



# Jessica Petrus

*Chamber Musician at Heart*

By Eric Price

**Every period of music has its particular style and flavor and you seem to sing a lot of music from the Baroque repertoire. Are you particularly drawn to this era and if so why?**

I have been very drawn to this genre since my undergrad, though initially it wasn't for musicological reasons. I feel I am a chamber musician at heart, and fortunately, the baroque period has abundant wealth in chamber repertoire (voice and continuo (organ, viola da gamba, lute, theorbo), etc.) I love working with small groups of musicians because each of our inputs is essential to bring the piece to life. And, since we're often performing works that may have not been heard for hundreds of years, it's especially important to find that group electricity!

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**Being a classical vocalist is a little different than being an instrumentalist, you don't have the luxury of practicing for hours on end without damaging your instrument. How do you balance practice, rehearsal, and performance? Do you have any special tricks or rituals? Especially when you're on the road.**

Like any craft, singing takes work and focus. But those principles can be achieved in many creative ways (and often have to be when on the road!).

The subconscious works in mysterious ways, and when I return back to it weeks later, my mind and body have usually figured how to navigate tricky musical passages, remember complicated rhythms, and suss out foreign languages. It's definitely one of the more magical tricks of being a singer, and I can't verify it works for everyone like this, but I'm grateful it does for me!

**When performing solo repertoire it is the norm to have an accompanist, do you have to switch to a different state of mind when performing with a chamber ensemble? Are there major differences in the way you perform, or do you try to treat both instances the same?**

Since voice and piano is just another small chamber ensemble, I don't personally find much of a difference in the approach. Each musician is still responsible for interpreting his or her own line, and listening to one another so that we find common musical ground for the piece.

**For the CMSCVA concert on January 10th, 2015 you'll be performing pieces by Barbara Strozzi and Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre who both happen to be female composers. As a female performer do you feel any kind of special connection or obligation to these composers to present their music in the same light as their more famous male counterparts?**

I am always thrilled to learn about female composers from this time period; their fame was significantly understated while in contrast, their compositions are quite vivacious! It fascinates me to think of Strozzi performing many of her own provocative cantatas among a small group of male Venetian intellectuals, and to explore Jacquet de la Guerre's cantatas, in which several are about strong female heroines. While social conventions of their respective times suppressed female expression, clearly these women spoke boldly beyond social norms via their music which totally inspires me as a female performer today.

**What composer or artist are you really into right now? Who is currently on the top of your itunes playlist?**

My music taste is all over the map and definitely depends on my mood and motivations! Some selections from this week alone include L'Arpeggiata, Rameau's Hippolyte and Aricie, and Miles Davis' Kind Of Blue.

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