with the New York City Chamber Orchestra. She was awarded 2nd place in the 2014 American Prize competition's art song and oratorio division.

A champion of new music, Ms. Tengblad curated *Modern Dickinson* (with Seattle Opera regular Eric Neuville and Austin Chamber Music director Michelle Schumann), a program featuring all 21st century settings of Emily Dickinson's poetry that was named the #3 Best Arts Event in Austin, TX 2015 and was nominated for 4 Austin Critic's Table Awards. She has premiered many roles and works including the Boston premiere of Kati Agócs' *Vessel* for three solo voices and chamber ensemble, and Agócs' world premiere of *The Debrecen Passion* (written for the Lorelei Ensemble) for which she was a featured soloist, both performed and recorded with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and in 2015 premiered Shirish Korde's *Questions for the Moon* with members of the Silk Road Ensemble. A highlight for Ms. Tengblad was appearing in a concert celebrating the 80th birthday of composer Dominic Argento (in attendance) for which the Minnesota Star Tribune reported her to have given "the most affective performance of the evening". The 2015-2016 season will include performances with BeatSong, her recital project with percussionist Jonathan Hess, featuring world premieres by Matthew Peterson (ASCAP Nissim Prize winner, 2013), and Emmy award-winning composer Kareem Roustom.

Ms. Tengblad performs with the Grammy-winning ensemble Conspirare out of Austin, Texas; the Yale Choral Artists, and Boston's Blue Heron, Lorelei Ensemble, Handel and Haydn Society, and Boston Baroque. Upcoming highlights include the Lorelei Ensemble's appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall, and solo engagements such



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as Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Boston Philharmonic, Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Landmarks Orchestra, and *Bastien und Bastienne* with A Far Cry (Bastienne).

Eric Neuville

Hailed for his "seemingly effortless vocal acrobatics" (Capital Times), Seattle-based tenor Eric Neuville is a regular on operatic and concert stages throughout the country. Highlights of this past season included performances of Young Thompson in Cipullo's *Glory Denied* with Nashville Opera, Laurie in Adamo's *Little Women* with Madison Opera, Mozart's *Requiem* with the Seattle Symphony conducted by Itzhak Perlman, Gastone in *La Traviata* and First Priest in *Die Zauberflöte* with Seattle Opera, John Muehleisen's *Pietà* with the St. Olaf Choir and Magnum Chorum, a remounting of the award-winning recital *Modern Dickinson* at the Victoria Bach Festival, and the world premiere of John Muehleisen's *A Kipling Passion* with Choral Arts Northwest.

His 2017-18 season will include a return to Madison Opera as Pedrillo in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* with Stephen Stubbs' Pacific Musicworks, Bernstein's *MASS* with the Austin Symphony, *Modern Dickinson* at St. Olaf College & Macalester College, *Il messaggero* in *Aida* with Seattle Opera, and John Kipling in Muehleisen's *A Kipling Passion* with Choral Arts NW.

Past season highlights include Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Abdullo in *Nabucco* with Seattle Opera, Carmina Burana with the Austin Symphony, Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Seattle Symphony, *Messiah* with Pacific Musicworks, Don Jose in *La tragédie de Carmen* with The Washington Idaho Symphony, Ulysses in Fauré's *Pénélope* with Vespertine Opera, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with Tacoma Opera, Frederick in *The Pirates of Penzance* with Tacoma Opera, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Vashon Opera, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with *Conspirare* and the Victoria Bach Festival, Haydn's *Creation* with the Bainbridge Chorale, and Cary Ratcliff's *Ode to Common Things* with *Conspirare* which earned him a 2015 Grammy-nomination as a soloist on the *Harmonia Mundi* recording of the work.



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Michelle Schumann

Hailed for her “sensitive, flexible, and tempestuous dexterity” (Fanfare Magazine), pianist Michelle Schumann has built a reputation for evocative and moving performances that are infused with unique energy and zeal. Winner of the 2006 Janice K. Hodges Competition for Contemporary Music, Schumann’s programs feature meticulously integrated selections of classic and contemporary repertoire producing performances that are “smart, irresistible, and utterly captivating” (Austin-American Statesman). Recent international performances have taken her to the City de la Musique-Paris, Conservatoire de Gabriel Faure, and Conservatoire de Maurice Ravel in France; Birmingham Conservatory and St. Mary’s Cathedral-Haxby in England; the Roxy Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland; and the Salzburger Dom Cathedral and Konzervatorium Wien in Austria.

