

36 Under 36 June 2013

Our sixth annual list of young visionaries reshaping and broadening the Jewish community.

The Next Jewish Community

The push, they prod, they inspire, they innovate, they pull a crowd with their ideas. Now in its sixth year, The Jewish Week's "36 Under 36" section has honored young people in our community who have dared to challenge conventional thinking and follow their inner compass.

Julia Adolphe, 25

Tuesday, June 4, 2013

• [Art](#)



www.juliaadolphe.com Making opera trendy to a younger generation.

Can opera sing, so to speak, to young Jews?

For Julia Adolphe, a 25-year-old opera singer and composer, the mission is clear. A Los Angeles-based New York native and

opera when her first chamber opera, “Sylvia,” was performed at New York City’s Bargemusic in March.

Influenced by Jewish music and inspired by a visionary desire to make opera compelling to the masses, Adolphe completed her doctorate in music arts from University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music.

“I want to make operas that are widely appealing,” Adolphe said. “Opera can be like the movies, it’s highly dramatic, highly personal and can talk about all your wildest dreams and fantasies. If opera can be more directly engaging to an audience, it can be popular to all ages.”

Based on a true story, “Sylvia” tells the story of a sexual abuse victim and her family of Holocaust survivors. Adolphe weaves in themes of the Passover story as well as an aria based on chants from the book of “Eicha” (Lamentations.)

The opera mirrors the form of psychodrama therapy, and its characters include doctors who act out scenes from the patient’s past. Adolphe spent a year writing the opera, although she first thought of it when she was 16. She said she liked the idea of mixing a contemporary storyline with a traditional form of art and music, and is hoping her opera will get picked up for future stage adaptations.

Making classical music compelling to a younger generation is part of Adolphe’s vision for changing the face of opera.

“Great art can be accessible to anyone, and that’s what I want people to learn from my operas,” Adolphe said. “Right now in the music industry, there’s a strict divide between pop and classical music, but they can be fused in the right way for a perfect combination on the stage.”

Sweet harmony: A believer in the reformative effects of music, Adolphe taught a course in Music Theory and Appreciation to inmates at the Auburn Correctional Facility, an all-male maximum-security prison.