

Justice Ginsburg Roasted In Operatic Fashion By NYC Bar

By **Natalie Rodriguez**

Law360 (February 5, 2020, 10:10 PM EST) -- A talented cast of New York lawyers put on an opera-inspired show on Thursday night to honor — and roast — U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg, recreating for the stage highlights of the “diva” justice’s life and career.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Stewart Aaron of the Southern District of New York and Milbank LLP’s diversity and inclusion manager Dennis Quinio were among those gently ribbing the justice’s sparkly dissent collars, lack of culinary skills and notorious exercise routines as part of the New York City Bar Association’s biennial “Twelfth Night” production, in which a legal luminary is honored via a musical comedy roast.

“Tonight’s performance was top of the heap. I wondered how the city bar would manage to spoof me as, truth be told ... I’m not a very funny person,” Justice Ginsburg said at the end of the event.



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg speaks at the New York City Bar Association’s biennial “Twelfth Night” production. (Steven Trader | Law360)

Standing underneath the official Supreme Court portrait of the justice, which is on a long-term loan

to the bar association, Ginsburg revealed the event was supposed to have happened months earlier, but it was postponed while she underwent **cancer treatment**.

Building on the justice's love of opera, the production was titled "Quando Ce Ne Sono Nove (When There Are Nine): A Night at the Opera with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg" and told the story of her life, rising from musically tone-deaf child to a meme-inspiring justice in the high court.

"Throwing shade! Cutting words on every page / Renegade! Her dissents have inspired a generation," sang Deana Stein, a senior associate at Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP, in the opening song.

The production touched on Ginsburg's early life, including when she fell in love with her late husband Marty in a song called "Love In a Cornell Dorm." The gender discrimination she faced early in her career while trying to land a job also came up.



Justice Ginsburg revealed the event was supposed to have happened months earlier, but it was postponed while she underwent cancer treatment. (Steven Trader | Law360)

"Women at the Bar! / Now you've gone too far / She's a wife with kids at home, so there's just no chance / Anyway you should have known, my clerks wear pants," sang attorney and member of the bar's executive committee Ronald Minkoff, playing the late Justice Felix Frankfurter, who once rejected Ginsburg for a clerkship.

Many of the scenes scoring the biggest laughs and loudest applause touched on the justice's personally close — but intellectually combative — relationship with the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, played by Clement Colucci, assistant attorney general in the litigation bureau of the New York State Attorney General's office.

"Scalia / Read his words and there's genius gleaming / Though he's stuck on original meaning," sang Felicia Berenson-Reinhardt, an associate court attorney from the Manhattan criminal court, one of nine women who played the justice.

The rotating cast, an ode to Ginsburg's famous "There will be enough women on the Supreme Court when there are nine" quote, played the justice at various stages of her life. The Ginsburg players included family law attorney Martha Cohen Stine, solo practitioner Jalila Bell, Schlam Stone & Dolan

LLP associate Jessica Caterina and Nancy Zehner, attorney and chair of the bar association's entertainment committee that put together the event.



Attorney D. Mara Lowenstein plays Justice Ginsburg during the Notorious RBG segment. (Steven Trader | Law360)

"Don't mansplain mister, I'm RBG! / I'm a Supreme, an independent lady / Don't mess with me, I'm from Brooklyn, baby," sang solo practitioner D. Mara Lowenstein, who played the justice during the Notorious RBG segment.

The song, styled after the late rapper Notorious BIG who serves as inspiration for the justice's most well-known social media meme, included hip-hop dancers on stage.

"She can't bake or roast, what a / Kitchen disaster / But wait til you hear Ruth's dissents," sang Rita Wasserstein Warner, a family law attorney playing Justice Elena Kagan.

The New York City Bar Association, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary, has been putting on Twelfth Night productions celebrating and roasting a legal luminary since the 1940s. Past honorees have included **former U.S. attorney Preet Bharara** and **U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff**.

The New York City Bar Association was one of the first legal associations Ginsburg joined in her early career and she held a number of committee positions throughout the 1960s and 1970s, including the executive committee and the sex and law committee, before she moved to Washington, D.C.

"My participation in city bar endeavors has been diverse, engaging and deeply rewarding," Justice Ginsburg said.

--Editing by Amy Rowe.