

The opera star for a new generation

Forget about the notion that opera is uptight and uncool Some of the art form's brightest stars would look just as good on MTV as on stage at the Met Soprano **Danielle de Niese** explains opera's modern appeal

When Danielle de Niese travels on her frequent international tours, she carries a visa listing her career as opera singer. Customs officials often react with disbelief: "But you don't look like an opera singer!"

At 30, de Niese, slim and gorgeous, is one of today's hottest opera stars. "There have always been beautiful opera singers," she points out. "But today we live in a very visual age. As an opera singer, you have to be able to both sing and act, and there's always someone who records the performance and puts it on YouTube."

Such performances are worth watching, even on YouTube; today's new opera stars defy people's notion of the form as boring, stodgy art performed by overweight older singers. Perhaps that's why Vanity Fair recently featured a photo spread of several opera stars, and Playboy asked readers to vote on the "hottest classical babe."

"Thirty years ago opera singers didn't work out, but today going to the gym is of

ten as important to them as going to rehearsals," explains Sarah Billinghamurst, the assistant manager in

reach huge audiences." Especially if the performers are gorgeous.

If you go

Danielle de Niese performs in 'Le Nozze di Figaro' Through Dec. 12
The Metropolitan Opera Lincoln Center
64th Street and Broadway
\$20-\$375, 212-362-6000
www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/

charge of artistic programming at the Metropolitan Opera. "Today there are many fabulous singers who also look fantastic on stage. And female singers, in particular, are very sophisticated about how they look on stage and in photo shoots."

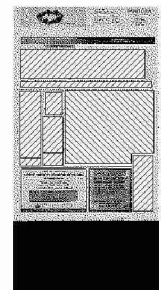
De Niese, a Dutch-Sri Lankan who was born in Australia, is no opera nerd: As a teenager in Los Angeles, she danced and hosted a TV show for young adults. "I had many career options, but classical music is like a love affair," she says. "And opera has the potential to

ELISABETH BRAW
 METRO WORLD NEWS IN LONDON

Hot for opera

Opera boasts other pretty, young — and supremely talented — faces, including:

-  What's Brad Pitt compared to Uruguayan bass **Erwin Schrott**?
-  Schrott's wife has real musical talent, too. She's **Anna Netrebko** of Russia.
-  **Evgeny Nikitin**, a Russian bass-baritone, also performs in a metal band.
-  Bass-baritone **Luca Pisaroni** hails from Verdi's hometown in Busseto, Italy.





► Opera singer Danielle de Niese's newest CD, "The Mozart Album," is in stores now. To listen to excerpts, go to www.danielledeniese.com/mozart.

"Today we live in a very visual age. As an opera singer, you have to be able to both sing and act, and there's always someone who records the performance and puts it on YouTube."

DANIELLE DE NIESE