

Live preview

L'isola disabitata

Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John
Jay College; Wed 18–Feb 28



Neal Goren's Gotham Chamber Opera has notched an impressive record for mounting visually ebullient, musically topflight productions of lesser-known operas suited to intimate spaces and forces. Any company that takes on not only Handel, Rossini and Britten but Respighi, Sutermeister and Piazzolla merits major points for questing ambition. Looming on the horizon this week is Haydn's *L'isola disabitata* ("desert island"), in a five-performance run at John Jay College's Lynch Theater, a space ideal in scale and acoustics for 18th-century works.

Mark Morris—directing without having his dancers in the mix—suggested the 1779 piece, a romantic comedy distinguished, according to Goren, by its concision and wit. "It's a valid, deserving opera, with fascinating orchestral episodes," he says. Goren judges voices shrewdly; recent Gotham shows have featured rising stars like Caroline Worra and Alek Shrader. "One of my chief tasks is to show off the skills of the singers," he explains.

Here, soprano Takesha Meshé Kizart, who generated major buzz last summer at the Caramoor Festival, will preside as Costanza, a newlywed accidentally abandoned for a dozen years along with an infant sister (Valerie Ogbonnaya, another comer), whom she's coached in hating men. When her still-bereft husband (versatile tenor Vale Rideout) shows up with a hunky friend (baritone Tom Corbeil), emotions and hormones run rampant. Goren has varied Costanza's character with a feisty substituted concert aria "like a furious mad scene," in his estimation; expect vocal fireworks.—David Shengold