

Lyric Opera to present "The Marriage of Figaro", with Jonathan Ross and Elizabeth Truitt, Oct. 9-10

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Liz Colton sues Hillary Clinton

WASHINGTON, D.C., Sept. 21, 2009 – Asheville native Dr. Elizabeth Colton, a career diplomat in the U.S. State Department, has filed an age discrimination lawsuit against Secretary of State Hillary Clinton alleging she has been denied the opportunity to serve at certain posts because of her age.

Dr. Colton, 64, filed the suit Federal District Court for the District of Columbia in Washington.

asks that the State Department's mandatory 65-year age limit be thrown out and that diplomatic personnel be allowed to serve regardless of their age. She also seeks restitution for legal fees, loss of pay, loss of retirement and health benefits, and "such other relief as may be just."

Secretary Clinton was named in the suit because she is the head of the State Department.

many overseas assignments as a foreign service officer and press attaché. With a broad background in communications, Dr. Colton had a meteoric career under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

In October 2000, she was assigned to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In November 2001 she was promoted to FS-04. In January 2003 she received a State Department Superior Honor Award (the first of three she would eventually receive) for political reporting and public outreach. She was promoted to FS-03 in the Summer of 2003. In September 2003 she filled an FS-02 slot in an assignment to Algiers, Algeria. In August 2004 she was assigned to Khartoum, Sudan, and in the Fall of 2005 she filled an FS-01 position in an assignment to Baghdad, Iraq. In the Summer of 2006 she received her second Superior Honor Award for sustained performance, and in October was promoted to FS-02.

She subsequently was posted to Islamabad, Pakistan, in a one-year FS-01 position and served a second year at the request of Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, a career Foreign Service Officer.

Before joining the Foreign Service, she was the chair of the mass communications department and professor of politics and media at Shenandoah University. She participated in partisan politics as Jesse Jackson's press secretary during his 1988 presidential campaign; was a media adviser to the late Sen. Terry Sanford, was an international journalist for Newsweek, ABC News, NBC News, Asiaweek, and Far Eastern Economic Review; and served as a diplomatic correspondent for National Public Radio in D.C. She also worked at the United Nations, and earlier served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Africa.

The legal action was announced by Thomas R. Bundy III, litigation partner for the Sutherland firm.

"Imagine if someone told Hillary Clinton she couldn't be Secretary of State because she would turn 65 before her term is up," Bundy said. "This case is one of first impression where the Department of State is preventing foreign service officers like Dr. Colton from taking certain posts years before they reach the 65-year-old mandatory retirement age for foreign service members under the Foreign Service Act."

Mr. Bundy added, "We believe the State Department should stop this unlawful, discriminatory employment practice. The mandatory retirement age itself is unconstitutional, lacking any rational basis, and is based on outdated stereotypes and misinformation."



Liz Colton, born and raised in Asheville, is shown in Lahore, Pakistan, one of her many overseas duty stations. Since joining the State Department in 2000 as a non-partisan career diplomat she has had a meteoric career. At the present time, however, State Department personnel are required to retire at 65.

She is represented by the law firm of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP, together with the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

If the suit is upheld, Dr. Colton

Dr. Colton had joined the U. S. Foreign Service in May, 2000, in the Bill Clinton administration, as an FS-05 under then Secretary of State Madeline Albright. Since that time she has served in



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During her career with the Foreign Service, the suit claims, Dr. Colton was offered a two-year post as the Chief of the Political-Economic Section at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers. She was the top choice for the position. After she accepted the offer and consequently had her bids withdrawn for other positions, the State Department's Human

Resources Department realized she would reach the age 65 mandatory retirement age only 16 months into the 24-month tour. As a result, Human Resources informed Dr. Colton that she could not take the position and filled the post with another candidate. In the end, Dr. Colton was forced to accept a less

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FEATURE

Scott Joiner

Lyric Opera presents Mozart masterpiece, Asheville style

Asheville, September 22, 2009 – Asheville Lyric Opera's production of Mozart's comic masterpiece, *The Marriage of Figaro*, will fit perfectly to open the company's Eleventh Season theme: Opera - Asheville Style. "From the inspiration of mountains to the world-class international retreat of our season sponsor, The Grand Bohemian Hotel, Asheville Style is unlike anything in the nation," says ALO General and Artistic Director, David Craig Starkey.

Performances are set for October 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. at Diana Wortham Theatre. They will feature many of the distinguished performers who have relocated to the region from around the country, in addition to some illustrious guests from outside the region.

