

THE
Aldburgh
C O N N E C T I O N

**Hugo Wolf,
the Mighty Miniaturist**

Walter Hall, Sunday, March 14, 2010, 2:30 pm



We wish to thank Peter Partridge
for sponsoring Monica Whicher

Sally Holton and Stephen Ireland
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We are also grateful to James and Connie MacDougall
for providing the flowers on stage

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We are performing on
the Edith McConica Steinway

Hugo Wolf, the Mighty Miniaturist

Monica Whicher, soprano

Michael Colvin, tenor

Brett Polegato, baritone

Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata, piano

The songs of Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

We began this calendar year with a concert (one of our annual Schubertiads) devoted to the music of the first great master of the German *Lied*. Now we celebrate the 150th birthday (which fell yesterday) of the composer who drew the nineteenth century to a close with one of the most amazing collections of vocal music ever penned. In fact, many would regard Hugo Wolf as the last great master of art song written in the German-speaking world. Despite his fondest hopes in other directions, song was Wolf's virtually sole focus during his working life. Schubert gave us his symphonies, sonatas and chamber music; Schumann, his symphonies, concertos and solo piano music; Brahms, the typically structured *œuvre* of a classical composer - four symphonies, several sonatas for various instruments, chamber music for different ensembles, solo piano pieces, one large-scale oratorio. But with Wolf, there are really *only* the songs, 245 of them published in his lifetime, plus a number of juvenilia. Explorations in other musical genres were limited and none of them, it is fair to say, would have ensured his immortality.

The twenty years of his working life were slightly longer than the productive span allotted to Schubert, who gave us a staggering 600 songs or more. Wolf's years, however, were pitifully reduced, first of all by the uncertain strugglings of a basically self-taught artist. There was more than a decade of painstaking experimentation until, one day in February 1888, sitting in chilly, borrowed quarters in the little village of Perchtoldsdorf, just outside Vienna, the poetry of Eduard Mörike did the trick. "Eventually, after a lot of groping around, the button came undone," is what he wrote to a friend a couple of years later about the act of creation which began the *Mörike-Lieder*, the first of five supreme songbooks. The same letter ends, "God grant me a long life and plenty of good ideas!"

The second part of the prayer was lavishly answered. The life was sadly curtailed by the onset of disease and madness which led finally to six years of silence and death at the age of 42. Today, for us, is a celebration of a birthday and a lifetime's achievement. So we focus away from the tragic biography and devote ourselves

to the five volumes, composed fitfully over a space of eight years - inspiration would run freely for Wolf, often with several songs composed in a day, until the inevitable creative block came, sometimes lasting for years. One can imagine the frustration of the time in between periods of songwriting. Wolf would occupy himself with other endeavours, music criticism, attempts at publication and performance of his songs. An unachieved ambition was that of becoming an opera composer after the example of Richard Wagner, his musical hero.

Wagnerian style is the first thing, perhaps, which strikes us about Wolf's music - but it is a superficial aspect, just his way of getting the notes down on paper. Perhaps without his realising it, what makes these songs distinctive and great is something quite different - an infusion of the style of folksong. The poets who inspired Wolf's greatest songs wrote of the world of nature, and of people leading rather simple lives but filled with the deepest and most universal longings. This composer, born in a small town in Slovenia, identified increasingly with the feelings of country folk, and his last two volumes, the Spanish and Italian Songbooks, arrive finally at an almost unbelievable synthesis of Wagnerian texture with the simplicity of folksong. At the piano, we notice how often the accompaniment finishes with an open fifth in the bass, a drone effect familiar in the *Lied* since Schubert's *Der Leiermann* and obviously intended to produce rustic simplicity. This effect is crucial even in the most large-scale of Wolf's songs: *Kennst du das Land*, perhaps, or *Geh, Geliebter*. It certainly creates much of the atmosphere of the most affecting of the Italian songs - and equally touching is the way in which the composer who, almost desperately, wished to create Wagnerian epics, found his immortality in the tiniest, truest and most intimate personal expressions. His honesty and intensity demand, in the words of Wolf's biographer, Frank Walker, "the grateful love of inarticulate humanity, for whom he sang of truth and beauty."

