



IN SONG: PRETTY YENDE

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#InSongSF

In Conversation Zoom Event with Pretty Yende and *In Song* Director Elena Park
Live at 12 pm PT on Monday, November 21



In Song: Pretty Yende. Photos: Deborah Rossouw (left, center); Ntokozo "Brix" Nxumalo (right)

San Francisco, CA (November 4, 2022; updated November 18, 2022) — San Francisco Opera's Webby Award-winning *In Song* video portrait series continues with the release of *In Song: Pretty Yende*. Filmed on location in Piet Retief and Cape Town, this new episode features the enthralling South African soprano Pretty Yende, who makes her Company debut as Violetta in a new production of Verdi's *La Traviata* opening November 11.

Steeped in Zulu culture in the timber city of Piet Retief, the iconic soprano grew up buoyed by family and a tight-knit church community, surrounded by love and a collective joy for singing. This 19-minute episode of *In Song* opens a window into the world of this enchanting artist, following her home as she visits with her congregation and family and

performs with the young students of her alma mater, the Ndlela Secondary School. Featured performances include the Zulu folk song "Iqhude" ("The Rooster"), the hymn "Hlengiwe" ("Redeemed"), and excerpts of Donizetti's "L'amor funesto" ("Sad Love") performed with pianist José Dias.

Yende recalls her grandmother, who, on their five-kilometer-long walks to and from church, planted "the first seeds of music in my soul" and the ten-second opera encounter through a TV ad that made her dream of singing music she had never before imagined. From overcoming a "very, very small voice" as a member of the school choir to winning national competitions to training in Cape Town, we see her early journey to international stardom. In Cape Town, pioneering opera singer Virginia Davids, who broke color barriers on the opera stage, recalls working with Yende to "find the inner truth of every role," while coach and impresario Angelo Gobbato encouraged her not to seek perfection but "to cross the threshold of touching the soul."

In Song: Pretty Yende, directed by Elena Park and Maropeng Vushangwe, is free and available now at sfopera.com, [YouTube \(English subtitles\)](#), [YouTube \(Zulu subtitles\)](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#).

With her magnetic charm, acclaimed operatic and solo performances worldwide and a critically lauded discography, South African soprano Pretty Yende has quickly become one of the brightest stars of the classical music world. Her current season includes a return to Paris Opera to star in *Roméo et Juliette*; the title role of *Manon* and *Marie (La Fille du Régiment)* at the Vienna State Opera; and her role debut as Gilda (*Rigoletto*) and a return to the heroines (Olympia/Antonia/Giulietta/Stella) in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at the Hamburg State Opera. Yende's 2016 debut album, "A Journey," for Sony Classical won several awards including the 2017 International Opera Award (Best Recording/Solo Recital). Yende is a 2011 graduate of the Young Artists Accademia of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. In 2010, she became the first artist in the history of the Belvedere Singing Competition to win top prize in every category and went on to win First Prize in the Operalia competition in 2011. Other prestigious honors include an award from the South African government, 'The Order of Ikhamanga in Silver,' for her achievement and international acclaim in the field of opera and serving as a role model to aspiring young musicians and more recently the Italian Knighthood, 'Ordine Stella d'Italia', for her work in building extraordinary relations between Italy and other countries.

San Francisco Opera's *In Song* is a series of intimate video portraits featuring remarkable artists who draw us into their distinctive spheres through stories and song—from classical to bluegrass, spirituals to mariachi and spanning Zulu, Samoan and Egyptian music. Launched in March 2021, the series invites us into the singers' worlds to see how they express themselves through deep connections to song. Episodes featuring sopranos Amina Edris, Meigui Zhang and Pretty Yende; mezzo-sopranos Jamie Barton (featuring banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck) and J'Nai Bridges; and tenors Arturo Chacón-Cruz and Pene Pati are available at sfopera.com/insong. The series, produced in collaboration with Lumahai Productions, was recently recognized at the 2022 Webby Awards as a Webby People's Voice Award winner for Best Music Video Series & Channel and was a finalist for best series in this category.

Along with San Francisco Opera's multidisciplinary *Instigators* program and other new digital content initiatives such as the podcast *North Stage Door* and *Atrium Sessions*, *In Song* is made possible, in part, through the Creative Edge Fund, with major support from Carol and Dixon Doll, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer and Bob Ellis.

San Francisco Opera presents Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* conducted by Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim in a new staging by director Shawna Lucey. This new vision of a beloved classic will open on Friday, November 11 simultaneously at the War Memorial Opera House and on the videoboard at Oracle Park in a free, live *Opera at the Ballpark* simulcast (sfopera.com/ballpark). The international cast is headed by three stars making their Company debuts: South African soprano Pretty Yende (Violetta), Chilean American tenor Jonathan Tetelman (Alfredo) and Italian baritone Simone Piazzola (Giorgio Germont). *La Traviata* runs through December 3 at the War Memorial Opera House; for tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com.

Audiences around the world can experience the Wednesday, November 16, 7:30 p.m. PT performance of *La Traviata* via livestream. To purchase virtual tickets (which includes a limited on-demand window), visit sfopera.com/digital. *The Traviata Encounter*, a one-night-only event on Saturday, November 19, offers attendees the opportunity to experience Eun Sun Kim leading the internationally renowned cast in the first act of *La Traviata* and then enjoy an immersive evening in the transformed lobbies of the Opera House. Recommended for audiences ages 21 and over, visit sfopera.com/encounter for information and to purchase tickets.

IN CONVERSATION WITH PRETTY YENDE

Monday, November 21 at 12 pm PT

Live Zoom conversation and audience Q&A with *In Song* director Elena Park

Soprano Pretty Yende joins *In Song* director and executive producer Elena Park for a live conversation and audience Q&A. The one-hour event is free; register [here](#).

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable photographs
of *In Song: Pretty Yende* are available at sfopera.com/press

Running time: 19 minutes

Filmed on location in Piet Retief and Cape Town, South Africa

FEATURING:

Pretty Yende, soprano

José Dias, piano

Ndlela Secondary School Choir

Ntokozo Vincent Mathibela, choir director

R.S. More, choir conductor

PERFORMANCES:

"Iqhude" ("The Rooster"), Zulu folk song

"L'amor funesto" ("Sad Love") by Gaetano Donizetti

"Hlengiwe" ("Redeemed") by Fanny Jane Crosby

A San Francisco Opera/Lumahai Productions collaboration

Directed by Elena Park and Maropeng Vushangwe

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Executive Producer: Elena Park

Producers: Nicole Potter and Warren MacCarthy

South Africa Production Services: Seed Media

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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PRESS PHOTOS: Downloadable photographs of *In Song: Pretty Yende* are available at sfopera.com/press.

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