

Juliana Yaffé and *The Yiddish Folksong Project*: A culturally significant repertoire finally steps into the light

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Folk songs in the Yiddish language were an important part of the life of Jewish people around the world for hundreds of years. Until recently, however, no significant body of finely-crafted arrangements of Yiddish folk songs suitable for mainstream concert performance had come to light. John and Juliana Yaffé's rediscovery of 42 arrangements by eminent American conductor-arranger Robert De Cormier has resulted in *The Yiddish Folksong Project*, a funded research, restoration, performance, recording, and publication project reviving the De Cormier archive. The project's output hopes to change the fate of the Yiddish folk song and make possible its long-overdue move into the world spotlight.

In this seminar, internationally acclaimed singer Juliana Yaffé, along with her pianist/music director, John Yaffé, and violinist Adam Summerhayes, will perform a passionate, poignant, and sometimes humorous, programme, consisting of some of the most beloved Yiddish folk songs. Additionally, the ensemble will discuss the origins of the Yiddish language, the Yiddish folk song in cultural context, the genesis of *The Yiddish Folksong Project*, Robert De Cormier's remarkable song arrangements, and the significance of these songs in the canon of world folk song.

BIOGRAPHY

Juliana Yaffé

UK-based soprano and vocal pedagogue Juliana Yaffé's repertoire has encompassed over thirty opera roles, a broad cross-section of the Italian, French, German and American art song literature, and most of the major oratorio solos. She has worked closely with numerous contemporary composers, inspiring works written especially for her. She has been heard as a soloist in performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Lincoln Center Festival, 92nd Street Y, Steirischer Herbst Festival (Austria), and with Cygnus, the Friends and Enemies of New Music, the Concordia Orchestra, Colorado Springs Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Oakland Symphony, San Jose Symphony, Florida Philharmonic, Istanbul Philharmonic, Orchester der deutschen Oper Berlin, Tokyo City Philharmonic, Orquesta del Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires), Orchestra dell'Opera di Genova, Orchester der Stadt Münster, Südwestdeutsche Philharmonie, Symphonie-Orchester Graunke (Munich), Alt-Wiener-Strauss-Ensemble, Vienna Operetten-Bühne, Orchestra of The 92nd Street Y, and the Walla Walla Symphony. She has sung solo recitals in France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, as well as throughout the U.S.A. She is currently active in worldwide performances and lectures in connection with her project *The Yiddish Folksong Project*.

Born in Texas, she received her bachelor's degrees in Vocal Performance and Music Education from Southern Methodist University and, soon after, was engaged as a soloist at the Municipal Theater in Münster, Germany. In the twelve years following, she was a fully contracted Principal Soloist in the opera houses of Essen and Stuttgart. Guest engagements found her in San Francisco, New York, Darmstadt, Aachen, Osnabrück, Kassel, Berlin, and Miami. In 1992, she resumed her postgraduate studies, receiving her Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance from Boston University, where, as a Dean's Scholar, she was a protégé of the renowned Phyllis Curtin. During that period, she also served as a vocal instructor, both in the Boston University School of Fine Arts, as well as its Tanglewood Institute.

Ms. Yaffé has recorded (with her husband, conductor/pianist John Yaffé) songs of Stefano Donaudy, Lee Hoiby and Arnold Schönberg for Südwestfunk (Germany). Alongside her performing activities, she was (from 1995 to 2014) Head of Vocal Studies at the Mannes College of Music Pre-Conservatoire Division, New York City, and she was for many years on staff at New York University, where she also headed the courses in German and French Lyric Diction for Singers. She currently resides in Coventry, England, and lectures at Coventry University.