

Edinburgh International Festival – mezzo soprano Andrea Baker

**Andrea Baker is truly an
international soprano in our midst.**

Andrea Baker is a mezzo soprano originally from Massachusetts who has come to settle in Edinburgh. She moved to San Francisco and then Germany, followed by Australia with her then partner (now husband) who is originally from Inverness. Now she says she is American by birth and Scottish by choice.

She has always been a singer, originally taught by her mother, then her church minister who was a trained tenor.

She explained: “The joke in my family is that I came out singing. So I come from a musical family, have always wanted to be a singer, and started singing as a young kid. My first voice teacher was my mum, and I was lucky enough to be in a church where the minister was a trained tenor. So I started singing recitals as a kid singing classical music as a very young kid. And back in the day, in the 70s, when I was growing up, schools still had orchestras. And we did operas and musical theatre. So I did my first opera as a kid in high school, and have been singing ever since actually, and made my debut in San Francisco.”



Andrea Baker in Lohengrin © Kaufhold

Scotland has always featured prominently in her career as she

got her first professional job as an opera singer at San Francisco Opera under the chorus master Ian Robertson who is also from Edinburgh.

A professional singer since 1994, she has now decided that she will tackle something quite challenging for the Edinburgh International Festival 2021 – and again it has Scottish connections. There are two opportunities on 17 August to hear her fabulous voice at the Edinburgh Academy Junior School in a pavilion there. The open air venue does not phase her as she said she was quite used to singing outdoors, having grown up in America.

woman:life:song is a collaboration between five eminent women. Originally commissioned by American opera singer Jessye Norman, it was financed by New Yorker Henry Kravis. The music was written by Scottish composer, Judith Weir, and the poetry is by Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison and Clarissa Pinkola Estés. The poets were asked to write new poems based on stages of a woman's life from the perspective of a woman: childhood, love, puberty, loss, maturity. Weir set the texts to music and Norman performed it at The Proms in 2000. Little performed or recorded it is a complex piece.



Baker admits that she idolised Maya Angelou who, like her, started in Porgy and Bess.

Andrea said: "It feels like a piece to me that needs to be sung. It needs to be...these words, these feelings, this story needs to come out. And although it comes from a particularly African American perspective, this woman could be any woman. And it goes through youth, it goes through sorrow, it goes through the joy of first love, it goes through loss, and it, it brings you out the other end, looking forward to a new adventure. After Covid, there are many adventures in front of

me that I never expected to happen, and this is one of them.”

Baker is performing with her “old college buddy” William Eddins, and also the Chineke! Orchestra. She said: “The orchestra is Britain and Europe’s only black and minority ethnic orchestra. They’re an extraordinary band, and I’m honoured to be able to be standing on the stage with the black team performing classical music here and the International Festival in my home city.”

Andrea Baker is on stage twice on 17 August 2021 – and this is one of the At Home performances which will be available [online](#) from 22 August to 20 February 2022.

<https://www.eif.co.uk/events/chineke-orchestra-william-eddins>