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**SOUTH AFRICAN SOPRANO PRETTY YENDE,
A RISING STAR WITH A MODERN FAIRY-TALE STORY,
RELEASES DEBUT ALBUM *A JOURNEY*
AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 16, 2016**



- Born 1985 in a remote town in South Africa, Pretty Yende was first introduced to operatic music at the age of sixteen when hearing the Flower Duet from Delibes's opera *Lakmé* in a British Airways commercial. At that moment she decided to become an opera singer.
- Yende rose to the top of the opera world with unparalleled speed, with competition successes and engagements at the world's foremost opera houses.
- First artist in history to win first prize in every category of the International Belvedere Competition (2009) and prizewinner at Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition (2011), again in all categories.
- Debut at La Scala in Milan (2010) and acceptance into their prestigious young artists' program.
- International breakthrough at her sensational Metropolitan Opera debut at the age of 27 in 2013.
- Each track on Pretty Yende's debut recording celebrates a milestone of her extraordinary musical journey.

Pretty Yende, a rising star soprano with a modern fairy-tale story, releases her [debut album *A Journey*](#) on Sony Classical. Available **September 16, 2016**, this [recording](#) has been a joyful labor of love for Yende, as it celebrates the milestones in her extraordinary musical journey, rising to the top of the opera world with unparalleled speed.

Yende was born in 1985 in the small remote town of Piet Retief, about three hundred miles from Johannesburg. At the age of sixteen, her life was transformed by hearing the "Flower Duet" from Delibes's opera *Lakmé* on a British Airways television commercial. On learning that this haunting music was opera, she decided at that moment to abandon her plans to become an accountant and 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 was taken from a childhood in a remote village in South Africa to all of the major opera stages of the world.

Besides the much-loved *Lakmé* duet (performed with mezzo Kate Aldrich) which first opened her heart to the world of opera, her debut recording includes the touching scene "Vous que l'on dit" from Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. In this opera, Yende gained dazzling international recognition when she replaced Nino Machaidze and starred opposite Juan Diego Flórez at her last-minute Metropolitan Opera debut in New York in January 2013. Her appearance in *Le Comte Ory* was received with rapturous acclaim and became a major turning-point in her career. "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*. Immediately afterward, she stepped in for an indisposed Cecilia Bartoli in the same role at the Theater an der Wien.

Another opera close to her heart is Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Her connection with the character of Juliet clearly runs deep, for she sang Juliet's "Je veux vivre" with such passion and conviction at the illustrious Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna in 2009 that she became the first artist ever to win first prize in every single category. Yende's performance of the so-called "Poison Aria," recorded on her debut album, also led to her acceptance on the acclaimed young artists' program at La Scala. Shortly after, in 2010, she made her stage debut there.

With "Ah, la pena" from Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, Yende continued her success at international competitions. This time, she stole the show in Plácido Domingo's renowned Operalia Competition in 2011: again, she was the first singer in history to receive not only the first prize but also the prize of the public and the Zarzuela prize. Plácido Domingo raved that "it was instantly clear to everyone there that she was ready for the world's greatest stages. She has an extraordinarily beautiful voice with a phenomenal technique, and she lights up the stage with charisma."

A particularly significant and moving event for the young singer came when she returned to her homeland in 2013 to sing the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Cape Town. From this opera, she has chosen the much-loved aria "Regnava nel silenzio." The recording also includes Rossini's famous "Una voce poco fa" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (the opera of her Paris Opéra debut). Pretty makes yet another debut when she sings the role of Elvira from Bellini's *I puritani*, the last track on her album, in Zurich in 2016.

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. 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.

On her debut album, Pretty Yende performs with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI Torino under Marco Armiliato.

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TRACKLISTING

1. Rossini: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, No. 5: Una voce poco fa
2. Delibes: *Lakmé*, Act I, No. 2: Viens, Mallika... Sous le dôme épais ("Flower Duet") with Kate Aldrich
3. Bellini: *Beatrice di Tenda*, Act I, Scene VI: Ma la sola, ohimè! son io... Ah, la pena in lor piombò
4. Rossini: *Le comte Ory*, Act I, Scene VIII, No. 4: En proie à la tristesse... Vous que l'on dit sensible
5. Gounod: *Roméo et Juliette*, Act IV, No. 17: Dieu, quel frisson court dans mes veines!...
Amour ranime mon courage
6. Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Act I, No. 3: Ancor non giunse!... Regnava nel silenzio
7. Bellini: *I puritani*, Act II: O rendetemi la speme... Qui la voce sua soave