

Summer 2016

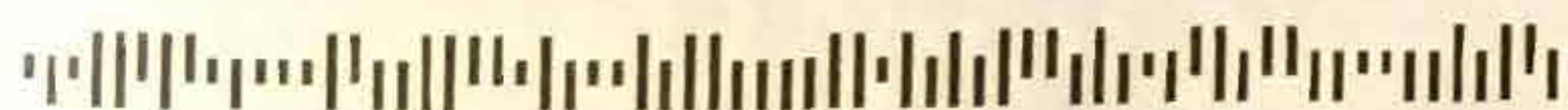
CLASSICAL SINGER

Expect the
Unexpected
Elizabeth DeShong

Your Summer
Reading List

Singer and Administrator:
Gabriel Preisser

The 10 Opera
Challenge



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20 Expect the Unexpected: Elizabeth DeShong

Mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong grew up in a small Pennsylvania town and came to the decision at a relatively young age to pursue an operatic career. Supportive parents found the aspiring singer voice and piano teachers, and she devoted herself to dutiful study of both instruments throughout her college career. Those piano skills continue to pay off for DeShong—the mezzo remarkably self-coaches all of her own roles. And as unexpected as the variety of roles DeShong sings is the attention to detail she gives to not only her artistry but all aspects of her life, including a website she hosts featuring captivating photos of her traveling life. With upcoming return appearances at Glyndebourne and the Met, DeShong is truly an artist to watch. *by Greg Waxberg*

photo by Kristin Hoebermann

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Michigan Opera Theatre is expanding its Young Artist Program and legendary tenor Richard Leech joins David DiChiera to lead the way. *by Greg Waxberg*
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Singing in tune can make or break an audition or performance for a singer. But what is the cause of out-of-tune singing? Dr. Jahn puts forth a few theories. *by Dr. Anthony F. Jahn*

THE HAMPSONG FOUNDATION

Empowering and Engaging Singers, Educators, and Lovers of Song



Thomas Hampson addresses attendees at the Song of America Educators Workshop.

BY PETER THORESEN

Baritone Thomas Hampson continues to inspire singers, teachers, and artists alike with his work in promoting art song. Read about his foundation's most recent offering: the Song of America Educators Workshop in New York City.

When we sing, many sets of hands are involved. Whether they belong to our recital partners or the teachers and coaches involved in repertoire selection, our music making is an ongoing and shared experience. As singers, teachers, and lovers of song, our relationships with composers and poets are the same. We benefit from the events, ideas, and emotions they experienced—including those of our living composers. And when we open our mouths to communicate a poet's words and to sing a composer's musical reaction to them, we immediately engage in the greater

community of music makers past, present, and future. Poetry and melody have a long-storied and dual capacity to facilitate community building between composers and audiences as well as singers and writers. Song connects. Song educates. And song transforms.

"Song is a metaphor of the imagination," says America's foremost baritone Thomas Hampson. "It is poetic thought encapsulated in music. Poetry is driven by the basic instinct to tell the story of existence, and American poetry explores the cultural roots of our nation."

To empower all of those affected and inspired by song, Hampson makes a further offering: the Hampsong Foundation. With a keen focus on technological innovation, according to the foundation's website www.hampsongfoundation.org, "the Hampsong Foundation seeks to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding through the art of song." To accomplish this, the foundation engages in strategic collaborations with key academic and cultural partners to offer ever-expanding research findings, interactive web resources, and workshops.



Hampson with Peter Thoresen

As a teacher and performer, I make frequent use of the foundation's web resources. And this spring, I had the pleasure of attending one of its most recent workshop offerings: the Hampsong Foundation's Song of America Educators Workshop.

About the Workshop

Held at Teachers College at Columbia University in Manhattan, the workshop is geared toward language arts, history, social studies, and performing arts teachers. Goals

for the workshop include making educators aware of the deep connections between music and a larger historical and cultural context, providing educators with experience with a variety of learning methods and approaches to song-related content, and highlighting *Song of America* online resources. *Song of America* is the Hampsong Foundation's multifaceted project exploring the history of American culture through classic song. Its free online resources include a radio series as well as the *Song of America* database (songofamerica.net), a catalogue rich with information on American composers, poets, and songs.

The workshop agenda is comprised of several interactive seminar-style and breakout events and includes a session with Hampson on the topic of teaching the humanities through art song.

Hampson—whose international performing career is as busy as ever—had finished a series of performances of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic only hours before my workshop, and was in the lobby bright and early, greeting eager and willing participants.

