

German Art Songs as They Ought to Be Heard

Posted By [Tom Strini](#) On October 9, 2009 @ 11:24 pm In [Arts & Culture](#), [Culture Desk](#), [Music](#), [TCD Feature 4](#) | [1 Comment](#)



[1]

Schubert and friends playing and singing.

points in the harmony lie, he feels the mass and momentum of the phrase, and he knows just how the piano and voice parts interact.

I've never seen singers look and sound so relaxed. Sopranos Valerie Errante and Tanya Kruse Ruck, baritone Kurt Ollmann, all of the UWM faculty, and guest mezzo Lauren Curnow could carry the room without strain. They turned that luxury into interpretive subtlety. They made singing sound like a pleasure.



[3]

Soprano Valerie Errante



[4]

Mezzo Lauren Curnow

See that old picture? With Schubert bent over the keyboard, in a parlor packed with friends and admirers? The gracious living room of the Hefter Mansion was rather like that Friday evening, as fans of fine singing packed the place for an evening of German art songs.

Jeffry Peterson filled for the late Franz S. at the piano. Peterson's deft hands and sharp ear put five singers at ease and served eight composers well. He just knows where the pivot and pressure



[2]

Pianist Jeffry Peterson

The distinct voice types and varied repertoire made the evening fly by. Errante's light, bright soprano opened by flitting like a bird through three Mozart songs. Curnow, dark, lustrous and weighty in sound, refreshed all the dreamy beauty in two of Schubert's most performed songs, "An die Musik" ("To Music") and "Standchen" ("Serenade"). Ollmann's urbane, communicative ways conveyed the meaning of the text in his Schubert set, and his rich, effortless baritone was a constant joy.

Curnow and Ollmann took turns on a set of five Brahms songs to start the second half. Errante surprised and delighted with an unlikely collection of German poems set to music by Americans (Edward MacDowell, Amy Beach and Charles Ives, of all people). Kruse Ruck has a big, Verdi/Puccini soprano and showed it to stunning effect in three ambitious, complex, dramatically charged songs by Richard Strauss.

Rarely heard ensemble works represented Schumann. Ollmann and



Curnow wrapped their voices round one another in the intensely amorous "Ich Bin dein Baum," in which poet Friedrich Rueckert compares love to the relationship of a fruit-bearing tree and her gardener. Errante and Curnow joined voices in the coy, flirtatious "Erste Begegnung," in which a giggly girl can't help telling her mother about an encounter with a boy among the roses on the riverbank.



[5]

Baritone Kurt Ollmann



[6]

Soprano Tanya
Kruse Ruck

Everyone, plus tenor Paul Thompson and pianist Katja Phillabaum (for the four-hands piano part) joined in for Schumann's ecstatic "Dunkler Lichtglanz," on Rodrigo de Cota's poem about the inevitable mix of pain of happiness with love.

The five singers and Peterson ended the evening with Schubert's rollicking "Der Tanz," about living life fully and dancing while you may. They sang lustily, through bright smiles. It was fun to stand around the piano and sing in Schubert's day, and it's fun today.

The formal name of the building is the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Hefter Conference Center, at 3721 N. Lake Drive. This program was part of the Yolanda Marculescu Vocal Arts Series at UWM.

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