

A virtuoso performance by Darynn Zimmer

Thursday, September 16, 2010, By John G. Miller

The Shelter Island Friends of Music presented a luminous recital by the soprano, Darynn Zimmer, on Saturday night, September 11 at the Presbyterian Church. Ms. Zimmer's performance revealed a voice capable of an enormous range of musical styles, from 19th century German and French art songs to contemporary American music. A graduate of both the Mannes School of Music and Juilliard, the soprano offered powerful versions of Schumann and Mendelssohn lieder and more subdued singing of songs by Gounod and Debussy.

The second half of the recital was devoted entirely to music of American composers, and it was in these songs that Ms. Zimmer's expressive approach was most persuasive. In five songs by Ernst Bacon, based on poetry of Emily Dickinson, she captivated listeners with her straight-forward approach to these brief lyrical gems. And, for the first time in memory, Shelter Island was the site of a classical music world premiere, when Ms. Zimmer sang "I Stepped From Plank to Plank," (also based on a Dickinson poem) written just two months ago by the acclaimed composer Lori Laitman.

The recital was held on the anniversary of the World Trade Center tragedy, and included a touching tribute to the memories of that day. The renowned composer, Bruce Wolosoff, who has lived on Shelter Island for several years, has written a radiant song, "Guru," expressively sung by Ms. Zimmer, which provided an apt reminder that music is essential to dealing with painful emotions.

During the entire evening the singer was perfectly matched and complemented by the pianist/accompanist Ted Taylor, whose own lengthy career has included musical leadership at both the New York City and Metropolitan operas.

Darynn Zimmer is the real thing: a singer with a vast repertory, an interest in unfamiliar composers, a commitment to American music, and a huge and beautifully focused voice. In the lively acoustics of the Presbyterian Church her voice occasionally sounded somewhat loud for the small space but her intensity and commitment to the musical texts made for a fascinating evening.

After a full season of purely instrumental performances, Ms. Zimmer's vocal recital was a invigorating expression of the range of great music.