

Meet Soprano Soloist Crossley Hawn

The City Choir of Washington's audience is familiar with soprano Crossley Danielle Hawn from her bravura performance of Brian Bartoldus' *Magnificat*, and as a soloist in Charpentier's *Te Deum* last April.



Photo credit: Kristina Sherk/Yevgen Gulekno

([Click here](#) to listen to an excerpt of Crossley singing “Suscepit Israel” from the Baroldus *Magnificat*). We are thrilled to welcome her back on May 19 in City Choir’s Baroque and Beyond concert, performing Heinrich Schütz’s Uppsala *Magnificat* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Requiem*. “I had so much fun singing with City Choir last year,” Crossley says, “and am truly honored to be back this season.”

Crossley maintains a busy career as a soloist, working with many local ensembles, including Cathedral Choral Society, Choralis (she won their Young Artists Competition in 2018), and the Folger Consort. She is also a cantor and chorister at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and at the National Cathedral. Further, she is one-third of Eya: Ensemble for Medieval Music; a creative director of the Bridge Ensemble; and was project manager of The Experiential Orchestra for the first-ever commercial recording of Dame Ethel Smyth's *The Prison*, recently recorded with Clarion Choir. “I do have a lot of irons in the fire,”

Crossley admits, “but I wouldn't have it any other way! I am incredibly blessed to do what I love for a living.”

Crossley’s approach to ensemble versus solo singing may be of particular interest to choral singers. She comments, “Singing in ensembles is about the unit as a whole, meaning your sound must fit into the sound of your teammates' in an appropriate and beautiful way. This takes trust in your colleagues, and it means a lot more attention to detail in terms of unity of vowels/tone/vibrato/phrasing, etc.” According to Crossley, there are some real technical challenges, particularly in the early and new music repertoire: “Modifying vibrato is a large part of that work, especially for sopranos,” Crossley points out. “It is very important to me to never sing completely straight, however. Even when I remove the vibrato in my voice, I try to sing with a healthy spin within the context of a more blended sound. It is possible to sing *sans* vibrato with spin in the sound!”

Crossley’s method of learning a new piece starts with her ears. “I do a lot of listening to start, both of well-known pieces and lesser-known works (when the recordings exist!),” she says. “I do stop listening to recordings at a certain point in my preparation so that I'm focused on my personal interpretation, but in those early stages, I love hearing the different decisions that singers make in interpretation and performance. When someone does something brilliant or helpful on a recording, you better believe I am going to shamelessly steal—er—borrow it.”

Her favorite music to sing comes from the Baroque era, which she says “allows me to both use my natural vibrato and to play with straighter singing in moments of dissonance and cadences. My lighter tone and slightly lower soubrette soprano range work to my advantage in early music.” But she also loves a wide range of music, confessing, “I wouldn't ever be satisfied performing only one genre/period of music, however. I've sung a lot of opera, jazz, pop and folk music. I believe singing

many different kinds of music keeps you from being pigeon-holed and vocally/professionally locked into one genre. Variety is the spice of life, after all, and it is important to keep the instrument flexible.”

What’s next for Crossley? “After the City Choir concert (which is, of course, a highlight of my season), there is a program of Purcell verse anthems that I’m performing down in Virginia, and Purcell is one of my absolute favorite composers, so I am extremely excited for that,” she says. “I’m also very much looking forward to my fifth project with The Folger Consort later this year.” Crossley’s medieval trio, Eya, has been active performing in many venues around the Washington, D.C. area and beyond. “We’ve had a wonderful season, and I’m always looking forward to more travels and projects with them,” she notes. In fact, the stars align in City Choir’s in Baroque & Beyond concert, where Crossley will be performing with Eya member Kristen Dubenion-Smith, our mezzo soprano soloist.



*Eya: Ensemble for Medieval Music:
Crossley Hawn (right), Kristen Dubenion-
Smith (center), Allison Mondel (left)*

Don’t miss this opportunity to hear and see these ascending luminaries on May 19.