In April 2014, Lulu Cossich (master’s student in voice) participated in an apprenticeship that allowed her to shadow world-renowned mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato for a day in New York City. At the time Ms. DiDonato was rehearsing for the performances of *La cenerentola* by Rossini at the Metropolitan Opera. The following is Lulu’s account of the experience.

The day started with a short visit to the Metropolitan Opera. Ms. DiDonato was kind to everyone she encountered, from the doormen to the members of the union. She knew their names and made sure to have meaningful interactions with every person we encountered. Afterwards we attended an interview at The Juilliard School. Ms. DiDonato was asked questions about Maria Callas’s legacy for a documentary that will be released next year.

The evening started at a pre-performance dinner (for Massenet’s *Cendrillon* at The Juilliard School) with Dr. Joseph Polisi, president of The Juilliard School. The performance was delightful, and I got to interview Ms. DiDonato during our time together. There are some important pieces of advice she shared with me that I believe are invaluable for young singers.

In regards to performing, she said that it is important for the performer to “see” and imagine what they are singing about; if they can’t see it, the audience won’t feel it. “There isn’t much to see on stage if you don’t live your life not just on the stage but every day. Singing is not about singing every syllable, every note. It’s not about the parts, it’s about the product as a whole. If syllables, notes, and rhythms are performed without that sense of unity, opera can be the most innately stupid art form. What makes art great, necessary and sustainable is its truthfulness.”

When I asked her about the current state and perception of opera, she expressed her concern for singers’ lack of substance. She said that many young singers are preoccupied with their image. “Their time at the gym is more important than the time they spend singing scales. They are working from the outside in rather than from the inside out. Some of this preparation includes studying voice technique, languages, and finding what you have to say through this art form.”

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