and also produced an A.R.T.-sponsored student performance of Macbeth, sang in West Side Story, helped run a student hip-hop conference, and spent a summer interning at Atlantic Records. A grant she won in junior year paid for voice lessons at the Boston Conservatory.

After struggling to make it as a classical opera singer in New York City, Hoyes decided to become an entertainment lawyer instead, and graduated from Columbia Law School in 2004. She performed throughout those years, though, and realized that she still wanted to pursue classical training and return to the stage.

A full scholarship to Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, enabled her to earn a master’s degree in voice pedagogy, combining performance and teaching, in 2007. In her last year, she performed as a classical soloist in a Mozart program at Carnegie Hall; she has been a freelance singer ever since. Pivotal work came through Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola, which is affiliated with Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC). In October 2013, Hoyes went on tour with Marsalis and the JALC Orchestra; she was part of the 70-member gospel choir that performed his Abyssinian: A Gospel Celebration.

The composition, commissioned for the bicentennial of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, “digs deeply into what Marsalis would call ‘the soil’ of the black church: its shouts, its dirges, its spirituals, its hymns of praise,” according to a report on National Public Radio. The piece also weaves in jazz and blues, along with the full range of vocals expressed in lyrics and pure instrumentals. Like Ellington’s Sacred Concerts, Hoyes says, “Abyssinian” focuses on themes of inspiration, community, black identity, and “the universal human experience.” “It’s certainly jazz work, but it has certain pieces that are almost like a Catholic mass in structure,” Hoyes says, “so Marsalis hired singers who have an affinity for classical and jazz—perfect for me.”

During the tour, Hoyes became friends with then-orchestra member Ulysses Owens Jr., a Grammy-winning jazz drummer. Although she already had several YouTube music videos and demos for auditions, he encouraged her to find a more substantial project to showcase her strong, supple voice. When she mentioned developing a recital to cover several of Ellington's soprano songs, Owens said, “That’s not just a concert idea, that is a concept album I would love to produce, and it is going to open doors for you.”

After the tour ended, Hoyes visited the Ellington archives, where she talked with volunteers who had known him or grew up with his music, which helped deepen her interpretation of the compositions on the CD. She gathered recordings of many wordless songs; perhaps most moving was Kay Davis’s 1947 version of “On a Turquoise Cloud” that she found on the online streaming service Spotify. “She had perfect pitch, a very strong intellectual passion, and a great technical facility,” says Hoyes. “She was a real consummate artist, and she sings with so much soul and so much warmth and personality.”

All of the songs on Hoyes’s CD feature new arrangements by Owens, who also helped with research, produced the album, and performs on it. Hoyes, he says in a YouTube video promoting the project, is “one of the most driven people that I have ever met. During my production career I learned how to decide what artists I want to work with, not just by their talent but by their work ethic. When I first encountered Candice she had all these wonderful questions, but she also had all these agendas in terms of what she wanted, being an artist.”