

**The Cleveland Orchestra presents Strauss's *Daphne*:  
A conversation with mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby**

by Mike Telin



On Wednesday, May 27 at 7:30 pm, and Saturday, May 30 at 8:00 pm at Severance Hall, Franz Welser-Möst will lead The Cleveland Orchestra and a cast of internationally-renowned singers in a new production of Richard Strauss's one-act opera, *Daphne*. Strauss described the opera as a "bucolic tragedy" which tells the story of a young woman who must choose between the love of men and her love for nature. The cast will include soprano Regine Hangler as Daphne, tenor Andreas Schager as Apollo, tenor Norbert Ernst as Leukippos, bass Ain Anger as Peneios and mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby as Gaea, the mother of *Daphne*.

Speaking from her dressing room at Severance Hall, the very friendly [Nancy Maultsby](#) said that she's having a good time performing the role of Gaea. "This is my first time with this role, so I'm a newbie, but I'm having a lot of fun with it," Maultsby said. "The role is very earthy."

How does Maultsby view the relationship between Gaea and her daughter Daphne? "I think of Gaea as a human embodiment of the character Erda from Wagner's *Ring* cycle. I think she's an intuitive mother, even though she may feel like Daphne needs to get to the business of being a young girl, and on her way to finding a husband. Gaea wants that for her and has told her so. I also think she understands her daughter in a way that maybe nobody else does. Gaea is tuned into everything, particularly her daughter. I think she's very wise."

Throughout her career, Maultsby has performed a wide range of roles in many of the world's most important opera houses. Her repertoire ranges from the operas of Monteverdi and Handel to works by John Adams, and she frequently performs the major heroines of nineteenth-century French, Italian and German opera, as well as symphonic works.

What does she particularly like about singing Strauss? “There are many things I love about Strauss,” she said. “*Daphne* is a phenomenal score, and it’s not one that I knew before, which makes it even more exciting for me. It’s a contralto role — there are a few low e-flats — but for me, it’s less about it being challenging and more about embracing the earthiness of the role and enjoying it. It’s a beautiful part and it’s wonderful to sing.”

Another exciting aspect of this week for Maultsby is that these performances will mark the first time she will perform with The Cleveland Orchestra as a Clevelander — she joined the voice faculty at Baldwin Wallace Conservatory this year. “I’m new to the faculty there, and I’m new to this area. I’ve sung with The Orchestra many times, but never as someone who lives here. I like teaching a lot, and I love Baldwin Wallace. I think it’s a really special school, the Conservatory in particular.”

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