

VOCE DI MECHE

Reviews of performing arts with emphasis on young artists and small opera companies.

Friday, March 3, 2017

EINE UBERRASCHUNG!



Babette Hierholzer, Stephen Tharp, Anne Riegler, and Katrin Bulke at German Forum Concert

The most amazing and wonderful surprise occurred smack in the middle of a compelling concert given by the German Forum in the sanctuary of St. Peter's Church. Phenomenal young baritone Aneas Humm stopped by on his way to the airport to dazzle us with a selection of *lieder* from Schumann's *Liederkreis*, with one lone selection from *Myrthen*.

We first became acquainted with Mr. Humm last year when the German Forum introduced him. His resonance has deepened over the year of concertizing in Europe with collaborative pianist Babette Hierholzer. His interpretive skills have also deepened and he used a full range of colors in his singing, from the expansive "*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*" to the fierce "*Ich grolle nicht*" to the excited "*Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne*". The final selection "*Du bist wie eine Blume*" might just have been part of the cycle; it fit right in. Mr. Humm seems to taste and savor and color every single word without sacrificing *legato* phrasing.

This was just icing on the delicious cake of a recital as sweet as a Mozartkugel. There was more variety than usual, since a prodigious pianist from Germany was on hand to delight us with several of Ravel's tributes to other composers, and a versatile soprano who showed her skills as a *coloratura*, and also as an operetta heroine.

Moreover we heard some interesting organ music resonating through this cavernous space which has such excellent acoustics.

Since opera is our thing, let us begin with Ms. Katrin Bulke who electrified the audience with the famous Queen of the Night aria from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. "*Der Holle Rache*" is known for its high-lying *tessitura* and need for pinpoint accuracy. Ms. Bulke fulfilled every requirement, as she did with Amina's sleepwalking aria from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, "*Ah non credea mirarti*" with its stunning *cabaletta* "*Ah non giunge*".

Later on, the artist, accompanied by Ms. Hierholzer, gave us two arias from operettas. We heard Fanny's aria from Johann Strauss' *Die Tanzerin Fanny Eisler*--"*Draussen in Sievering*". It was obvious to us that the requisite technique was no different from that of Queen of the Night. In a more Hungarian vein, we heard "*Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiss*" from Franz Lehar's operetta *Giuditta*. We even got a little barefoot dance, perhaps a Czardas but, who knows!

Accomplished pianist Anne Riegler engaged the audience with her charming introductions to each piece and held our attention with some fine playing. We heard a Sonata by Joseph Haydn with its gloriously contemplative Adagio--and then a tribute to Haydn written by Maurice Ravel, variations written on the letters of his name.

A frisky and propulsive *scherzo* by Alexander Borodin was followed by Ravel's brief "*Valse a la maniere de Alexander Borodin*". A baroque piece by Francois Couperin was succeeded by Ravel's Prelude to *Le tombeau de Couperin*. The concept is an interesting one and the basis for Ms. Riegler's recording, soon to be released in the United States.

And that was not all! Organist Stephen Tharp, stepping in for his indisposed wife, performed the rhythmic and melodic "Toccata for Organ" from Leon Boellmann's *Suite Gotique*. But even better was his duet with Ms. Hierholzer on the piano--Cesar Franck's *Fugue and Variations op. 18 for organ and piano*. Mr. Tharp's refined Gallic melody was played with a reedy sound whilst Ms. Hierholzer supported with dynamically varied *arpeggios*. This sounded unlike anything we have heard before and delighted us far more than the closing piece--Mendelssohn's Overture to the Oratorio *Saint Paul* which just sounded like typical church music.

The German Forum continues to impress us with the quality of the talent they unearth from the German speaking world. Membership is now open and worth every penny. We might add that there was also a generous repast of delicacies accompanied by wine and beer. This made for an evening that was nourishing to body and soul. Körper und Seele!

(c) meche kroop

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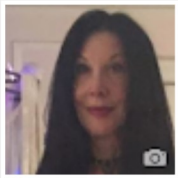


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