"Eager and willing" was the name of the game that morning and afternoon. And the Hampsong Foundation's team and

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Primary Resources for Singers, Teachers, and Lovers of Song

Song of America is the Hampsong Foundation's primary focus and continues Thomas Hampson's career-long dedication to American music and the work of his first *Song of America* collaboration with the Library of Congress in 2005–06. Results and subsequent resources of this project are the *Song of America* radio series and the *Song of America* database. These Hampsong Foundation offerings have immediate and practical application for educators, singers, and any other individual that shares an educational or leisure-based appreciation of poetry and song.

The *Song of America* radio series is available for free streaming at songofamerica.net/radio. And the foundation's second radio series, *Song: Mirror of the World*, is now being broadcast on radio stations throughout the country. These episodes, as well as the vast catalogue of information on the *Song of America* database at songofamerica.net, have extensive functionality for professional use in the classroom and studio—or for pure enjoyment while listening on the treadmill or heading to a rehearsal on the subway. Like all aspects of poetry and song, there's something for everyone in the resources found at hampsongfoundation.org.

presenters had no intention of having workshop participants seated for much of that drizzly Saturday in New York City. Participants got to know each other

quickly in an opening timeline activity led by Hampsong Foundation team member and musicologist Susan Key. Upon registration, attendees were given

a card with a significant historical or cultural event on it and asked to discuss it with someone they didn't know, before adding the card to a timeline, which would serve as a reference tool throughout the workshop.

Immediately after, in an activity called "Our Songs, Our Selves," workshop presenter and Hampsong Foundation team member Dan Tolly had participants on their feet and interacting with one another moments after the timeline was completed. Through various musical, rhythmic, and improvisation-based activities, participants had the opportunity to examine the bio/historical contextual information of Langston Hughes' poetry while engaging with one another in musical play.

Hampsong team member Mark Clague joined workshop participants via WebEx from his office at the University of Michigan for a conversation on

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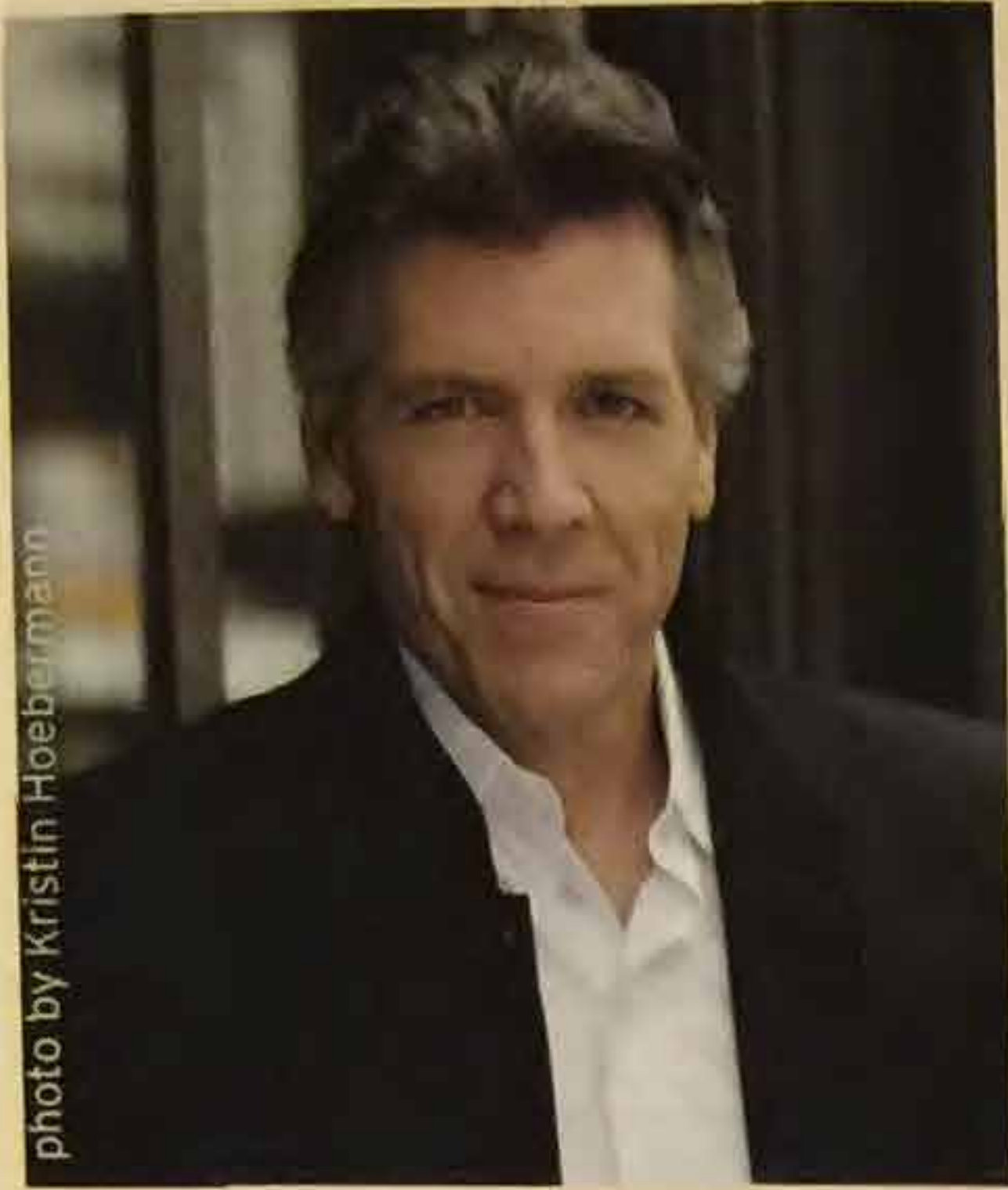
PROGRAMS

