School of Music Fosters International Talent

This year, the IU School of Music has become home to two talented international singers, Mariana Zvetkova of Bulgaria and Thamsanga Zungu of South Africa. The students were drawn by the distinguished reputation of Indiana University’s voice program and the opportunity to study with world-renowned soprano and IU Professor of Music Martina Arroyo.

Professor Arroyo first heard her future students during a trip to Pretoria, South Africa, to sing the world premier of An African Oratorio and serve as a jury member for the 1994 UNISA International Voice Competition. There, she had the opportunity to hear Mariana Zvetkova participate in the competition and heard, privately, voice student Thamsanga Zungu, who had come to audit the competition. Arroyo was so impressed by the quality and potential of these two young singers that she encouraged them to come to Indiana University. Her colleagues, reviewing the audition videotapes sent by Mariana and Thamsanga, enthusiastically agreed with Arroyo’s assessment, with each application receiving the highest ranking and both vocalists being awarded scholarships to study at Indiana University.

Soprano Mariana Zvetkova, who is spending the academic year at IU with funding from an Artistic Diploma Scholarship, is a graduate of Bulgaria’s Academy of Music. Mariana began her music studies at age four, studying accordion and piano, but her talent as a vocalist was not discovered until a teenager. In an effort to continue her piano studies in high school, she supplemented her audition with a performance of four songs prepared in the two weeks prior to the competition. Having no previous vocal training, Mariana was surprised at being awarded first prize for her singing. Through her teachers’ recognition of Mariana’s special talent, voice became the focus of her studies. While a university student at the Academy of Music in Sofia, Mariana was awarded two scholarships. After graduation, she received a year’s scholarship from the Bulgarian Academy of Art and Culture to continue her studies in Rome. Upon returning home, Mariana joined one of her country’s largest opera companies, the Rousse Opera, where she performed professionally for three years. Professor Arroyo says that by coming to IU, Mariana is gaining the intensive technical training required to reach her true potential as a world-class performer.

Thamsanga Zungu, enrolled in the IU Music School’s Performer’s Diploma program, has also come to study with Professor Arroyo to acquire the special training needed for a professional opera and concert career. At twenty-three, Thamsanga has revealed an especially promising talent as a Bass. The special quality of his voice was first recognized by a University of Durban-Westville faculty member who was accompanying Thamsanga’s high school choir. With the support of a U.S. Scholarship for South African Students, Thamsanga entered the University of Durban’s music program, where he studied with voice teacher Colleen Phillips. While not trained in opera, Phillips encouraged Thamsanga to further develop his vocal talents by studying abroad in order to pursue a professional career. Martina Arroyo thoroughly agreed.

For both Mariana and Thamsanga, their IU studies with Professor Arroyo will help them achieve their artistic goals to perform in concerts and opera throughout the world. Since coming to IU, Thamsanga has already performed major roles in the IU Opera Theater, as Collinne in La Bohème, as well as The Speaker in The Magic Flute. Mariana was recently the soprano soloist with IU’s very successful production of Britten’s War Requiem. Both Mariana and Thamsanga are preparing for the 1995 International Marian Anderson Vocal Arts Competition in July.