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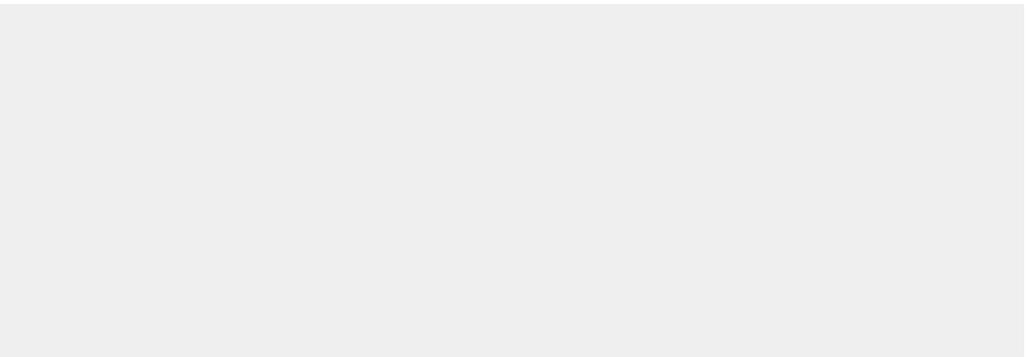
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Soprano Sylvia Lee sings signature role in Opera San Jose's 'Lucia di Lammermoor'

BY DAVID JOHN CHAVEZ SEPTEMBER 8, 2016 [CALIFORNIA THEATRE](#) [GAETANO DONIZETTI](#) [LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR](#)

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Sylvia Lee takes on her first role for Opera San Jose as its newest resident principal artist, the title role of "Lucia di Lammermoor." (Photo from sopranosylviale.com)

Sylvia Lee has gotten used to her new digs.

The soprano from South Korea has made adjustments in her new city of San Jose, an environment she admits not being used to. A city girl at heart, Lee has lived in her home city of Seoul as well as the bustling metropolis of New York City, and has taken a bit of time to deal with the spread out nature of the Bay Area's biggest city.

But for Lee, there is certainly one part of the Bay that trumps everything else.

"I certainly love the weather here. The weather is always good."

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It is weather that Lee will spend the next year enjoying. Lee is the latest principal resident at Opera San Jose, arriving this past July, the newest of the company's six resident artists.

Lee is also getting an opportunity to sing what she considers her signature role for the company in a production that opens Saturday, Sept. 10th. "*Lucia di Lammermoor*," the bloody and primal 1835 opera by Gaetano Donizetti, adapted from the novel by Sir Walter Scott, will run for six performances. The story follows Lucia Ashton, who is part of a feuding family and an arranged marriage. The Ashton family has taken the Ravenswood family land by force. Further complicating the dynamics of the feud is that Lucia has fallen in love with the master of Ravenswood, Edgar. The complexity of the situation leads to devastating consequences, led by the marriage of Lucia, forced onto her by her brother out of political necessity.

Lee first got a taste of her potential at the early age of seven. Growing up in a busy metropolis such as Seoul gave her many cultural opportunities. Children's choir was the start of her performance life, and many who heard that young voice saw in her a potential and a gift, even though she didn't see it in herself right away.

"I always wanted to be a painter or a sculptor because I was shy in front of people and really liked being in walls of my own," said Lee. "For a long time I was wondering if this was right for me or not. Even when I was in an undergrad at Seoul National University, I was still in doubt. I mean, classical music in Korea is not as popular as pop music.

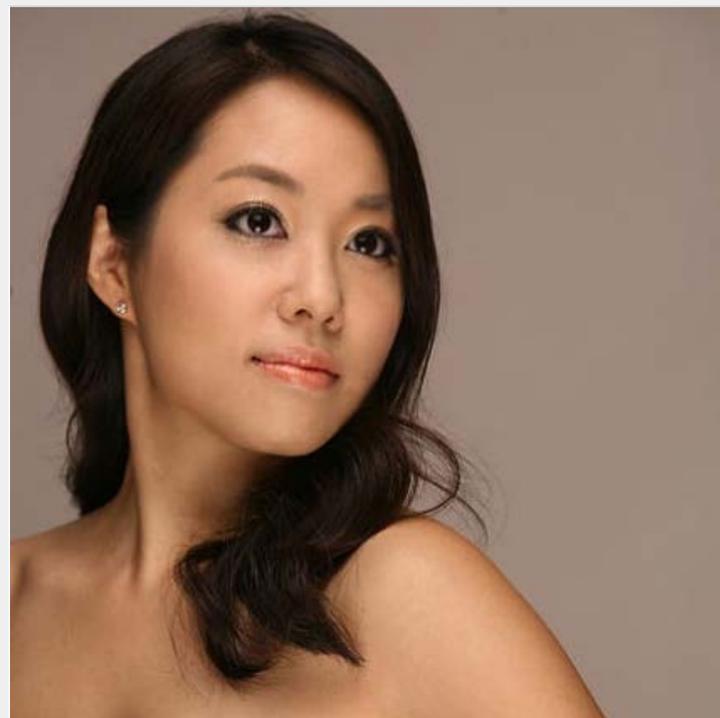
"Can I really become a professional singer if I keep doing this?"

The answer to that question is an emphatic yes. In addition to her undergraduate degree, Lee has a master's degree from New York City's Mannes College of Music and spent a year taking a professional studies course at Manhattan School of Music.

The experiences Lee received being part of New York City was the beginning of Lee's shift, from a shy young woman with reticence of her chosen career to a decorated opera singer.



She won the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions for the Eastern Region. She has also garnered awards from both the National Opera Association Competition and the Olga Koussevitzky Competition of the Musicians' Club of New York.



“When I realized I can recreate a character by myself, I started to really like it and then I was no longer shy singing in front of people.” (Photo from sopranosylvialee.com)

For an aspiring opera singer, there was no better place to hone her craft and delve into true opera artistry than in New York City.



“I came to New York to study and realized I can actually be in my own world on a stage, becoming a character of the opera,” said Lee. “When I realized I can recreate a character by myself, I started to really like it and then I was no longer shy singing in front of people. I didn’t have to think about the audience.”

According to Lee, culture played a role, referring to taking a more reserved approach to performance as an Asian woman. So showcasing her talent and vulnerability on the stage was certainly developed over time.

“When I was at Mannes, I started realize I had the talent and could be as free as I can.”

As is the case with many roles in opera, Lucia is terribly visceral. And Lee has played this role twice prior, in Hong Kong and South Korea, respectively. The ability to perform Lucia again is another opportunity to showcase everything she has learned in the world of professional opera.

“This is a very difficult role, but my voice is really suitable for this role,” said Lee. “It’s not as difficult for me to sing this role vocally. But to build and express this character is always so fun and so complicated because there are so many layers to her.”

WHAT TO KNOW IF YOU GO

Opera San Jose presents **“*Lucia di Lammermoor*”**

Written by Gaetano Donizetti

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

Sept. 10th – 25th

The California Theatre

345 S 1st St, San Jose, CA 95113

Tickets range from \$55 – \$175

For tickets, call (408) 437-4450 or visit www.operasj.org

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