

MUSIC

CLASSICAL & OPERA

Preview

Expatriate games

Constance Hauman sings the works of wartime exiles in a multimedia recital

By Matt Dobkin

Los Angeles isn't necessarily the first town that's mentioned in a discussion of the classical-music world's premier urban centers. But for soprano Constance Hauman, the city is a place rich in musical history and possibility. It's where she learned the title role of Berg's *Lulu* for a recent series of performances in Copenhagen and where the idea for her current recital, "Exiles and Emigrés," a concert of works composed by fugitives from Nazi Germany, was born. "I couldn't get over that there were all these great sources here in L.A.," Hauman says. "I was astonished to discover that, for about a 14-year period, the richest musical city in America was Hollywood!"

The era Hauman, 37, refers to lasted from the mid-1930s to the end of the '40s, when dozens of European painters, composers, playwrights and poets came to sunny California, seeking refuge from the atrocities of

World War II. Arnold Schoenberg, Ernst Toch, Erich Korngold, Emerich Kalman and Robert Stoltz were all among the expats who worked in Los Angeles to create a new musical language for film in the glory days of Hollywood. These composers, and a handful of others, are represented on Hauman's program, which will be performed at the 92nd Street Y Saturday 21.

Hauman got the idea for the recital a few years ago when the Los Angeles County Museum of Art asked her to present a concert in conjunction with an exhibit of paintings by Grosz, Beckmann, Ernst and others. "I saw the exhibit before it opened," Hauman recalls. "And I thought, I'd like to use some of the paintings with the music." Although she wasn't permitted to remove the paintings from the museum, Hauman used slides of the work, as well as film clips and news-

reel footage from the period, as an active element in the concert. "The whole thing escalated," she remembers, "because there were still many families of these composers in L.A.: the Schoenberg kids, Toch's grandson, Kalman's daughter. I was able to get home movies. I have home movies of Schoenberg!"

For the New York performance, Hauman has also commissioned two 16mm film collages by Louis Klahr. She's produced and directed a video that will accompany a number of songs, and has spent countless hours obtaining film clips, silent films and news footage. "I was having so much fun last night with my editor, cutting the last few bits that go with one of the Kalman songs. I woke up this morning and said, 'I've got to start practicing!'"

Hauman is clearly fond of conducting the kind of detailed research that adds layers of meaning to what could otherwise be an ordinary *lieder* recital. But how will audiences respond to the sharp historical focus and to the concert's unforgiving suggestion that the United States sheltered chiefly European artists—not the ordinary people who were of no use to the country's various industries? How does Hauman think people will react to the multimedia extravaganza she's put together? "If I say the words *raise your consciousness*, I sound like Shirley MacLaine. But I hope that by watching it, people will make certain connections to things going on in the world today."

And if she can't stir up discussion about current injustices, Hauman hopes to at least remind her viewers and listeners of certain pieces of history that many would like to either forget or ignore. "I went to see Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* in L.A. recently," Hauman reports. "And I was just blown away. After the movie, in the bathroom, there were two girls about my age, and one was still in tears. She said, 'I hope that wasn't a true story.' And I couldn't help myself. I interrupted and said, 'Do you mean the plot, or the *Holocaust*?' She goes, 'I mean, like, the whole thing! The camp...' I was dumbfounded. I almost passed out! I thought, This is L.A.! The whole city was founded by refugees of this war! How easily people forget."

**Constance Hauman presents
"Exiles and Emigrés" Saturday
21 at the 92nd Street Y.**

L.A. WOMAN Constance Hauman, seen here as Berg's *Lulu*, draws inspiration from SoCal.

