

Review

Music

Velvet Voice

**Soile Isokoski, Finnish soprano,
October 10, PASYDY auditorium,
Nicosia**

The opening of the Autumn/Winter series of Pharos Trust concerts began on Wednesday night at the PASYDY Auditorium with a simply beautiful song recital given by Finnish musicians, soprano Soile Isokoski and pianist Marita Viitasalo.

The evening began on time (it is possible!) with Garo Keheyan welcoming everyone and explaining to new audience members that the main efforts of the organisation are to “enrich lives through music as well as ignite hearts and minds.” This was definitely accomplished in this concert.

Mozart's song output was approximately 30 and was one of the earliest composers to pave the way for Schubert and Schumann. The three songs, carefully chosen by this impressive duo were different in character but from the first note of the piano, the stylistic attributes of Mozart were present. The second song *Abendempfindung K523* was lyrical with the slow cantabile lines highlighting the fluidity and timbre of Isokoski's voice. Nothing further can be said about the excellence of accompanist Marita Viitasalo – always ever-present, with minimal pedaling offering clarity of sound and perfectly balanced with the voice. Throughout the recital one was very aware of the perfect diction

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of Isokoski. All the consonants were so clearly formed and especially the endings of words while never compromising the music. It is rare in a song recital to understand all the words and be able to follow the text so easily. This was true of her German, English and Swedish.

The Schubert song selection saw the changes of tonality perfectly accomplished – there was never an intonation flaw and the vocal lines and phrasing were carefully mirrored in the piano. The drama of repeated notes, so typical of Schubert's writing, especially in *Nur Were Die Sehnsucht Kennt D877* were dramatic and exciting. Isokoski's voice is crystal clear with velvet qualities while simultaneously refined and together with Viitasalo, they created a musically intelligent performance which was ultra polished. Everything was seemingly effortless – a sign of true artists.

The Sibelius songs were more musically exciting and vividly presented with an accompani-

ment full of character. Viitasalo is not only musical, but technically polished, so teamed with her experience, is a superb partner for Isokoski.

Following the interval, was Britten's *On This Island Op 11* a song cycle completed in 1937, a year of tragedy for Britten as both his mother and close friend Peter Burra died. The final song *As It Is, Plenty* particularly appealed.

Richard Strauss is one of the great songwriters with extended tonalities and challenging harmonies. Isokoski loves singing Strauss and commented on his writing "he just seems to love the soprano voice."

This was definitely a case of 'the best left for last'. Isokoski's voice was full of yearning, understanding and yet sensuous with an affecting directness. The performance was full of subtle nuances and depth – just a phenomenal performance from both artists.

Thank you to the Pharos Trust for sharing with us another evening of high quality artists.

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