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About Thomas Hampson

Thomas Hampson enjoys a singular international career as an opera singer, recording artist, and “ambassador of song,” maintaining an active interest in research, education, musical outreach, and technology. Hampson, who was recently inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, has won worldwide recognition for thoughtfully researched and creatively constructed programs as well as recordings that explore the rich repertoire of song in a wide range of styles, languages, and periods. Through the Hampsong

Foundation, which he founded in 2003, he employs the art of song to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding. Read more at thomashampson.com, hampsongfoundation.org, and songofamerica.net.

music’s role in the understanding and teaching of various aspects of the humanities. The session included a presentation, “Song in the Humanities Classroom,” and a spirited discussion on song’s unique ability to aid in classroom teaching on topics relating to early American history and poetry, transcendentalism, and the Harlem Renaissance (among other key topics). The conversation addressed poets and composers, including Francis Hopkinson (a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who personally claimed to have been the first Native of the United States to produce a musical composition), Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, and Lin-Manuel Miranda—the titular star and writer of Broadway’s blockbuster musical *Hamilton*.

Immediately after, composer and pianist Richard Pearson Thomas guided participants through a series of interactive, participatory musical, rhythmic, and compositional exercises in his workshop session, “Listening Tools & Techniques for Any Classroom.” On faculty at Teachers College at Columbia University, Thomas maintains an international performing career, and his compositions are performed

regularly worldwide. Using the text of an Emily Dickinson poem, he enlisted the help of participants to demonstrate and subsequently model several performance and compositional activities for teachers to use as they explore simple and imaginative techniques for use in the classroom. The result was a room full of happy educators and teaching artists, creating music on the spot, both in this session and in the subsequent breakout session facilitated by Thomas, Tolly, and Key.

A lunch with the Hampsong Foundation’s founder and president, Thomas Hampson, followed. During this intimate Q&A session with the artist who is regularly referred to as “America’s Ambassador of Song,” Hampson discussed his foundation’s mission, initiatives, and resources and engaged workshop participants in a dialogue on the topic of teaching the humanities through art song. He encouraged the day’s attendees to share their present needs, asking how the Hampsong Foundation might address them through additional, future resources.

The workshop culminated in an extended session and masterclass entitled “Song in Dialogue.” A frequent and celebrated masterclass

teacher, Hampson, with Thomas at the piano, worked with three emerging professionals in song repertoire thematically programmed to align with the poets, composers, and Hampsong Foundation resources highlighted and utilized during the workshop’s previous sessions. In an open dialogue with the three singers, Hampson challenged each of these song interpreters to unpack key textual, contextual, and musical components of their selected songs, while Hampson integrated the usual suspects of the masterclass setting: healthful technique and vocal production, attention to one’s body, and connection to the text and vocal line.

“Song in Dialogue” was available live to listeners worldwide online through the Hampsong Foundation’s website and was also streamed live in the tudor-themed Milbank Memorial Chapel at Teachers College—another example of the Hampsong Foundation’s many digital resources and offerings. Its recording is currently still available for viewing on the foundation’s website.

Peter Thoresen is an award-winning voice teacher, performer, and music director. His students appear regularly in national tours and productions on and off Broadway. He maintains a thriving private voice studio in Manhattan and serves on the voice faculties of Musical Theater College Auditions (MTCA) and Broadway Kids Auditions (BKA) in New York. Thoresen is also on faculty at American Voices and the YES Academy ASEAN as a voice teacher, performer, and music director in Turkmenistan and Jakarta. He previously served as business manager to Thomas Hampson and was a visiting faculty member at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he earned his doctor of music degree in vocal performance. Read more at peterthoresen.com.

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