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Alumna Makes International Opera Debut

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Alumna Makes International Opera Debut

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. –Elementary music teacher by day, international opera star on the weekend.

Welcome to the whirlwind life of 2001 Illinois Wesleyan University graduate Sarah Sippl, who recently made her international opera debut in Mazatlan and Culiacan, Mexico. The debut, which occurred Friday, May 7, 2010, was a Wagner Gala concert with the Orquesta Sinfonica Sinaloa des las Artes.

Sippl, an instrumental music education major at IWU, earned her spot in the opera after placing second in the 2009 Concurso di Canto Sinaloa Vocal Competition in Culiacan, Mexico. The opportunity occurred after nine years of studying opera nights and weekends while juggling her full-time job teaching music at an elementary school in the Chicago-land area.

“I went to Culiacan thinking of it as another opportunity to sing for people,” said Sippl. “I had no idea I would advance to the finals, go on to win Second Place and be chosen to solo with the OSSLA and the Mexico City Philharmonic. It was quite an honor.”

According to reviews from Mexico, opera spectators in Mazatlan, Mexico felt the honor was theirs as they sat spellbound in the theater engulfed by Sippl's voice, which rose and fell to the dramatic movements of the opera. Hector Guadado, a reviewer from *Noroeste Mazatlan*, described the voice of the young lead as “substantial and rich,” with the power to “assert itself over a large orchestra and reach bright high notes that impart a dark quality to her interpretation.”

Guadado later states, “Sippl unleashed a cascade of sounds that brought the Mazatlan audience to near ecstatic experience at the Angela Peralta Theatre.”

After her week debuting in Mexico, Sippl returned to Chicago exhausted but exhilarated to continue her career. In the months ahead she has plenty planned to keep her busy. This includes working on a new repertoire and technique with her instructor Alvaro Ramirez, applying for competitions and auditions and performing as a resident artist for da Corneto Opera's production of Gounod's Faust and several company recitals.

Regardless of where her international opera career takes her, Sippl insists the foundation IWU established for her was invaluable.

“IWU was four years of allowing me the freedom to find out who I was, what I wanted and where I wanted to be,” said Sippl. “I look back and think of all the opportunities that were laid at my feet and the open arms and helping hands that were always there for me, and are still there for me.”

This international debut in Mexico was just the beginning for Sippl who plans to go overseas in the near future and begin auditioning for European operas, specifically in Germany.

“My career is just getting started,” said Sippl. “And my age does not match the type of roles my voice is meant for. I'm still very young and have a while until I can sing the full roles of what I sang in concert in Mexico. Voices are like snowflakes and fine wine. They're all different and if treated well, they get better with age.”

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