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Because of operatic commitments, Colin Ainsworth has withdrawn from today's concert. We are extremely fortunate, and grateful, that MICHAEL COLVIN has been able to take his place.

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IN NATURE'S CARE

Fussreise (Eduard Mörike)
(baritone)

Journey on foot: With a freshly-whittled walking stick, when I go out early through the woods, up and down the hills, then, like a bird in the leaves singing and stirring, or like the golden grape sensing blissful spirits in the sun's first rays, so the dear old Adam in me feels autumn and spring fever, the God-emboldened primal bliss of Paradise.

Well, you are not as bad, old Adam, as the strict teachers say; you still love and praise, sing and glorify your beloved Maker and Preserver, as if it were the first day of creation.

Would that this could be given me, that my whole life could pass in the gentle glow of just such a morning journey!

Wenn du zu den Blumen gehst . . . (Spanish Songbook: anon., trans. Paul Heyse)
(tenor)

If you go among the flowers, pick the loveliest to adorn yourself; oh, but if you stand in the garden, it is yourself you must gather.

All the flowers know that your loveliness is beyond compare, and the flower that has seen you - its colour and finery must grow pale.

Lovelier than roses are the kisses from your mouth, for the charm of flowers ceases where your fair charm but begins.

Im Frühling (Mörike)
(soprano)

In Spring: Here I lie on the hill of spring; the clouds become my wings, a bird flies before me. Oh tell me, one and only love, where you live, that I may dwell with you! But you and the breezes have no home. Like a sunflower my mind stands open, yearning, expanding in love and hope. Spring, what is it that you want of me? When shall I be stilled?

I see the cloud moving, and the river; the golden kiss of the sun drives deep into my veins; my eyes, wondrously enchanted, close as if in sleep. Yet my ear still catches the hum of the bee. I think of this and that, I yearn without quite knowing why. It is half pleasure, half lament. Tell me, my heart, what memories are you weaving here in the twilight shade of golden-green boughs? - Old, unnameable days!

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

Der Gärtner (Mörike)

(tenor)

The Gardener: On her favourite pony as white as snow, the fairest princess rides down the avenue. On the path down which her steed so finely prances, the sand that I strewed glitters like gold!

You little rose-coloured hat, bobbing up and down, toss a feather secretly down! - and if, in return, you would like a flower from me, take a thousand for one - take all of them!

Verschwiegene Liebe (Joseph von Eichendorff)

(tenor)

Silent Love: Over treetops and standing grain, away into the brightness - who may guess them, retrieve them? - thoughts go floating, the night is silent, thoughts fly free.

If only she could guess who has thought of her amid the rustling of the wood, when no one keeps watch but the flying clouds - my love is silent and as beautiful as the night.

Auf eine Wanderung (Mörike)

(baritone)

Mörike describes his arrival in a small German town and, unexpectedly, hearing the beautiful singing voice of Marie Mörike, a cousin's wife.

On a Walk: I arrive in a friendly little town, its streets bathed in the red light of evening. From an open window, across the most sumptuous show of flowers, golden belltones are sounding, and a voice seems like a choir of nightingales, making the blossoms quiver, the breezes stir and the roses glow redder.

Long I stood in amazement, oppressed by joy. How I made my way out of the town, I truly cannot remember.

Oh, how bright the world shines here! The sky surges in crimson tumult, the town lies behind in a golden haze. How the stream babbles, how the mill roars in the valley! I am as if drunken, led astray. O Muse, you have touched my heart with a breath of love!

Auf dem grünen Balkon . . . (Spanish Songbook: anon., trans. Heyse)
(tenor)

From her green balcony my maiden gazes down at me through the trellis. She winks with a friendly eye, but with her finger she says: "No!"

Luck, which never lets young love unfold without tangles, has allotted me a certain joy, but also a precarious one. I hear either endearments or scolding when I come to her window shutters. It's always the same with maidens: a little pain will mingle with happiness: she winks with a friendly eye, but with her finger she says: "No!"

How can she reconcile her coldness and my ardour? Because my heaven rests in her, I see darkness alternating with light. The wind bears away my wistful cry that my sweet darling has never yet clasped me in her arms. But she holds me off so subtly - she winks with a friendly eye, but with her finger she says: "No!"