Michelle’s most irresistible qualities as a performer include her unabashed musical expression and her ability to connect with audiences. Her performance of Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue conducted by Peter Bay of the Austin Symphony was named the #1 Classical Arts Event of 2008 by the Austin Chronicle. Additional accolades include the 2009 award for “Best Instrumentalist” and the 2006, 2007, and 2008 award for “Best Chamber Music Performance” given by the Austin Critics’ Table. While deeply steeped in the creative-cultural community of her hometown, Michelle has also been a featured performer at international festivals including the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Ottawa Chamberfest, Ethos Contemporary Music Festival, San Angelo Piano Festival, Fayetteville Chamber Music Festival, International Festival Institute at Round Top, Long Beach Opera Festival, Bang-on-a-Can Summer Festival at the Massachusetts Museum of Modern Art, Banff Festival of Music and Sound, Snake River Chamber Music Festival, Victoria Bach Festival, Victoria International Festival, and Tanglewood.

Praised for her versatility, Schumann has helped to lead an eclectic array of projects demonstrating her commitment to unexpected creativity in collaboration. Project highlights include designing and performing the music for Ballet Austin’s “Truth and Beauty: The Bach Project” which featured solo piano music by J.S. Bach and Philip Glass and was later aired on the lauded PBS-KLRU program, “IN CONTEXT.” In addition to performing the solo piano program, Schumann also led a baroque ensemble from the harpsichord for Bach’s Orchestral Suite No.2. In 2010, Schumann served as music director, conductor, and pianist for Michael Nyman’s chamber opera *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, in a collaboration with Austin Lyric Opera during the Austin Chamber Music Festival. In 2006 and 2008, Michelle’s pianism took to the dramatic stage in a staged production of Schubert’s *Die Winterreise*, directed by the Viennese Maverick producer Andreas Mitisek of the Long Beach Opera. Michelle has also been an enthusiastic proponent of the music of John Cage and has developed a cult-like following for her annual “Happy Birthday, Mr. Cage!” concert which she has been producing,



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performing, and directing since 2000. Highlights of the series includes a collaboration with film-collage artist Luke Savisky in an acclaimed rendering of Cage's "Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano;" and a co-production with the Austin Zen Center of Cage's most meditative music, set for an encore presentation at the Brooklyn Zen Center in 2011.

Since 2006, Michelle has served as Artistic Director of the Austin Chamber Music Center, where she "is fearlessly expanding our definition of chamber music" (Austin-American Statesman). Following her ground-breaking first season with the Austin Chamber Music Center, she won multiple awards from the Austin Critics Table, including the coveted award for "Body of Work/Season." Praised for "her whip-smart sense of programming" (Austin-American Statesman), Schumann's specialty is developing unexpectedly integrated and thought-provoking programs. Her brand of performance includes an enthusiastic interplay with the audience, with whom she shares surprising insights about the music, composers' lifestyles, and the social context of music performed. Her trademark includes bringing diverse music together under a blanket of narrative, producing not simply concerts, but events.

Michelle has enjoyed performing with some of the finest musicians gracing the world's stages, including violinists Soovin Kim, Charles Wetherbee, and Brian Lewis; cellists Clancy Newman and Sara Sant'Ambrogio; and the Jupiter, Cavani, Carpe Diem, and Chiara String Quartets. Michelle's other collaborations include the Meridian Arts Ensemble, American Repertory Ensemble, American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, the Austin Symphony Orchestra, and Long Beach Opera.

Schumann is artist-in-residence and professor of piano at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor where she is the founder and Artistic Director of the Hillman Visiting Artists Series. She received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The University of Texas at Austin and additionally holds a Young Artist Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a Performance Diploma from the Vienna Conservatory. Her principal teachers included Anton Nel, Gregory Allen, and Marilyn Engle with additional teaching mentors including Emmanuel Ax, Peter Serkin, Ursula Oppens, Anne Epperson, and James Dick.