EVENTS CALENDAR
4  Friday, March 30, through Thursday, April 5

MUSIC
5  Julia Bullock Fast-rising American Soprano makes recital debut at Hahn Hall
6  The Dirty Knobs with special guest John Kay (of Steppenwolf) at SOHO
7  ‘Let it Be’ A Celebration of the Music of the Beatles
25  Sounds of the Scene

STAGE
8  ‘Macbeth’ Ojai Performing Arts with Director Michael Addison gets primordial with their Shakespeare play
26  Movie Trailers brief descriptions of movies playing locally

SCENE TV
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ART
27  ‘Resolution’ Whitney Brooks Abbott shows a fresh body of work which partly involves the recent fire legacy in the area.

CONCERT REVIEW
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THE ART SCENE
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SPOTLIGHT ON SMOOKY MARGIELAA

All ages are invited to check out the rap show at Velvet Jones tonight. A good thing, considering that the starring attraction is all of 15 years old, and a fast-rising sensation. Precocious teenage rapper Smooky Margielaa, straight outta the Bronx and with a rapid ascent fueled by the support system of influential rapper-producer-actor ASAP Rocky’s championing, shows up for a rare Santa Barbara rap show. Mr. Margielaa’s pedigree reaches back to his cultural roots in Mali, West African musical traditions including his playing the indigenous balafon and growing up in a music-soaked upbringing, as the son of celebrated Mallian singer-guitarist Abdoulaye Diabate. Smooky switched musical tracks from traditional Mallian music to the rap scene two years ago, quickly honing his personal sound using the easily available tools of Garage Band and SoundCloud. Comethazine and Lil Mosey, fellow teen rappers, open the show. 8 p.m. tonight. Velvet Jones, 423 State St. Tickets are $18. 965-8676, velvet-jones.com.
— Josef Woodard

SPOTLIGHT ON BANDA LA BOHEMIA AND SONORA EXPLOSIVA

Tonight at SOHO, the club transforms into a powerful, dance-inductive hot house of the Mexican regional music kind, with the arrival of two hot bands from Oxnard, Banda La Bohemia and La Sonora Explosiva. Banda la Bohemia is a 16-musician-strong and well-dressed ensemble, teeming with the brass-powered sound of banda music, as heard with their 2014 single “El Cien por Ciento.” Sonora Explosiva, officially known as La Sonora Explosiva de Oxnard, serves up a steamy brand of salsa and cumbia with its conga-driven six-piece band and lead singer up front. 9 p.m. tonight. SOHO, 1221 State St. Tickets are $10 to $15. 952-7716, sohosb.com.
— Josef Woodard
Schubert meets the Blues, Courtesy of a Fast-Rising American Soprano

JULIA BULOCK, A HIGHLY RESPECTED AND FAST-RISING AMERICAN SOPRANO, MAKES HER LOCAL RECITAL DEBUT AT HAHN HALL ON THE THEMES OF SCHUBERT, SAMUEL BARBER AND THE CONTEMPORARY BLUES

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent

Julia Bullock, soprano
John Arida, piano
When: 7 p.m. Tuesday.
Where: Hahn Hall, Music Academy of the West, 1070 Fairway Rd.
Cost: $37, $10 UCSB students
Information: 893-3535,
ArtsAndLectures.UCSB.edu

Clearly, one of the hot tickets of the current, 2017-18 classical music season takes place in Hahn Hall on Tuesday, and with a meaty, surprising programming menu including Schubert, Samuel Barber and contemporary blues. The potent voice and charismatic persona belong to widely-respected and intrepidly adventurous young soprano Julia Bullock, a powerful and uniquely versatile singer who has been heralded for her work in “Porgy and Bess,” “West Side Story” and John Adams’ “El Niño.”

She has also sparked up appearances with some of the world’s great orchestras — the NY Phil, LA Phil, London Symphony Orchestra (with Simon Rattle on the podium), the San Francisco Symphony — in addition to her passionate engagement in more experimental, contemporary and off the standard repertoire radar projects. In short, she’s a hot property on the current serious musical scene.

Although Tuesday’s recital, with her accompanist-partner John Arida on piano, will be her recital debut in Santa Barbara, she has passed through the 805 in recent years and left an indelible mark. There she was, as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic during its造成 Santa Barbara Bowl performance during the 2015 Music Academy of the West season and, more distinctively, as a starring attraction of the Peter Sellars-directed 2016 edition of the world class Ojai Music Festival — in not one, but two challenging roles.

We checked in with the upwardly and laterally mobile Ms. Bullock for an interview before her trip out west.

News-Press: You appeared with the NY Phil, via the Music Academy of the West, were at the Ojai Music Festival in 2016, and now you are headed to Hahn Hall to give a recital of your own. Are there other Santa Barbara connections or visits we should know about?