Geh', Geliebter, geh jetzt . . . (Spanish Songbook: anon., trans Emanuel Geibel)
(soprano)

Go, beloved, go now! See, the morning dawns. People are already passing through the alleys, and the market is becoming so lively that pale morning itself must already be raising its white wings, and I'm afraid of our neighbours, that you'll shock them; for they don't know how deeply I love you and you love me.

When the sun, shining in the heavens, banishes the clear pearls from the field, must I also, weeping, surrender the pearl which was my treasure? What sparkles as day to others seems to my eyes as night, for the darkness of parting looms before me when dawn awakes.

Flee then from my arms! For if you lose track of time, we might trade our brief, warm embrace for long sorrow. Purgatory's pains can be borne for one day, while hope, shining in the distance, reveals heaven's glory.

Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen . . . (Italian Songbook: N.Tommaseo, trans. Heyse) (baritone)

If you wish to see your lover die, don't wear your hair in curls, darling. Let it tumble free from your shoulder; it looks like threads of pure gold.

Like golden threads, stirred by the wind - how beautiful is your hair, beautiful is she who wears it! Golden threads, silken threads innumerable - how beautiful is your hair, beautiful is she who combs it!

Ich hab' in Penna . . . (Italian Songbook: Giuseppe Tigri, trans. Heyse)
(soprano)

I have a lover living in Penna, another one in the Maremma plain, one in the lovely harbour of Ancona, and for the fourth I must go to Viterbo; another one lives there in Casentino, the next lives in the same place as I, and yet another one have I in Magione, four in La Fratta, ten in Castiglione!

AFFAIRS OF THE SOUL

Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen . . . (Spanish Songbook: Lope da Vega, trans. Geibel)
(soprano)

You who hover around these palm-trees in night and wind, you holy angels, silence the treetops, my child is sleeping.

You palms of Bethlehem in the roaring wind, how can you today bluster so angrily? O roar not so! Be still, bow softly and gently;

The child of heaven suffers distress, oh, how tired he has grown with earthly sorrow. Oh, now in sleep, gently eased, his pain melts away.

Fierce cold comes rushing, how shall I cover the little child's limbs? O all you winged angels soaring in the wind, silence the treetops, my child is sleeping.

Verborgenheit (Mörike)
(baritone)

Seclusion: O world, let me be! Tempt me not with gifts of love. Let this heart in solitude have its bliss, its pain!

I cannot tell why I grieve; it is unknown sorrow. Always, I see the sun's dear light through tears. Often, when I am scarcely aware, pure joy flashes through the heaviness that oppresses me, shines blissfully in my breast.

THE LURE OF THE SOUTH

Italian Serenade (piano-duet)

arr. Max Reger
(1873-1916)

Wolf composed a Serenade in G for string quartet in May 1887. In a letter in 1890 he first referred to it as an "Italian Serenade" - he gave this title to the orchestral version of 1892. Reger assisted as editor when the orchestral score was published in 1903, and also made this piano-duet version for domestic performance.

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the
Torel Room, with the kind assistance of students
of the Opera Division, Faculty of Music

MEISTER-WORSHIP

Mignon: Kennst du das Land (*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*)
(soprano)

In Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister* the child Mignon, who was abducted by brigands in Italy and brought over the Alps into Germany, remembers, as if in a dream, her far-off southern homeland.

*Do you know the land where lemons blossom, where golden oranges glow among dark leaves? A soft wind blows from the blue sky, the silent myrtle and tall laurel grow.
Do you know it? There would I go with you, my love!
Do you know the house? Its roof rests on pillars, its hall gleams and marble statues stand and gaze at me: What have they done to you, poor child?
Do you know it? There would I go with you, my protector!
Do you know the mountain and its cloudy path? The mule seeks its way through the mist, ancient dragons dwell in caves, the rock falls sheer and the cataract over it.
Do you know it? There would I go with you, O father!*

Harfenspieler III (*Goethe*)
(baritone)

The mysterious Harper has become the protector of poor Mignon. The third of his songs is suffused with guilt and remorse - it will transpire that Mignon was the child of his incestuous union with his sister.

