

Juno-winning soprano takes lead in Magic Flute

BY GRANIA LITWIN, TIMES COLONIST
MARCH 31, 2009

Luminous, dazzling and shining are just three of the words that have been used to describe Shannon Mercer, who not only won a Juno Sunday night, but appears on stage here beginning April 16.

The young star, an Ottawa-born soprano, will perform in the lead role of Pamina in Pacific Opera Victoria's *The Magic Flute*.

Mercer was nominated for two vocal recordings in the same category, but won her award in Vancouver for classical album of the year, *Gloria! -- Vivaldi's Angels*, in which she sings with Montreal's Ensemble Caprice.

"I've know her since her undergrad days at McGill where we did some work together," said POV artistic director Timothy Vernon, between rehearsals for the show.

"I'm not surprised that she has been singled out because she has that rare combination of beautiful, full-bodied sound and a great deal of flexibility and subtlety in approaching the phrasing."

He said her role in the forthcoming opera is challenging "as all Mozart is," and includes some of the most famous, beautiful music he ever wrote.

"She's going to be absolutely exquisite in it."

The Victoria maestro said everyone at Pacific Opera is thrilled and proud of her recent win, and he in particular wishes the classics were given greater play in the media. "She is a whole lot better looking than Nickelback."

Mercer attended San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Summer Program, has been particularly praised for her baroque work, and balances a busy schedule of performances in opera, concert and recital.

The *Magic Flute* runs April 16 through April 27.
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