"This kind of ensemble piece is the perfect way to show off so many of the artists who call this area home, and who have become audience favorites. It's also an opportunity to showcase great artists who have been associated with our company during the last decade," said Starkey. "They are important exponents of ALO and the region's music scene." The story at the core of *The Marriage of Figaro*, which still holds truth for today's world, is that the heart is what truly ennobles a person – not nobility, wealth or social rank. It tells the story of a servant and his fiancée who go head-to-head in a comic tussle with their employers, the Count and Countess.

The Marriage of Figaro, written in 1786, represents one of the most important collaborations in the history of art and music, and ALO plans to make collaboration a key element in their production, co-producing the show with Tennessee Tech University and the Bryan Symphony Orchestra in East Tennessee. The libretto was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte, whose extraordinary life as a poet, friend of Casanova, and world traveler has been the subject of dozens of books. It is based on the

play, *La Folle Journée*, by Pierre Beaumarchais, which Napoleon later called 'The first stone thrown in the French Revolution,' because of the role it played in the rise of the working class. The music that Mozart composed for the opera is considered to be some of his absolute best and most joyous. A year after the premier Mozart traveled to Prague, where he said, "Nothing is played, sung or whistled but 'Figaro.'" To this day, it is the sixth most performed opera in North America.

Playing the title role, Figaro will

Davis (as Cherubino), who was recently heard with Colorado's Central City Opera. Diane Pulte, an accomplished mezzo-soprano who has sung with the Dallas Opera makes her ALO debut as Marcellina, and Daniel Webb, known for his appearances in the Broadway production of *La Bohème*, returns to ALO as Doctor Bartolo.

To lead the Lyric Opera Orchestra, ALO is bringing in Daniel Allcott, who has been Principal Conductor of the Atlanta Ballet, guest conductor for the Dallas Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and Music Director of the Bryan Symphony Orchestra. Jon Truitt will direct the opera, in addition to playing one of the primary roles. The opera will feature a new scenic design by local artist Daniel Azazpour, formally designer and artist for the The Dallas Opera Company. Starkey affirms, "We are blessed with so many craftsmen and creative talent. The ALO is excited to be featuring these individuals of our community in the creative process of producing an opera."

The show promises to be an evening full of fun, wit, wisdom and beautiful music for families and young alike. Tickets are available and range from \$28 to \$49 with discounts for children and students. In addition, season tickets may be purchased for the entire season at a major discount. Future ALO special events this Fall include, *Hansel and Gretel* November 6th at North Buncombe High School and *The Christmas Concert* November 20th, the eve of the Asheville Holiday Parade at the Diana Wortham Theatre. For tickets call the Diana Wortham Theatre Box Office at 828-257-4530 or go to www.ashevillelyric.org.

Contact the author at 828-236-0670.



The Marriage of Figaro, a Mozart classic based on a libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. Written in 1787, Da Ponte was a poet and friend of Casanova.

be Jonathan Ross, well-known baritone in the region and AB-Tech faculty member. In the grand role of the Count will be baritone Jon Truitt, who returns to ALO after performing with many top opera companies across the U.S. Mr. Truitt will play opposite his wife, Elizabeth Truitt debuting as the Countess. Other well-known singers to the area, Andrea Blough (as Susanna) and Scott Joiner (as Basilio and Don Curzio) will be heard along with debuting mezzo and Lake Toxaway-native, Regina

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career-enhancing position to finish out her career.

"We are confident that the court will finally agree that if presidents, judges, Congress members, civil servants, ambassadors and other political appointees in the State Department are capable of serving our great country well past 65 years of age, then so can your average citizen who is a foreign service

officer," said Mr. Bundy. "Dr. Colton's career is distinguished, and there is no reason a woman of her experience, energy and enthusiasm should be forced to retire when she wants to continue to serve."

Dr. Colton's case is represented by Sutherland Litigation Partners Thomas R. Bundy III and Lewis S. Wiener, with Litigation Associate Christopher W. Hammond of the firm's Washington, D.C., office, in conjunction with Susan

Huhta of the Washington Lawyers' Committee.

To read the full complaint, visit http://www.sutherland.com/files/upload/Colton_Complaint.pdf.

Dr. Colton is the daughter of Henry and Marie Colton of Asheville. Marie Colton served in Raleigh as a State Representative from Asheville from 1978 to 1994. She was appointed to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 1994.