

Avant-garde singer Joan La Barbara said she has taken her voice about 95 percent of where it can go and is now expanding her instrument through other artists.

La Barbara will present *Vocal Windows*, a multi-faceted art excursion utilizing her voice with videos, movement and art at 8 p.m. tonight,

By MELISSA ADAMS

Saturday and Sunday at the Center for Contemporary Arts.

The show also features the video expertise of Steina Vasulkas, the directorial talents of Barbara Karp, and the artistry of Lita Albuquerque.

"I've been trying to expand from straight concert situations and it's intrigued me to go into the direction of the theater, which I've always loved," La Barbara said.

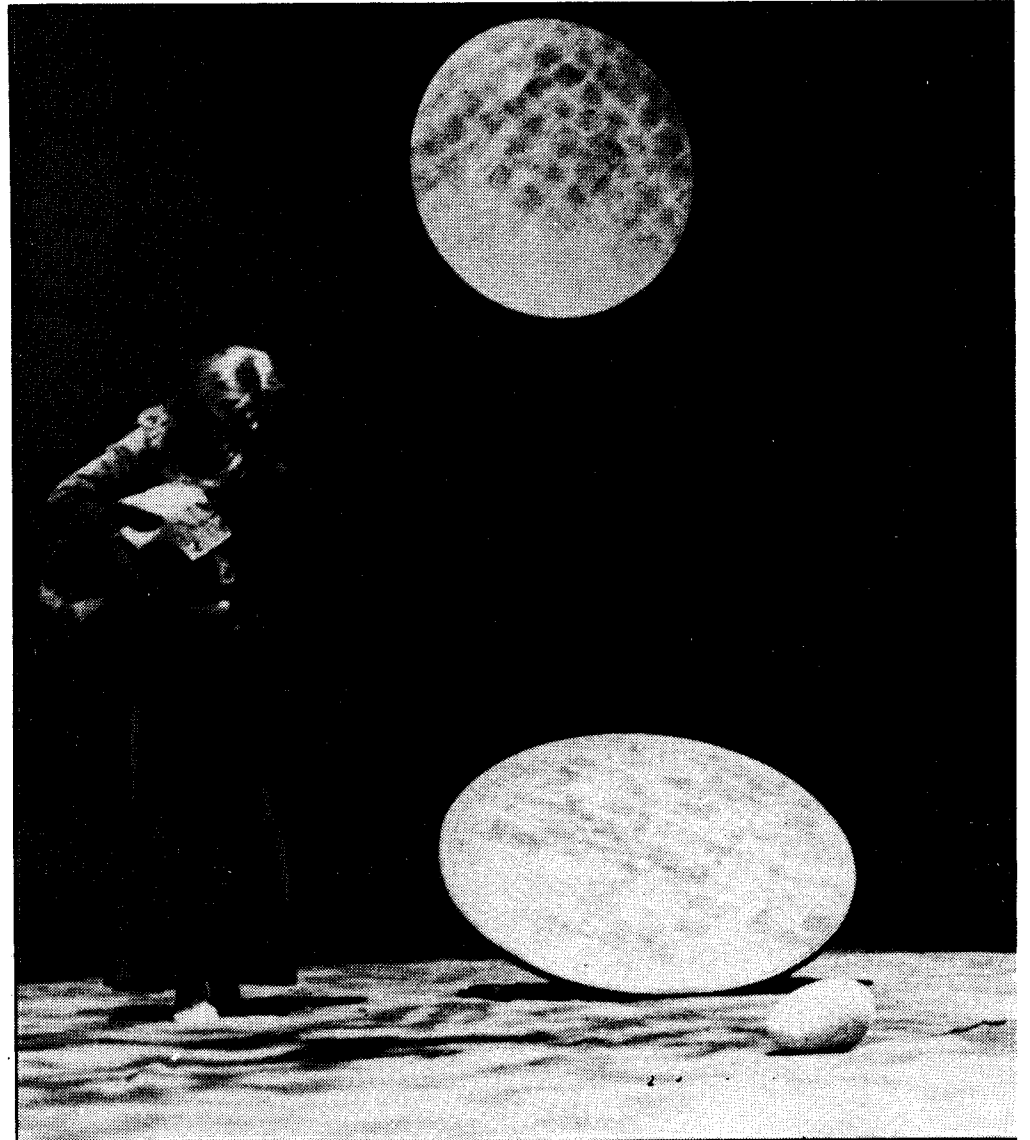
She has expanded her three-octave voice into realms of what many consider the avant-garde, using electronics to stretch her vocal instrument to the limits.

