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## ‘Singing is my destiny’

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Debra Li

**LUZ** DEL **ALBA**, renowned Uruguayan-American **soprano**, will perform at Shenzhen Grand Theater tonight. She will bring to local music fans

songs from operas like “Don Giovanni,” “The Magic Flute,” “La Traviata” as well as some Spanish folk songs.

**Alba** made her debut as Juliet in the opera “Romeo and Juliet” last week in Hong Kong.

Although some said she was a little old for the role — since Juliet is a teenage girl — **Alba** found similarities between the characters of Juliet and Violetta in “La Traviata,” and herself.

“They share the purity and keenness in love for someone. I believe that’s common in all women,” she said.

Like her characters, **Alba** is a passionate woman, but about opera.

As a child, she loved to listen to music. At 15, she made up her mind to become a singer after being moved to tears while watching a musical adapted from Shakespeare’s “Othello.”

“There’s no opera house or formal music conservatory in my hometown. So I took odd jobs after school to earn the money to pay for a music course in Montevideo. I traveled there once or twice a month to take the lessons,” she said.

**Alba** later studied at the Montevideo Conservatory of Music.

“I’ve always dreamed of singing in Europe, since that’s the place where opera was born. When I went on a tour with my choir to Europe, I decided to stay on the last stop,” she recalled.

The tour’s last stop was in Switzerland. There **Alba** worked as a waitress, a babysitter, and a nurse to pay the tuition fees at the Geneva Conservatory of Music.

“I have always know that singing is my destiny, and that belief did not waver during the most difficult time in my life,” she said.

Fortune smiled on her when mezzo-**soprano** Carmen Gonzalez met her and took her in as a pupil. “You’ve got the voice. You need to go to Italy and spend all your time singing rather than taking courses and working on odd jobs after class,” Gonzalez told her.

**Alba** said Gonzalez was like a mother to her: “She taught me more than three years, without charging me any tuition fees, and introduced me to the opera world.”

Fortune smiled on **Alba** again when a singer fell sick at the Summer Music Festival in Frankfurt and Mainz and the organizers began looking for a replacement. “They called me one night, asking if I could fly to Frankfurt the next morning and sing in ‘The Magic Flute.’ People need the luck to push them to center stage when young, but they also need to get prepared for it. When the destiny called, I was ready to embrace the opportunity,” she said.

And a chance encounter with renowned tenor Placido Domingo took her to the United States.

“Once I saw Domingo, the superstar, coming into the same theater I sang at. I came up to him and told him, ‘You’ ve got to listen to my singing.’ He gave me four minutes, and agreed to take me on his tour to the United States to sing a small role first,” she said.

Since then, **Alba** has sung in many cities around the world.

“I went to Beijing last year, and was fascinated by Beijing opera. It’ s so unique and so different from the things I was familiar with. I spent almost all my leisure time during that stay going to Beijing opera shows.”

**Alba** said she will learn some Chinese songs and include them in her repertoire in the future.

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