He who never ate his bread in tears, who never sat miserably weeping through the nights, he knows you not, you heavenly powers. You bring us into life, you let the wretch become guilty, then you abandon him to his torment; for all guilt is avenged here on earth.

THE SPIRIT WORLD

An eine Aeolsharfe (Mörike)

(tenor)

The Aeolian harp is designed to play spontaneously when exposed to the wind. Mörike here laments his younger brother, who died at the age of 17. The poem, and song, are superscribed by some lines of the Latin poet, Horace, reproaching a mourner for the unreasonably duration of his lament - in Mörike's case, a period of 13 years.

To an Aeolian Harp: Leant against the ivy-covered wall of this old terrace, you, a wind-born Muse's mysterious lyre, begin again your melodious lament!

From afar, winds, you come, ah! from the boy who was so dear to me, from his fresh green mound. On your way, streaking over spring blossoms, saturated with sweet scents, how sweetly you afflict my heart! You murmur into the strings, drawn by harmonious melancholy, growing louder, fanned by my desire, and then dying down again.

But all at once, the wind blows violently and a lovely cry of the harp echoes, to my sweet terror, the sudden stirring of my soul; and here, the full-blown rose shakes and strews all its petals at my feet!

Der Feuerreiter (Mörike)

(baritone)

Mörike was fascinated by all kinds of legends of black magic. The "Fire-rider" is supposedly based on a mad captain in the Thirty Years War, a recluse who was only seen when a fire had broken out somewhere - there is even a hint of fire-raising involved. Wolf turns the lengthy poem into an absolute tour-de-force, a vocal symphonic poem, whose dramatic sweep falls into four sections:

1. A distant tumult is heard, then the Fire-rider emerges, wearing a red cap; there is a blaze at the mill behind the hill! He gallops through the gate, across country and arrives at the mill, while the fire-bell peals.
2. In awed tones, the narrator reminds the Fire-rider, who brandishes a splinter of the True Cross to subdue the flames, that the Devil is lurking and may take vengeance on him.
3. In less than an hour, the mill collapses in rubble. The Fire-rider is seen no more; the crowd returns home.
4. Later, a miller finds a skeleton, wearing a cap and on a bony mare, upright against the cellar wall - but instantly, it falls in ashes. Rest in peace, here in the mill!

A PARTING JEST

Wie lange schon . . . (Italian Songbook: Tommaseo, trans. Heyse)
(soprano)

How long have I yearned, ah! if only a musician could love me! Now the Lord has granted my wish and sends me one, all pink and white. Here he comes with a mild manner and bows his head and plays the violin.

Seemans Abschied (Eichendorff) (tenor)

Sailor's Farewell: Adieu, my love, you never wanted me - I was too lowly for you. One day you will wander by moonlight and hear sweet sounds: a mermaid is singing, the night is balmy, quiet clouds drift by. Then think of me and my mermaid wife and find yourself another lover.

Adieu, soldiers and musketeers! We ride a wild horse that bucks and rears and turns somersaults before towering cliffs. The merman rises up amid lightning flashes on dark nights, the shark snaps, the seagulls cry: this is a merry struggle!

Stretch out your lazy limbs on your bearskin rugs, you stay-at-homes. God the Father gazes out of his window and sends his Flood again! Fieldmarshals, cavalrymen and musketeers, all must drown, while we run before a favourable wind straight into Paradise.

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This Aldeburgh Connection celebration of Hugo Wolf is being recorded by CBC Radio for broadcast on IN CONCERT (Host Bill Richardson)

Neil Crory, Senior Music Producer
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Plans are in full swing for the **Aldeburgh Connection's 2010/12 season!** Full details will be published in our brochure during the month of June. Meanwhile, here are some dates for your diary.

Sunday Series: October 24, December 5, January 30, March 6, May 1.

Discovery Series: Tuesday, November 2 and Tuesday, February 15.

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The fourth **Bayfield Festival of Song** will run from June 5 to 13. Brochures will be available and bookings accepted at the beginning of April. Here are some highlights:

June 5, VIRGINIA HATFIELD and LAUREN SEGAL in recital.

June 10, Masterclass for young singers with MARY LOU FALLIS and PETER TIEFENBACH.

June 11, *Primadonna Sails In!* - an entertainment with FALLIS and TIEFENBACH.

