

Skyline

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May 10, 2007 FREE

CLASSICAL MUSIC: TO KNOW ART SONGS IS TO LOVE THEM

Group shares its musical knowledge

VOX 3

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 1218 W. Addison St. "Abenmusk: Sacred Cantatas by Dietrich Buxtehude," 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 9. "North and South: American 20th Century Vocal Music," 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 16. Free, donations welcome. (773) 784-0425. www.vox3.org.

By JACK BESS | Contributor

Like a symphony's first movement that is typically played allegro, a new Chicago vocal music collective is planning an exciting and lively introduction for itself to local audiences.

Formed last year by young performers brimming with knowledge and enthusiasm for vocal works, VOX 3 is bursting out of the gate with its first two concerts May 9 and 16, at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lake View.

The collective's members, most of whom graduated last year from Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts, have a scholarly appreciation for lesser-known works, which is evident in the programming of their first two concerts.



VOX 3, a new vocal performance group, likes to educate its audiences about the songs it sings.

"All of us are intellectually minded and (after graduating) we missed the opportunity to also write and talk about music," said soprano Angela Zawada, the collective's marketing manager and Logan Square resident.

On May 9, VOX 3 will mark the 300th anniversary of Dietrich Buxtehude's death with a program of works from the early German baroque composer that will include sacred cantatas and a pair of organists

leading a chamber ensemble.

All-American program

The following Wednesday, VOX 3 launches a series of vocal art-song recitals. The program includes Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915," based on a James Agee poem as well as curious contemporary pieces, such as Lee Hoiby's "Bermudas," which takes its text from an investment company's writeup on the joys of tropical living. Then

there's Domenick Argento's humorous "Miss Manners on Music," using text from the etiquette columnist herself to instruct the audience on how to appreciate classical music.

To share their enthusiasm for the music, the collective plans to print essays on the pieces in the concert program and a quarterly publication. The first issue will include a discography discussing the numerous recordings of Barber's "Knoxville," said Brian von Rueden, VOX 3's artistic director and baritone.

"This won't be just a program note you're looking at but something you can take home and read," he said. "Rather than just 'get on the boards' (perform), we wanted to think about the music we are doing and share that with our audience. I think it's a more rewarding experience for performers and audiences alike if we have a deeper appreciation of the music."

To that end, the Buxtehude concert will be prefaced by a short lecture by David Schrader, an accomplished musician and Roosevelt faculty member.

Drawing room style

The collective's take on the audience/performer relationship harkens back to the art song's origins in the drawing rooms of Europe, with friends and acquaintances gathered by their common love of music, said von Rueden, an Uptown resident.

Instead of having singers perform on a large symphony-hall stage, VOX 3 hopes to establish a more intimate connection in smaller settings with different audiences. For a concert of Spanish and Latin American music in July, von Rueden said, the group will choose a venue that is likely to draw from a Latino audience, he said.

As a way of even further engaging the audience, VOX 3 plans to take a leaf from an unlikely source — reality TV shows — when it begins its opera series in the fall, von Rueden said. One concert will present semi-staged scenes from various operas, and at the end of the night, audiences will vote on which excerpted opera they want to see in full.