"One way I looked at expanding was through the visual arts," she said. "By going to masters in various disciplines, I got inspiration from imagery and translated it into soul.



In 'Vocal Windows' the shape of video is controlled by the voice

VISUAL



La Barbara in the 'Winds of the Canyon' performance piece

Barbara and Lita (her partners) translate it into visual art.

"Barbara has worked for years conceptualizing and staging music in visual scenes. Lita has made wonderful sculptures, performance pieces and paintings," she said. "Steina and I started working together on interac-

tive voice and video, to visualize the voice through video without a film score."

La Barbara also felt the three artists could add new dimensions to the delivery of her own compositions.

"Visual artists hear sound and think images. I was curious to find out what the visual images of the sound looked like," she said.

Karp, who is known for her imaginative stage productions of operas and other performance pieces, is moving toward more improvisational work.

"The experience is very interesting and sometimes difficult. Each artist sees things differently," Karp said, adding that when she worked with La Barbara on the conceptualization she had to first discover her own dynamic motivation. "I had to see how it fits."

Working with other artists from varying background and mediums has been an education for the artists.

"It takes us places we haven't been," said Karp, who was trained as pianist and then took off in stage directing.

"People from other disciplines think differently," La Barbara said.



Joan La Barbara



Barbara Karp



Steina Vasulkas

SOUND



Woody, and featuring La Barbara's voice.

"In this piece," La Barbara said, "the shape of video image is controlled and affected by the sounds of voice."

She is continually working with Vasulkas since they both live in the Santa Fe area.

"Usually when Joan sings, she shapes songs through her vocal chords to project into space," Vasulkas explained. "We are shaping landscapes and patterns according to songs she sings. It's highly interactive." La Barbara's solo selection, *Performance Piece*, is an improvisational exploration into vocal gestures and speech that involves what she calls the feelings of performance.

Another unique facet of the show is that it physically moves the audience

Melissa Adams has been a feature writer for *The New Mexican* for a number of years.



La Barbara wanted to stretch her voice to accomplish more than sound.

She was trained as an opera diva but felt her flexibility was limited in opera. "I felt I had creative ideas that were being suppressed," she said.

She said she rebelled and ran away from opera, moving into jazz and electronic music.

"I started imitating instruments

and then my voice became an instrument. I wanted my voice to be an equal partner," she said.

She experimented with new music and with such musicians as Anthony Graxton and Philip Glass, but found she still wanted to go beyond.

"It was a more personal journey," she said.

She has recorded nine records and continues to do concerts.

"Now I keep looking at other cultures for vocal materials and styles to expand what I can do."

Tonight's performance features four separate pieces, beginning with *Vocal Windows*, an effort utilizing the talents of Vasulkas and her husband,

from place to place. For example, while the show begins inside the theater, Karp soon moves the audience to an outside area and then into a sound stage for the presentation of *Berlin Traume* (Berlin Dream), which is augmented by Albuquerque's slides and other visual affects.

La Barbara explained that the final piece, *Winds of the Canyon*, was inspired by a Santo Domingo corn dance. In it, she interweaves her live voice with electronically mastered vocalizations.

'Visual artists hear sound and think images. I was curious to find out what the visual images of sound looked like.'



Scene from 'Berliner Trauma'

CLOSE-UP

What: 'Vocal Windows'
 When: Tonight, Saturday and Sunday
 Hours: 8 p.m. Where: Center for Contemporary Arts, 291 E. Barcelona
 Tickets: \$7
 Reservations: 982-1338