

# White Roses of Antonina Ermolenko



The name Ermolenko already has a distinguished history in the annals of Ukrainian vocal music. One hundred years ago, the legendary Ukrainian soprano Natalia Ermolenko was performing in opera theatres across Europe and singing the art songs of Mykola Lysenko and Yakiv Stepovy. Today, there is a new Ermolenko - Antonina.

Born in Ukraine, but educated in Canada, Antonina Ermolenko has combined the best of both cultures to become one of today's most promising vocalists. She is a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music (Toronto), Hunter College (New York City) and Canada's Opera Workshop.

On Sunday, April 10, 2011 the Ukrainian Music Festival sponsored a vocal recital at the CBC Glenn Gould Studio of soprano Antonina Ermolenko and her accompanist pianist Marianna Humetska. The programme included art songs and arias by F. Schubert, A. Dvořk, M. de Falla, G. Puccini, G. Verdi, G. Bizet, L. Yashchenko, A. Kos-Anatolsky and S. Hulak-Artemovsky.

Schubert's famous *Stndchen*, *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* were absolutely enchanting. Falla's *Siete canciones populares espaolas* were breathtakingly fiery. The operatic arias of Dvořk, Puccini, Verdi, Bizet and Hulak-Artemovsky were brilliantly evocative. Yashchenko, a contemporary Ukrainian composer, arranged the folk song *Oi, de ty pidesh* (*Oh, where will you go*). Rarely has such a transcription been more artistic than

this. It requires incredible vocal technique in performance. Antonina's rendition was as effortless as it was beautiful.

The three art songs of Kos-Anatolsky were the highlight of the recital: *Koly zasnul syni hory* (*When the Blue Mountains Fall Asleep*), *Bili troiandy* (*White Roses*), and *Nezabutnii val's* (*The Unforgettable Waltz*). The lyricism and emotional depth of these three pieces, sung so expressively, brought quite a few tears to the eyes of the audience.

Pianist Marianna Humetska, also born in Ukraine, studied in L'viv, Moscow and Toronto. Her recent performance of R. Schumann's virtuoso *tudes Symphoniques* was superb. As an accompanist, Marianna is in complete control of the music. She weaves a magical tapestry of sound for the soloist.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to the performers and sponsors for an unforgettable event.

*Wasył Sydorenko,*

*Toronto Musicologis*

### **PHOTOS**

*Concert organizing committee (L-R back row): Olya Bileychuk, Roma Kwasnycia, Mika Gembatiuk, Oksana Zolkewych; (L-R front row): Ania Krystalowych Wawruch, Marta Chomyn, Antonina Ermolenko, Marianna Humetska, Mika Barabash Shepherd*