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The Art of Song

by Jan Jezioro



David MacAdam

Tenor David MacAdam returns to the Friends of Vienna in *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Sometimes life has an uncanny way of surprising you. When the current board of directors of the Friends of Vienna decided to engage the Ottawa-based tenor David MacAdam to sing Franz Schubert's groundbreaking song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin* (*The Miller's Beautiful Daughter*), for their next concert on Sunday, March 16 at 3:30pm at the Unity Church (1243 Delaware Avenue), they did so based both on his international reputation and his recent roles in productions of *The Barber of Seville* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* by Nickel City Opera, where he also serves as associate artistic director.

So, it was something of a surprise to discover that MacAdam had previously performed this work in this series over 25 years ago. "I learned the first few songs of *Die schöne Müllerin* in my first or second year at UB," says MacAdam, "when I was about the same age as the apprentice miller in the cycle. I immediately identified with his journey and his experiences. Periodically after that, the miller called to me, I would learn a few more songs, and fall more in love with the cycle."

In 1988, Edith Horowitz, then artistic director of Friends of Vienna, engaged MacAdam to performance the entire cycle. "That was when I finally completely immersed myself," he says. "Performing it back then, I identified with the unbridled optimism of the miller as he sets out, felt that I, too, had lived the joy and suffered the pain of love, and sang the songs in earnest, as if I was singing my own life. When I sing these songs now, I still feel that way, but a lot of water has gone over the millwheel in the interim. Now I also cherish both his and our innocence. I'd like to be able to talk to him, and say, 'Don't drown yourself—you can get past this! Life will bring more joy and pain, but in the end, it's all worth the trouble.'"

"*Die schöne Müllerin* is the only one of the three Schubert cycles I've sung so far," says MacAdam. "It was really the very first song cycle ever, and perhaps the best. I love the perfect integration of text and music, and that singer and pianist are equal characters in the story, miller and brook, informing and completing each other, each necessary for the other to make sense."

"As for the other two, I think I've reached a point in my life where I'm ready to sing *Die Winterreise*, but I don't feel *Schwanengesang* is really for me."

MacAdam has performed many other song cycles, including Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, Beethoven's *Sechs lieder von Gellert*, Debussy's *Fêtes galantes II*, and Vaughan Williams's *10 Blake Songs*, but he says that "somehow I keep getting drawn back to cycles of love, loss, and pain: Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Vaughan Williams's *Along the Field* and *Songs of Travel*—another cycle that has strong personal resonance for me."

While MacAdam says that both opera and art song have their challenges, “opera is often painted in broader strokes, more vivid colors, ‘writ large,’ if you will. Art song typically uses a more varied palette, with vivid colors but also pastel hues, and shades of grey. I believe that art song can take the singer and the listener on a journey deeper into the heart, mind, and soul, and evoke more subtle and complex emotions than opera.”

Macadam met his accompanist, New York City-based pianist Byron Sean, about a year ago. “This concert marks our first collaboration, hopefully of many,” MacAdam says. “We’re finalizing arrangements to perform this concert in Ottawa in May and New York City in June, and planning is underway for Syracuse either sometime later this year or next season.”

Tickets are \$10, \$5 for students. Visit www.friendsofvienna.org.

The Arditti Quartet at UB

One of the biggest pluses of the University at Buffalo’s continuing reputation as a vibrant, international hot-spot for the performance of cutting-edge, contemporary classical music is that UB consistently attracts the very best musicians in the world who have dedicated themselves to performing avant-garde music. Case in point, on Wednesday, March 19 at 7:30pm, the London-based Arditti Quartet, arguably the premiere string quartet on the planet dedicated to performing new music, will make a welcome return to Slee Hall.

Lead by their eponymous first violinist Irvine Arditti, the quartet will perform American composer Conlon Nancarrow’s *Quartet No. 3*, British composer Harrison Birtwistle’s *The Tree of Strings*, Hungarian composer’s György Ligeti’s *String Quartet No. 2*, and the *Quartet No. 2*, “*Cuerdas del destino*” by Arditti’s wife, the Mexican composer Hilda Paredes.

That same day, at 10am, the Arditti Quartet will host a composer workshop in Baird Recital Hall, open for public observation.

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