

LIVE ARTS IN THE AREA

Vocal recital features works by Strauss, Mozart, Donizetti

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The youngest of four girls, Meredith Ziegler comes from a musical family and was always encouraged by her parents to mix it up with the arts.

Her first stop on that journey was with the clarinet but she didn't take to the instrument. As it turns out, that was a good thing, and she followed her passion for voice.

At Wethersfield High School, her teachers noticed her developing talent, one thing led to another, and following an outstanding education at the University of Connecticut as a music and vocal performance major in the undergraduate and graduate programs, Ziegler is well on her way to a career in opera.

Friday, the Storrs resident will perform a recital of works by Mozart, Strauss and Donizetti, among others, at 7:30 p.m. at the Tolland Arts Center on the green in Tolland.

"For singers, it sometimes takes a long time for a person's voice to develop," Ziegler said. "The last two years of undergraduate, my voice really developed."

And beyond that.

A mezzo-soprano, Ziegler made her debut last season with the Connecticut Opera performing solo parts in Verdi's "Il Trovatore" and Rossini's "L'Italiana in Algeri." She is part of the Connecticut Opera's resident artist program.

"It's a great stepping stone," she said of the resident program, which is competitive and difficult to get into.

Ziegler has also been placed in several prestigious opera contests sponsored by state organizations.

"Connecticut Opera has been wonderful," she said. "Every day I'm singing." As part of the organization's outreach program, she sings professionally in 10 to 12 shows a week when the Connecticut Opera is in full season.

This fall she will be Mercedes, a friend of the title character, in the Connecticut Opera's production of "Carmen."

She also has sung abroad. Last summer she performed at a festival in Graz, Austria, and her voice has been heard throughout New England in various choirs, singing oratorios.

She is slowly building a repertoire of works for mezzos. Her dream, as might be expected for one with her voice



Meredith Ziegler

range, is to play Cherubino, the young male page cut-up normally played by a woman, in Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro."

"I'm working on the role," she said, adding she'd like to do it within the next five years.

Her goal is to be a full-time opera singer but she's aware of the difficulty in achieving that dream. She also teaches voice lessons and suspects that her future will be divided between performing and teaching.

Her UConn voice teacher, Constance Rock, says Ziegler is enormously talented and "her work ethic is higher than any student I have ever taught."

Rock also praised her academic work, citing as an example Ziegler's discovery of a set of songs by a young composer, Jake Heggie, with poems by mezzo-soprano Frederika Von Stade.

She pursued the works through e-mail conversations with the composer that developed into a master's thesis.

A prestigious national singing journal published the results of her research.

She is looking forward to a solo concert because it will give her the opportunity to do the music she loves rather than being confined by a role. She will be accompanied by pianist Allan Conway who will perform a solo by Dave Brubeck, as well.