



Meet Kate Light, Making Music with New York City Opera, Ovid, and the Dick Van Dyke Show

by Amanda Gordon, 7 Apr 2010

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For Kate Light, a violinist in the New York City Opera Orchestra, playing the waltzes at the company's gala as patrons danced was fun but frustrating. "I wanted to watch," she said a few days after the event, speaking by telephone from her Upper West Side apartment. But the music—especially the waltz by Chabrier—was whirling by. "All I saw was this swirl of pink dress being lifted off the ground," she said.

Don't be mistaken, however: Light is a skilled multi-tasker. The violinist is also a poet, librettist, and lyricist, and soon she'll be courting her own patrons at two fully staged performances of her work.

First up is an excerpt from her adaptation, with composer Masatora Goya, of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, featuring the story of Echo—"that lovely, talkative, happy young nymph," as Light describes her—and Narcissus, "the equivalent of a celebrity today who everybody is chasing after." Ovid was the first to put these mythological figures together, and Light's spin makes Ovid himself a character.

Her years at City Opera have shaped her populist approach. Light combines archaic and contemporary language, as in this line of Echo's from the song "I Love to Talk": "I can light up a commissary/With my warbling and thrilling tales./I can wake up the statuery/And the virgins beneath their veils." In "Something to Be Desired," Narcissus croons, "Fact of the matter/When you're chased by a satyr,/Mister, you get pretty tired."

The 15-minute musical version of the story of Echo and Narcissus debuts on Thursday at the Shortened Attention Span Musical Festival (April 8-11, Thursday: 8 p.m., Friday, 9 p.m., Saturday, 9 p.m., Sunday, 3 p.m., Player's Theater, 115 Macdougal Street, \$18,

<http://www.ovationtix.com/trs/pr/642435>).



Kate Light at New York City Opera's gala, where the orchestra played waltzes for the crowd.

Light's other project is anything but classical Roman poem. She has written a libretto for a one-act opera based on an episode of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" in which a former lover of Laura's appears on the scene, making Rob jealous and Laura nostalgic for a tender, young moment in the past. Carl Reiner, who wrote the episode, "The Life and Love of Joe Coogan," has granted Light and the composer Paul Salerni permission for the project, and the full work will be presented in September at Lehigh University. The libretto uses some dialogue from the original script, along with new material by Light, including a sonnet that Joe, Laura's old flame, had written for her, and which Laura has been saving in a shoebox. Light turns the sonnet into a love duet for Laura and Rob. From an early preview, we can say a Mary Tyler Moore-type belting out the high notes in her mod 1960s living room is campy and sweet, while the story line most certainly merits--and thrives in--an operatic treatment.