

## Hometown Diva

by Elizabeth Stivers / Butler – April 1, 2014

At 5 years old, when [Angela Brown](#) started singing hymns and gospel music at her "Granddaddy's" Mount Calvary Baptist Church on the Indianapolis west side, she already had a pretty good idea that she wanted to be a professional singer when she grew up. But little did she know that the big, joyful voice from her little frame would one day belt out arias all over the world to packed opera houses filled with her fans.

Brown has been a part of many performances. This season alone she's performed in *A Woman's Life* with the Oakland East Bay Orchestra, the Jacksonville Symphony, and the Boulder Philharmonic. She's also helped create a recording of that show with the Nashville Symphony for the Naxos label; performed a return engagement in Moscow for *Porgy and Bess*; and sang *Aida* with the Edmonton Opera (in Alberta Canada) and the North Carolina Opera.

And on April 3 as a highlight of the [Butler Artsfest 2014](#), Brown will be in Indianapolis, her hometown, performing selections from *Porgy and Bess* at 7 p.m. in Butler University's Howard L. Schrott Center for the Arts.



*Photo Courtesy Of Angela Brown. Angela Brown has traveled the world performing, but her hometown and current homebase is Indianapolis.*

Brown says that being raised in Indianapolis gave her many opportunities to perform. She was around music a lot through the [Indianapolis Civic Theatre](#) and through her formative years at [Crispus Attucks High School](#). She says it helped that she'd sung pretty much every genre of music even at a young age. An enthusiast of most styles of music, Brown admits that deciding which one to pursue in college (and ultimately professionally) was a challenge.

But Brown knew she needed to attend college to study music and improve her craft. "Being in school gives you the opportunity to be placed in front of people," she said. "That helps you move your career along.

Eventually you will want to have a degree behind you, whatever it is, because you won't be singing forever. Education will help across the board."

She received a degree in music from [Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music](#) and a Bachelor of Music from Oakwood University, which allows her to teach. And before long, the opportunities started rolling in.

She initially intended to be a singing evangelist -- performing gospel and contemporary Christian music. "Now God just gave me bigger pulpits," Brown said.

Her role as Aida at the Metropolitan Opera in 2004 was a "magical time" in her career and is what launched her into international opera performances. She's wowed audiences, on many occasions as a soloist, at the following venues: Metropolitan Opera; National Opera of Paris; Bilbao Opera, Spain; Teatro La Fenice; Florentine Opera; The Philadelphia Orchestra; and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Brown married a few years ago and now has three stepsons. Her husband currently lives in France, but she moved from New York back to Indianapolis. If you're wondering about Brown's secret to a happy marriage, it's one word: Skype. She and her husband are on it throughout each day.

Brown, too, has lived in France and many other places, but she says, "There is no place like home [in Indy]. As long as there's an international airport you can get anywhere."

The arts aren't funded by the government in America like they are in some other countries



so part of a performer's job is to constantly build his or her audience and to help gain younger donors. She says being self-employed demands determination and the ability to think outside of the box. It's all about "making opportunities current" so she created a unique show called ["Opera ... From a Sistah's Point of View."](#)

*Photo Courtesy Of Mercer University. Brown performs from her own "Opera ... From a Sistah's Point of View" for school children.*

Brown believes that every role she has ever had has prepared her for the next one. "Anytime you're on the stage, continuing to hone your craft, you learn new things," she says. "Each time you are on stage, you could be inspired to do something different with that character. You never know what will inspire you or the audience. You're going to have a different audience every time."

She is full of inspiration and passion for what she does. "Singing has to be a passion, regardless of the genre," she explains. "If you are passionate about it and willing to never let anyone determine what success is going to look like for you ... go for it!"

Even after all of her stage time, Brown still gets jittery. "It's important to have nerves to a certain extent but not to the point of sickness or to the point where I can't do my job," she said, "As I've gotten older, I've realized that I got the job because I can do the job. If I go to a surgeon, and I want him to cut on me, if he tells me he's nervous -- I don't want him to cut on me!"

Jumping up and down, stretching, and deep breathing are all remedies that Brown uses backstage. "I don't have time to show my nerves," said. "I take the stage and never let them stop me."