

PRETTY YENDE

Biography



Credit: Gregor Hohenberg_Sony Music Entertainment

Born in 1985 in the small remote town of Piet Retief, about three hundred miles from Johannesburg, South African soprano **Pretty Yende** was initially introduced to singing in a manner familiar to many South Africans – in her church choir. At the age of sixteen, she heard the Flower Duet from *Lakmé* on a British Airways television commercial and was so enraptured by its beauty that she became determined to find out more about it. On learning that it was opera, she decided at that moment to abandon her plans to become an accountant, and to train to become an opera singer instead.

Soon she gained a scholarship to study at the South African College of Music in Cape Town with Professor Virginia Davids, the first black woman to appear on opera stages during the apartheid years in South Africa. With Davids's help, Yende's extraordinary talent blossomed, and she triumphed in both the International Hans Gabor Belvedere (2009) and Operalia Competitions (2011). In both, she won first prize in every category and was the first artist in history to do so. Her successes also led to an offer to join the prestigious young artists' program at La Scala in Milan (2009–2011), where she made her stage debut in 2010. In the same year, she won first prize at the Leyla Gencer Voice Competition and Concours International de Belcanto Vincenzo Bellini.

Pretty Yende has appeared at all of the major opera houses of the world, and has been widely lauded in the press. "Possessed of diamanté tone and a megawatt smile... a soprano of real musical intelligence," said *The Telegraph* after her debut recital in London. When, in 2013, she stepped in at a month's notice to sing in Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* opposite Juan Diego Flórez (replacing Nino Machaidze) at New York's Metropolitan Opera, she gained rapturous acclaim. "Her voice has a luminous sheen combined with steely resolve ... she delivered some of the most difficult coloratura passages with scintillating precision," said *The New York Times* after this sensational Metropolitan Opera debut. Later that year, she also replaced an indisposed Cecilia Bartoli at Vienna's Theater an der Wien in the same opera. "A sensational Vienna debut," said *Bachtrack.com*.

Yende has already appeared at major opera houses in Berlin, New York, Los Angeles, Barcelona, Hamburg and Paris, and has frequently sung at her 'home theatre' of La Scala. Her roles include Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) and Elvira (*I puritani*). Forthcoming seasons will also see her appear at the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, the Royal Opera House in London, the Opéra National de Paris and the Metropolitan Opera. In 2013, she sang Lucia in Cape Town.

Pretty Yende is represented worldwide by Zemsky Green Artists Management.