

The New Criterion

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An American lullaby

by Jay Nordlinger



Diana Damrau. Photo: Official Website of Diana Damrau

I do a podcast called *Q&A*, an interview show. (The imaginativeness of the name is stunning.) My guests are a great diversity, including writers, athletes, politicians, ballerinas—and musicians. My latest show is with Diana Damrau, the starry German soprano. Go [here](#) to try it.

We were in the offices of the Warner music company, in Midtown Manhattan. Here on this blog, I would like to tell you something that happened before we recorded.

Damrau and I passed a large photo of George Gershwin, at the piano. I remarked to her, “He means so much to us Americans, you know. I don’t know if they still do it, but mothers used to sing their children to sleep with ‘Summertime.’”

“For that,” said Damrau, “you really need to warm up.” She then alluded to the glissando at the end that starts on a high A (or a high B, depending on the soprano, and the key she chooses). “No, no!” I answered. “Mamas sing a simplified version, in whatever key! We’re not talkin’ Leontyne Price.”

Warm laughter. Thought you might like.

Jay Nordlinger is a Senior Editor at *National Review*.

His podcast with *The New Criterion*, titled “Music for a While,” can be found here.