June 12, SUSAN PLATTS in recital.

Other events will feature singers LESLIE ANN BRADLEY, ERICA IRIS HUANG, FRANK MUTYA and VASIL GARVANLIEV.

Full details will be posted on our website, www.aldeburghconnection.org

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This year's final Sunday concert, at 2:30 pm on May 2, will be *City of Villages*, an eclectic mix of songs from various traditions, reflecting some of Toronto's diversity and some of the musical and literary figures who have made up its rich tapestry. Soloists will include LUCIA CESARONI, ALLYSON McHARDY, LAWRENCE WILIFORD and BENJAMIN COVEY. For tickets, call our box office, 416.735.7982.

If you are already a subscriber, remember that you can bring a friend to this concert at the reduced price of \$40. We encourage you to take advantage of this special offer and introduce a new audience member to our series!

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Copies of our CDs are available during the intermission or through our website: www.aldeburghconnection.org

Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; grants, corporate funding and individual donations are needed for the balance. Please consider joining one of our supporting categories: Benefactor (\$1,000 or more), Champion (\$500 or more), Patron (\$200 or more), Supporter (\$100 or more) and Friend (\$50 or more). Donations may be made by cheque, VISA or MasterCard, and may be made in instalments. You will receive information about our activities and all donations will be acknowledged by a receipt for income tax purposes. Donors may act as sponsors for a concert, an artist or a special commission. Suggestions for corporate sponsorship are also very welcome.

Your support is vital to the continuation of these concerts! Please reach us at 416-735-7982 or through our website: www.aldeburghconnection.org

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We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following in the presentation of today's concert:

The Ontario Arts Council



The City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council



Alice Adelkind
 Sally Holton and Stephen Ireland
 Chris Kelly
 James and Connie MacDougall
 Peter Partridge

We are very grateful for the generous sponsorship of our Discovery Series by:
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THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION continues to be supported by a large group of individuals, including the following, whom we gratefully acknowledge - donations received January 1, 2009 to February 28, 2010:

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Aldeburgh is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic Directors **Stephen Ralls** and **Bruce Ubukata** visited and worked there for many summers, as have many of the singers who appear with the Aldeburgh Connection.

Monica Whicher's performances on the concert and opera stage are marked by style and musical elegance, combined with an intuitive theatrical sense. Her 2008-2009 season reflected the varied aspects of her artistry and highlights include Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* with Oundjian and the Toronto Symphony, *Elijah* with the Calgary Philharmonic, the title role in *Thaïs* for Pacific Opera Victoria, Bach's *Johannes Passion* for the Amadeus Choir and performances at the Westben Festival, Festival of the Sound and the Aldeburgh Connection. In 2007-2008, Ms. Whicher was heard in Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the National Arts Centre Orchestra and *Messiah* with the Mississauga Choral Society. Also on the concert stage, she sang Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* with the Kingston Symphony, Grieg's *Peer Gynt* with the Victoria Symphony and a new work by Gavin Bryars performed with the Talisker Players of Toronto. Her discography continues to expand with the recording of a set of songs by the Ukrainian composer Dimitri Lysenko. Her 2009-2010 season is made up of concerts, recitals and symphonic engagements across Ontario.

For 2006-2007, she sang the Strauss songs for Orchestra London and the Ottawa Symphony, *Messiah* with the Colorado Symphony and the Elmer Iseler Singers, the title role in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for Opera Atelier's tour of Korea, and then repeated the role for Toronto Masque Theatre. On her schedule for 2005-2006 were Opera Atelier's *Armide* and *Orfeo*, and she returned to Pacific Opera Victoria for the Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia*. *Elijah* with the Vancouver Symphony, *The Creation* for Orchestra London, Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder* with the Hamilton Philharmonic, Bach's *Mass in B Minor* for the Vancouver Bach Choir and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Victoria Symphony were highlights of her concert schedule.

In recent seasons, she was featured in *Messiah* with the Calgary Philharmonic and the Edmonton Symphony, as Drusilla in Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea* for the Cleveland Opera and she was lavishly praised for her Naxos recording of *Castor et Pollux* with the Aradia Baroque Ensemble and Opera in Concert of Toronto. For Opera Atelier, she starred as the Countess in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, the Aldeburgh Connection presented her in Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch* and she was in Ottawa with the National Arts Centre Orchestra for Mozart's *Requiem*. On the summer festival circuit were appearances at the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival and at the Nürnberg Chamber Music Festival as the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* and the Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, the latter recorded for broadcast by Bayerische Rundfunk.