Julia Bullock: Nothing is scheduled yet in the coming season, but I’m always happy to return to the Santa Barbara area. It’s just so damned beautiful.

NP: Your program here includes Schubert, Barber and contemporary blues, which sound like a killer combo to me. Can you explain some of the details of the program, and any connective themes in your design of the program?

JB: When I was asked to submit this recital program, I was working on Schubert songs that were to be presented alongside miniature plays by Beckett at the LA Phil. The poetry for Schubert’s, “Suleika I,” was originally credited to one of the greatest German poets and intellectuals, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, when in actuality it was written by his close confident Martin von Willemer.

That got me thinking about how historically women often aren’t credited for their work, even if we appreciate what they contribute to our culture. I immediately considered Faure’s “La chanson de la vie,” in which the poet Charles Van Lerberghe composed words that consider the story of Eve, but without the voice of God or Adam intersecting.

Several years ago, I researched the writing of blues singers and musicians, and was surprised to find how many fierce songs and how much lyrical wit had been contributed by black women, several of whom are largely not celebrated or even remembered today. In part, that was because of their “risque” content — these women were socially and sexually liberated within themselves, and wrote unabashedly about it. It’s from that research where I happened upon Alberta Hunter and Lenzey Price was the voice that inspired Samuel Barber, or that I wanted to close the Schubert group with one of my favorite songs, “Seligkeit,” which is about finding bliss here on earth despite the desire to go to heaven.

There’s great complexity and often difficulty faced by anyone who is seeking inner peace; and from the characters of Suleika, to Eve, to the various spiritual writings of the anonymous hermits, or the admittance of emotionally raw vulnerability in the lyrics of the blues tunes, in one way or another, every piece of music, every poet, composer and character is looking to find a space to share and be heard. We aren’t all given the allowance to express and release our voices freely, and yet we all acknowledge how important it is to do so.

Mixing Schubert with blues and more, Soprano Julia Bullock to make local recital debut.

Rising and adventurous soprano Julia Bullock

NP: You were clearly a star of the Peter Sellars-directed Ojai festival two years ago, between your roles in Kaija Saariaho’s “La Passion de Simone” and Tyshawn Sorey’s “Josephine Baker: A Portrait.” Was that festival experience a highlight of your recent musical life, and also a demanding task?

JB: In retrospect, the experiences I view as highlights in my musical life are also the most demanding, all encompassing, and often stressful while they’re happening, but I learn a tremendous amount working with Peter. Performing two extreme one woman shows was a large undertaking, and I wasn’t quite sure how I’d fare during the process. I can only tell you I left the theater post-performance

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CONCERT REVIEW

Jazz Studies, Down at the Nightclub

By Josef Woodard, News-Freem Correspondent

The generally stellar Santa Barbara City College jazz band program know to watch out for public performances, usually on the hill or upstairs. But in the 30-year anniversary year, the bands (three different bands, of rising skill levels and culled musical experience) perform at the hilltop Garvin Theatre on this campus with the stunning view, or with occasional gigs in the downtown area, including restaurants of SOHO club and eatery downtown, upstairs in Victoria Court. In either venue, big band culture is well-represented in the 805 by the college's long-standing and strong program.

Last Monday, I bought a ticket for the impressive current incarnation of the student Lunch Break Band, directed by jazz educator Jim Mooy. The place was packed, with musicians and listeners, on and off the stage (the sax section set up on the "dance" floor), and the band filling the room with the stuff of which this fine band is made. Kicking off the set in engaging style, Mr. Mooy led the band in a rousing take on "The Chicken," by Jaco Pastorius, the late, great bassist and seminal innovator as big band leader. On the "Souls Intro" to the tune, the warm wash of gospel feeling almost suggests a fake finale, but kicks into the funky, riff-laden main groove of the piece, with shades of a different kind of funky chicken ambiance. Indeed, going for the "Bari Good" on his chosen instrument, the trombone.

Guest saxist Lito Hernandez, a former member of the band who is back in town after studying at the Berklee School of Music, made a strong impression with his work on baritone sax, as the protagonist of the program/out of this world "Bari Good" (living up to the challenge and promise of the title). This evening's switch hitter award went to the tall and talented Grey Ingersoll, who worked up a robust and melodic solo on "Body and Soul" on his chosen instrument, the trombone. But he also snuck in a surprise factor, serving up a rap during the set's chattiest and most intellectually intriguing cut of the set, "The Bridge," by noted big band leader John Daversa, "that intricate maze of a piece," reported a good solo showing by trumpeter Greg Kidde.

