

Russian-born soprano Nika Leoni has been praised for *"a lyrical beauty, an engaging silver quality to her voice,"* and *"an exquisite skill in expressing the gamut of human emotions."* Her performances, marked with a *"charming and inviting stage presence"* as well as *"a beautiful sense of poetry and elegance,"* have been enthusiastically received by American and European audiences, and she delivers equally impressive performances of opera roles, orchestral and chamber concerts, and art song programs.



Nika made her operatic debut in the Czech Republic at the Silesian State Theater in Opava with the role of Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. The regional newspaper "Ostravske Noviny" described her debut performance as *"...a strong and convincing character portrayal combined with skillful technique."* Her success led to other engagements in Europe. Shortly after her performance in Opava, she was invited to sing the same role on the stage of Usti nad Labem City Theater in the Czech Republic. Later, she performed the role of Dalinda (*Ariodante*) with the ever-popular Pocket Opera Company in San Francisco, after which she returned to the Czech Republic as Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*) at the Silesian State Theater. While in Europe, Nika sang Micaela (*Carmen*) with the Opera on Tour Company in Germany and participated in an Opera Gala concert tour with orchestra that included appearances at the Gasteig Philharmonie in Munich and the Berlin Philharmonie. In New York, Nika took part in the DiCapo Opera Young Artists Program, and later was one of the seven accepted young American singers to the esteemed Lake George Opera Festival's Young Artists Program, where she covered the mainstage role of Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) and appeared as Governess (*Turn of the Screw*) in the Program's season closing concert. Artistic Director Marc Verzatt characterized Nika as a *"dramatically intuitive and creative"* artist who is *"extremely quick to characterize, has excellent stage presence as well as performing instincts on the highest level"* and possesses *"a voice which she uses with intelligence, musicality, and an understanding of communication to an audience."* The company invited Nika back for the following season to sing La Cugina (*Madama Butterfly*) on the stage of the 5,000-seat summer festival theater, as well as Mimi (*La Bohème*) and Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) as part of the Young Artists Program's performance series, and to cover the mainstage roles of Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Elisetta (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*).

Nika's next operatic performance of Despina in Opera Domani's *Così fan tutte*, was noted by the conductor and the present "Music For Life International" Director P. George Mathew as a performance *"that simultaneously crackled with earthy wit and glowed with musical and vocal finesse."* He praised Nika as *"a rarely encountered singer who, simply by her very presence, inspires the singers around her to sparkle in their very different roles,"* who possesses *"instinctive understanding of the subtlety of [character] within the opera's complex musical and dramatic textures"* and *"carries within her a very deep-seated personal and almost mystical joy in operatic performance as well as a solid vocal technique and the musical grounding with which to deliver it."* Later, Nika appeared again with Opera Domani as Susanna (*Les Nozze di Figaro*), and Norina (*Don Pasquale*). Following engagements include Gilda (*Rigoletto*) with Orpheus Ensemble in Munich, Germany; Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) in a new production of *Kinder-Zauberflöte* in Innsbruck, Austria; Pamina and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) with the Opera Company of Brooklyn in New York; Mimi (*La Bohème*) with Salon Opera and Giulietta (*I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*) with Classical Presentations in New York. Nika also appeared in operatic concerts as Manon (*Manon*), Thaïs (*Thaïs*), Sophie (*Werther*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), and Angelica (*Orlando*). Most recently, Nika produced and sang the title role in the newly composed opera for children *Queen Esther* by Albert Markov that had its world premiere in New York in 2010 with encore performances in 2011.

Mr. Goller of New York's "Forum" wrote of Nika's performance as a *"beautiful portrayal of Esther sung with a warmly tender, silken voice."* Other recent New York engagements include the roles of Anna in Puccini's *Le Villi*, Joan in *The Veil of Forgetfulness* and Mary Lee in *A.F.R.A.I.D.* by S. Stoderl, as well as the performance of songs by D. Shostakovich in a world premiere arrangement with orchestra. In 2009, Nika made her debut as a dramatic actress/singer in a Broadway-style musical play *Pushkin's Little Tragedies* that premiered at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York. For this *"noteworthy performance,"* Nika was praised as *"ravishing"* ("Backstage"), *"a beautiful and charming opera singer with a beautiful soprano voice, ... [whose] portrayal of Laura [in the Act I play "The Stone Guest"] was remarkably appealing."* ("Russian Bazaar", New York).

Nika Leoni's versatility as a concert artist is known and appreciated by various audiences in the U.S., as well as Europe. Her performance of Glière's *Voice Concerto* with the Richmond Youth Chamber Collegium won her an invitation to present it in Poland where she appeared with Wałbrzych Filharmonia Sudecka, whose Artistic Director Józef Wiłkomirski described Nika as *"an extraordinary performer demonstrating her exquisite voice and truly expressive musicality."*

Nika has worked and studied with a number of accomplished artists, including singers Galina Vishnevskaya, Elly Ameling, Maria Spaccagna, and Franco Iglesias, conductors Daniel Beckwith, Georg Tintner, Josef Wallnig, John Axelrod, P. George Mathew, and Michael Stuart Holmes, composers Lorenzo Martinez Palomo and Albert Markov, and directors and musical coaches Rudolph Jansen, Nico Castel, Marc Verzatt, Daniel Helfgot, and Yelena Kurdina.

Nika Leoni's artistry was recognized by a number of vocal competitions. She was a Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in San Francisco and has received First Prizes and Awards from the East Bay Opera League Competition, the NATS Competition, Contemporary American Art Song Competition, and Santa Clara Art Song Festival.

Nika's unique exquisite programs of Russian Romantic Songs have been praised by the audiences in the U.S. as well as in Germany, Italy, Austria, and the United Kingdom. Her first CD of Russian Romances and Traditional Songs titled "Dark Eyes" was released on Larion Records™ in 2009, and is now available in stores worldwide.