



VOX 3

a vocal music collective

P.O. Box 408435, Chicago, IL 60640 • 773-784-0425 • www.vox3.org

VOX 3 COLLECTIVE CLOSES ITS SECOND SUCCESSFUL SEASON WITH VOX FEMINA, A CONCERT OF ART SONG COMPOSED AND SUNG ENTIRELY BY WOMEN

*****VOX Femina Boasts Performances by Company Members Ashlee Hardgrave, Alexia Kruger, and Rebecca Prescott—with Special Guests Angela Young Smucker and Pianist Paul Nicholson*****

Contact: Brandon Hayes
312-479-0819
behayes@vox3.org
(Media inquiries only)

(Chicago – April 8, 2009) **VOX 3** celebrates the conclusion of its second season with a performance of music entirely written and sung by women. **VOX Femina: Vocal Works by Female Composers** features songs by often-neglected composers such as Holmès, Chaminade, and Tailleferre, along with the more familiar songs of Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. Sopranos **Ashlee Hardgrave, Alexia Kruger, and Rebecca Prescott** appear with mezzo-soprano **Angela Young Smucker**. Pianist **Paul Nicholson** accompanies. *VOX Femina* is performed on **Sunday, May 3 at 3pm** at **Bethany United Church of Christ** (4250 N Paulina St., Chicago). Admission is free, although donations are welcome. For more information, interested patrons may contact VOX 3 at 773-784-0425, info@vox3.org, or www.vox3.org.

“*VOX Femina* is an opportunity to showcase what makes VOX 3 unique and exciting among vocal companies—it is the realization of our motto: ‘younger, hotter, smarter,’” said Artistic Director Brian von Rueden. “All four singers showcased in *VOX Femina* are emerging artists in the Chicago concert and theater scene, representing some of the best local talent despite their young age. Joshua Allard’s extravagant original costumes heighten the experience for both the audience and the performers. With the musical selections for *VOX Femina*, we hope to introduce our audiences to parts of the vocal repertoire usually left unheard.”

The varied journey of **VOX Femina** begins in seventeenth-century Venice with a cantata by Barbara Strozzi, stops in eighteenth-century Germany with songs by Corona Schröter, and lingers over the nineteenth-century talents of Pauline Viardot, before finishing with contemporary composers Libby Larsen and Gwyneth Walker. As part of its exploration of female composers, *VOX Femina* moves beyond simple concert-style presentation of works, allowing the performers to inhabit the personalities and tell the stories of these women through their music. Designers **Joshua Allard** and **Brian von Rueden** dress the singers in era-inspired gowns to enhance the theatricality and vitality of these composers’ works in a manner beyond the traditional recital format.

VOX 3 is a collective of artists who educate both performers and audience through varied presentations of vocal music. The group’s members perform music, execute administrative functions in the organization, and educate the public about vocal music through concerts and *Collective Voice*, a bi-annual publication of original articles.



Ashlee Hardgrave's recent performances include Despina in *Così fan tutte* with American Opera Group as well as Baby Doe, Masetta, Gilda, Britten's Miss Wordsworth, Pamina, and Bellini's Elvira. An active performer in Chicago's concert scene, Ms. Hardgrave's recent engagements include concerts with Bailiwick Repertory, premieres of new compositions and multi-genre collaborations with groups such as ECN Danceworks, The Space/Movement Project, MacMurray College, Beloit College and Dream Engine Theatre Company. She is a company member of Sandhill Theatre Company and VOX 3.



Alexia Kruger has performed a wide variety of music from opera to oratorio, art song, and music theatre. Past roles include Susanna and Contessa d'Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, the title role in *Suor Angelica*, Lola in *Gallantry*, Marianne in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Desiree Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music*. Kruger has also been a soloist with the Bach Institute, the Illinois Chamber Orchestra, the Polish American Symphony, Grace Community Orchestra, the Valparaiso University Symphony Orchestra, the University of Illinois Percussion Ensemble, the Whirlwind Project, and the Irish-American Center in Chicago. The Chicago Musicians Club of Women awarded her the Virginia Cooper Maier scholarship in their annual competition in 2007. She is a company member of VOX 3.



Rebecca Prescott, a rancher's daughter from Jerome, Idaho, is a Master of Music graduate of Roosevelt University and a company member of VOX 3. Her stage credits include Desdemona in *Othello* with the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* with Sienna Repertory Theatre, Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*, Low-Dive Jenny in *The Threepenny Opera*, among many others. She has performed often with the Millennium Chamber Players, having sung Lucia in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Barbarina in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the soprano solo in J.S. Bach's *Mass in G-major*. Most recently, she received rave reviews for her performances in the Chicago premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus and Euridice* with Chicago Opera Vanguard, and for her turn as Josephine in *H.M.S Pinafore* in Hyde Park.



Mezzo-soprano **Angela Young Smucker** is a member of the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers, with which she was featured on *A Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor and sang the role of Herod in the world premiere performance of Francis Grier's *The Passion of Jesus Christ*. Smucker's opera credits include Zita (*Gianni Schicchi*), Augusta (*The Ballad of Baby Doe*), and Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*). She last appeared with VOX 3 in the *Myths and Fairytales* concert in fall 2007.



Paul Nicholson has been active in the Chicago area as an accompanist, vocal coach, composer, conductor, and singer since 1985. He served on the staff of the Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus under the direction of Doreen Rao. Paul has been accompanist to the faculty of Roosevelt University, Lake Forest College, Concordia University, Columbia College and the Chicago Studio for Professional Singing. He has appeared both at the keyboard and as a singer on Live from Studio One on WFMT. Paul serves as accompanist to the William Ferris Chorale and has appeared as guest continuo player with Bella Voce, Newberry Consort, Apollo Chorus, Chicago Chorale, and Chicago's newest period instrument ensemble Baroque Band.

Joshua Allard has designed with over 15 companies, and costumed over 50 productions in Chicago since 2003. He studied costume design and construction, modern dance, acting, and public relations at Valparaiso University and is a graduate of the Chicago Arts Program, and the Illinois Governmental Internship Program. In January of 2008, he served as the Wardrobe ATD for the Kennedy Center's national touring production of *Teddy Roosevelt & the Treasure of Ursa Major*.

Brian von Rueden has designed costumes for over 40 repertory and regional theater and opera companies in the last decade. He has served as costume shop supervisor for Northern Lights Playhouse and designed the inaugural season for the Kohler Arts Center in Wisconsin. Von Rueden's designs for the operatic stage include Cimarosa's *L'infedeltà fedele*, Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with Millennium Chamber Players, and Rorem's *A Childhood Miracle* at Roosevelt University. Working with the new Sandhill Theatre Company in Chicago, he designed Nathaniel Wright's *Faith* and *Pushing Daisies*. In addition, he has costumed productions for the Eclectic English Theatre Company in Dresden, Germany, the Underground Theatre in Valparaiso, Indiana, the Three-Sided Players in Chicago, Illinois, and is also the Artistic Director of VOX 3 Collective.