By way of introducing the vocalist of the set, Cambria Metzinger, Mr. Mooy informed us that she was leaving town to study music at Chapman College, but he reasoned that "if we do our job right, that means that people head out of town. Unfortunately, that's what's happening here as fully as half the band leaving. It's a happy problem to have." Ms. Metzinger gave an assured, glowing account of the classic, "Body and Soul," the set's most generous nod to the repertoire of jazz standards.

By contrast, the final chart of this Monday soiree veered a bit too close to the smooth jazz for comfort, with the inclusion of "Baby Cakes," by saxophonist Eric Marienthal — who somehow straddled the smooth and real jazz scenes — was a special guest. At SOHO, the surrogate for Mr. Marienthal was also saxist Brandon Boyd, engaging in some friendly cutting-cutting like lick-waving for good, old school jazz music.

On this night, the Lunch Break Band ensemble sensibility was tight and spirited, and some solos seized more attention than others who were well formed or real yet. In other words, it's a student band, a work in progress, but one well worth hearing and keeping tabs on. For the next two or three bands (a three-band, on-campus affair) head up the hill to the Garvin Theatre on April 30.

COVER STORY

BULLOCK

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very upset and in tears a couple of times, because I didn't feel like I did my job well.

But it's amazing what the body will allow you to do as long as the mind is not overworked. The Baker project had a particular stress, because the final drafts of the material weren't complete and received until the day before I flew to Ojai. We hadn't even run the whole piece through until the day before the opening night of the festival. So in my mind it was a reshaping of all the material we weren't finished with and a new work, and although I tried not to let the anticipation of the piece overwhelm the realities of the circumstances, that was a challenge.

But so I'm pleased to have performed all of the repertoire, because there's nothing like being in the thick of things and communicating with those works are ones I can stand behind, not just as a musician, but also as a socially conscious human being.

NP: It was very impressed by your re-casting and the new pieces that drive so much of Black American art, and those themes are indefatigable. So, in short, yes.

NP: You have worked with some of the finer orchestras in the world, including the NY Phil, the Chicago Phil, the Chicago Symphony, and the London Symphony with Simon Rattle. Is working with orchestras something you have come to savor, and imagined doing in your young years?

JB: I adore singing with orchestras, and have loved that repertoire since I first began listening to classical vocal music when I was 17. It's rich material in every respect. My favorite part of my job are the rehearsals. There's nothing greater than facing an orchestra of musicians, cluing in another, and working to coordinate and express a shared moment together.

NP: Conversely, is the recital format something of special interest for you, in terms of allowing a more personal expression, and the freedom from the programming/conceptual end to the intense, focused spotlight on stage?

JB: The recital format is the most trying on the mind, because if I get distracted or lose focus, it's up to me to pull it together, and quickly. It's you, the poetry and the music itself. The responsibility for the success of a performance becomes greater, because there aren't any external elements. And, as I described in the set, lighting or costumes.

But the freedom to program as I want and use the recital format as a tool to communicate more than just my voice is something I wouldn't pass up. This isn't about putting my talents on display, it is just doing this material, and want to find the right context in which to communicate it so that it's more than a random collection of "love music." NP: I'm intrigued by some vocalists, in different genres, who freely move across a coalition of lines of idiom. You are certainly one of those, as is the jazz singer Cecile McLorin Salvant, who moves smoothly from Bessie Smith's early blues world to the chanteuse zone, standards, originals, etc. Do you feel there is there a generational shift among some younger singers, in the classical scene and elsewhere, who have a broader vision of what music is and can be, in terms of style?

JB: Yes, I think this "broad vistas," has always existed. I loved the recordings of Leontyne Price singing Mozart and Handa as much as her Andre Previn album, "Right as the Rain." And Nina Simone certainly explored various genres in her life, and I'm drawn to the sound of her voice and the way she used the voice with the love of Régine Crespin at the same time as Edith Piaf.

I used to want to contain and mold myself within and around whatever repertoire I was singing, but I came to realize that I had to do that so much anymore. I don't want to play part of a classical singer any more than a jazz, blues, or pop singer. I just want to sing, and lend my body and mind to material I think I can do justice to, and bring a depth of warmth and emotional depth to the performance, and be so much vocal, but emotional. The important thing is to have a clear frame of reference.

I may decide to focus my musical attentions a bit more narrowly, depending on what feels right at the moment, but I want to give the most joy, but I've been given the space to experiment, and I want to take advantage of the platform.

NP: Are you happy with the way things are unfolding for you, and your musical trajectory — need to see very far? JB: Yes, I am. I can pick the projects on which, and people with whom I want to work. There are a few goals I have that haven't been realized yet, but honestly, there's only so much I can do over the course of a few years, and in due time. I want to feel ready, and prepared for each opportunity that comes my way.