On the international circuit, Ms Whicher performed Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* and *Exultate, jubilate* with Rilling in Bilbao and has also been heard with the symphonies of Barcelona, Utah and Minnesota. Winner of the George London Award, she premiered Ryan's *Ophélie* with the Toronto Symphony and was heard with the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony (Brahms' *Deutsches Requiem*) and with the National Ballet (Gorecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*). Of particular note was her performance as Solveig in *Peer Gynt* with Christopher Plummer and the Toronto Symphony. In concert, Ms Whicher premiered song cycles by John Beckwith and John Greer for the Aldeburgh Connection and appeared with the Winnipeg New Music Festival and Festival Lanaudiere. She has collaborated with harpist Judy Loman, guitarist Rachel Gauk and the Penderecki Quartet in recital and her concerts are frequently broadcast by CBC Radio 2. Her recordings of Bach, Schubert and Hatzis are available on Marquis Classics and other labels. Ms Whicher was nominated for a 2002 Juno Award for her CD entitled *Singing Somers Theatre*, released on the Centredisc label. Ms Whicher is a Faculty member of Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

Michael Colvin has appeared to critical acclaim on opera and concert stages throughout Canada, the USA, the UK and Europe - he was hailed in Opera News as possessing "one of the most beautiful young lyric tenor instruments around". His 2009-2010 Season includes the role of Peter Quint in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* at English National Opera, conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras and directed by David McVicar, Arbace in the Canadian Opera Company's production of *Idomeneo*, conducted by Harry Bicket and the Italian Singer in Pacific Opera Victoria's *Capriccio* by R. Strauss. On the concert stage his schedule includes Verdi's *Requiem* for the Richard Eaton Singers of Edmonton, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for Vancouver Symphony and *Messiah* for the New Mexico Symphony, Newfoundland Symphony and Toronto's Elmer Iseler Singers.

In 2010-2011, he will return to English National Opera as Flute in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Plans also include *Die Meistersinger* for Welsh National Opera where he covers David, and for the Canadian Opera Company, he will cover the role of Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*. He will be heard with the Seattle Symphony in *Messiah* and continues his recording project of Ukrainian art songs by Lysenko.

Michael's 2008-2009 season featured his Minnesota Opera debut as Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and a season at English National Opera as Bob Boles in David Alden's production of *Peter Grimes* conducted by Edward Gardner. Concert highlights last season included Haydn's *Creation* with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Calgary Philharmonic and Kingston Symphony, *Messiah* with the Winnipeg Symphony and Chorus Niagara, Vivaldi's *Dixit Dominus* for the National Ballet of Canada and a recital with Toronto's Aldeburgh Connection.

Recent operatic roles include Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* for the Canadian Opera Company, Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* for Portland Opera, Don Ottavio in Chicago Opera Theater's *Don Giovanni*, and his critically acclaimed UK opera debut as Rodrigo in *La donna del lago* for Garsington Opera. Other engagements included Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Opera Lyra Ottawa, and Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* and Jupiter in *Semele* for Chicago Opera Theater. For the COC he has sung in *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Il viaggio a Reims*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Barber of Seville*. Other credits include a big-screen debut as Don Ottavio in the film *Don Giovanni Unmasked* alongside baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky and recordings on the Naxos, CBC and Warner Music labels.

On the concert platform Michael has sung Mozart's *Requiem* for Chicago's Grant Park Festival and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with Nicholas McGegan and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, *Messiah* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra/Glover, National Arts Centre Orchestra/ Pinnock and Rochester Philharmonic, Schubert's *Mass in A flat* with Helmut Rilling and Festival Vancouver, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre symphonique de Quebec, Elora Festival and Festival de Lanaudière, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, Haydn's *Creation* and Verdi's *Requiem* for the Elora Festival and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for the National Ballet of Canada. Highlights include Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* and Brahms's *Liebeslieder-Walzer* for CBC Radio, Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* at Toronto's Glenn Gould Studio and regular appearances with Toronto's Aldeburgh Connection and Off Centre Music Salon.

