

Tarrytown-
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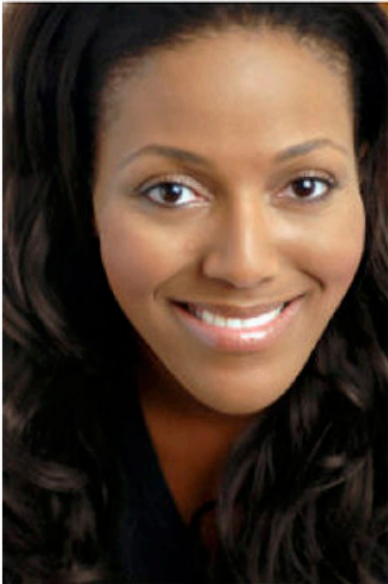


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Entertainment

Tarrytown Soprano to Perform Rare Music From Black Composers

In the third installment of her Inspired Song concert series at Warner Library, Yolanda F. Johnson will honor African-American Music Month with a line-up of rarely performed black songs and lyrics.

Posted by [Krista Madsen](#) (Editor) , June 05, 2012 at 06:47 PM



By day, Tarrytown's Yolanda F. Johnson works for the Princess Grace Foundation, supporting emerging artists in theater, dance and film. By night (meaning nights, weekends, vacations and any other time in between) Johnson is an emerging artist herself. Or maybe she has already emerged.

Johnson is a soprano with a voice that has graced stages around the world. She also wows her congregation regularly here as a lead singer in the music ministry of the of Tarrytown. Anyone who hasn't heard her sing will get the chance this weekend at the third installment of Johnson's Inspired Song concert series

at .

Sign of the times: "I'll be having tea with a colleague who is in a show at the Met, and she's still temping," Johnson said. Most opera singers are working performers as, of course, there isn't a ton of money to be had for most in the industry.

Maybe not big money coming in, but big heart going out. In all her pursuits, Johnson digs deep into the history of music, the important stories songs tell, and how music can give voice to the voiceless. She volunteers as a representative for the Foundation for Post-Conflict Development to the United Nations, where she eventually hopes to explore how the arts can be used to help nations heal post-conflict.

Musical all her life, Johnson started young with classical piano and then later began singing in her grandfather's church choir. She says she's a better singer thanks to her piano roots. At the age of nine, she had her first singing audition. And she found her way to opera in high school. Raised in Nebraska, Johnson went to college in Oklahoma, then Ohio for her Master's in Arts Management.

With gigs around the country and the world (last year she starred as Anita Hill in an opera called Clarence and Anita), it's the performances right here in her chosen home of several years that really resonate. "I'm super-excited about Saturday," she said. "This is music that is never performed. People may not hear these songs again.

On June 9, Johnson will honor African-American Music Month with a line-up of music by black composers ranging from Florence Price to Stevie Wonder, and lyrics from the texts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the poetry of Langston Hughes and Nikki Giovanni.

After presenting a spirituals concert and lecture at the library last June, Johnson set up this seasonal series sponsored in part by ArtsWestchester. First came women composers, then "Four Seasons." The last of the series will come in September and feature "Songs of Personal and Historic Narrative."

First, back to this weekend. "It's sure to be a wonderful afternoon of music," she promises, noting, "and it's free."

Celebrate African American Music Month with Yolanda F. Johnson's Inspired Song Concert Series, this Saturday, June 9th at 2:30 p.m. at Warner Library.

