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A voice to drown in

Soprano Alexandra Flood, a rising star in Europe, is heading to Brisbane for an appearance with the Southern Cross Soloists

PHIL BROWN

Alexandra Flood is standing in her kitchen in Munich, singing. How do we know this? Well, I happen to be on the other end of the phone line thinking if she sounds this good by phone, how much better will she sound when she is here in person?

Flood, 27, a young Australian soprano who is a rising star in Europe, is based in Germany now but is coming to Brisbane later this month for *The Nightingale*, part of the 2017 concert series at QPAC with leading Australian chamber music ensemble Southern Cross Soloists. When I ask what she'll be singing I don't really expect an impromptu performance, but who's complaining? Particularly when Flood is singing Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin's otherworldly aria from *Wild Swans*, which many of us became familiar with when broadcaster Phillip Adams used it as theme music for his ABC Radio National show *Late Night Live*.

"I've worked with Southern Cross Soloists before at the Bangalow Music Festival (northern NSW) and that was a fantastic experience," Flood says. "When they asked me to come to Brisbane to be part of this recital, I was thrilled. And I'm looking forward to coming back for it."

Queensland audiences got to hear Flood last year when she was a guest artist with the Queensland Ballet's production *Strictly Gershwin*, with music by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. "That was a world-class production," Flood recalls. "I was lucky enough to sing *Someone to Watch Over Me* and I sang half a solo on *Summertime*. I'm a classical artist but I also see

myself as a bit of an anybody when it comes to vocal music. I enjoy spreading my wings. I've done lots of musicals and I was once in a rock band in Melbourne performing in dirty pubs."

Flood is from Victoria and studied music and journalism in Melbourne before travelling to Munich to do her master's degree in music. She made her professional European opera debut in June 2014 as a young artist at the Salzburg Festival where she sang with the Vienna Philharmonic, and her star has been on the rise ever since.

She regularly comes home to Australia to perform and last year Flood sang with operatic baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes on a Pacific cruise, and

prior to Brisbane she'll be on a ship again singing, this time with the great Jose Carreras, before returning to dry land for concerts in Brisbane, Melbourne and Adelaide.

She says she is looking forward to revisiting Brisbane. "I loved the lifestyle, the food and the great coffee," Flood says. "I went to some pretty cool cocktail bars too when I was there."

The forthcoming concert with the Southern Cross Soloists is named after Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Nightingale and the Rose* and it features exquisite classical pieces including works by Mozart and Vivaldi, but the finale is pure pop. Flood reveals that she will sing her version of *Blackbird*, a song by the Beatles.

Southern Cross Soloists artistic director Tania Frazer says the ensemble is thrilled to have Flood singing with them again. "She has this amaz-

ing voice and when I first heard her it was one of those occasions when you don't want the singer to stop singing," Frazer says. "She's a delight and is so versatile. Her singing seems so effortless and her voice just floats."

Frazer says the Kats-Chernin piece was chosen with Flood in mind. "It totally suits her voice," she says. "It's super-duper high." Frazer adds she has programmed unashamedly beautiful music for this concert to

"transport people from their normal lives". "It will be exquisite," she says.

Having had a sneak preview over the phone from Germany, I agree that "exquisite" is a good word to use to describe Flood's voice.

Along with Greta Bradman, she is one of our most promising sopranos and Frazer says she is busy and much sought-after, so it's something of a coup to have her – albeit briefly this time around.

I can't wait to hear her sing her own arrangement of *Blackbird*, which was sung by Paul McCartney on *The Beatles*, also known as the White Album. Now, if we could just get McCartney to do a duet with Alexandra Flood. Just a thought.

***The Nightingale*, 3pm, November 26, Concert Hall, QPAC, \$59; qpac.com.au**

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Victorian-born Flood is currently based in Munich. Picture: Susan Windmiller