Born in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, and raised in Toronto, Canada, Michael began his musical studies at St. Michael's Choir School in Toronto and returned to music after attaining his Bachelor of Science in Immunology from the University of Toronto. A graduate of the University of Toronto's Opera Division, Michael has also trained with the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England and the Banff Centre for the Arts. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, most notably the Canadian Opera Foundation Award, Chalmers Performing Arts Award and a Canada Council Artist Grant.

Brett Polegato's artistic sensibility has earned him the highest praise from audiences and critics: "his is a serious and seductive voice" says *The Globe and Mail*, and *The New York Times* has praised him for his "burnished, well-focused voice" which he uses with "considerable intelligence and nuance." He appears regularly on the world's most distinguished stages including those of Lincoln Center, La Scala, the Concertgebouw, the Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Roy Thomson Hall, the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

He opened the Canadian Opera Company's 2009/2010 season as Sharpless, his role debut, in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. He spent the winter in Oslo, where he performed one of his signature roles, Count Almaviva, in a new production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. The New Year began with a series of performances of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* with the Colorado Symphony. In May, he sings another of his signature roles, the title role in *Don Giovanni*, for Calgary Opera. Following these performances, he makes his debut with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* with Robert Spano, conducting, and concludes the season in Toronto, where he makes a return appearance with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

In 2008/2009, Brett Plegato opened the Canadian Opera Company's season singing the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, a performance lauded by critics and audiences alike. In November, he performed one of his signature roles, the title character in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, in a new production for Vancouver Opera. Between recital appearances at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and Rockefeller University in New York City, he travelled to Boston to sing Handel's *Messiah* with the Handel & Haydn Society and, later in December, with the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir in Toronto. Following these performances, he travelled to Naples for the re-opening of the Teatro di San Carlo, singing Ned Keene in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* with Jeffrey Tate conducting. His season culminated in his first essay of Schubert's monumental cycle, *Winterreise*, with pianist Stephen Ralls, for the Aldeburgh Connection in Toronto.

He has appeared frequently in the title role of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, including new productions at the Strasbourg's Opéra National du Rhin, at the Leipzig Opera conducted by Marc Minkowski, and in Munich with Marcello Viotti. *Pelléas* was also the role which marked his Paris Opera debut in September of 2004. He has appeared with the Chicago Lyric Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, Opéra de Genève, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra National de Toulouse, Teatro Real in Madrid, Saito Kinen Festival, Florence's Maggio Musicale, Vlaamse Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera and Calgary Opera in over 50 roles, including Oreste (*Iphigénie en Tauride*), Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), Yeletsky (*Pique Dame*), Valentin (*Faust*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Dandini (*La Cenerentola*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Wiedhopf in Braunfel's *Die Vögel*.

Equally at ease on the concert and recital stages, Mr. Plegato made his Carnegie Hall recital debut at Weill Recital Hall in May 2003 with pianist, Warren Jones. He is a frequent guest artist with the Bayerischer Rundfunkorchester in Munich and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and has appeared with most major U.S. and Canadian orchestras. He with the Chicago Symphony in the U.S. premiere of Saariaho's *Cinq Reflets*, the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Mahler orchestral lieder, the Toronto Symphony in Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and Zemlinsky's *Lyric*

Symphony with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. In 2002, he returned to the London BBC Proms for a concert performance of Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* with Gianandrea Noseda conducting, and rejoined the National Symphony Orchestra at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center for Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. As a recitalist, Mr. Polegato appears frequently throughout North America and Europe, and is particularly noted for his programming choices and wide range of repertoire.

Polegato's recordings include the Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* with the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano, his critically praised solo disc, *To A Poet*, with pianist Iain Burnside, on CBC Records, an Analekta-Fleur de Lys disc of Bach's popular *Coffee and Peasant Cantatas* with the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, and a live period-instrument performance of *Messiah* with the Handel & Haydn Society on Arabesque Recordings. His opera recordings include Emmerich Kálmán's *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (Decca) with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Gluck's *Armide* with Les Musiciens du Louvre, on the Deutsche Grammophon's Archiv label.

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