Creating a theme-based recital: Programming with a Purpose

Mr. Stephen Swanson

ABSTRACT:
Creating a theme-based recital: programming with a purpose. Take your programming to a new level that helps keep your audience involved in the entire performance.

Recitals seem to grow out of a wide variety of sources, but unless you are performing an evening filling song cycle there are considerations that can help the audience to be drawn into the stories that are being told by the performers. This roundtable will discuss methods that Professor Stephen Swanson has found useful in his nearly 50 years of performing. He will discuss

1. Recital that grew out of reactions to social/political situations
2. Recital that were created because a song cycle was the request of his collaborative pianists
3. Recital that grew out of the desire to perform funny, non-traditional songs
4. Recital that were created to supply an artistic component to an international conference sponsored by the University of Iowa English department
5. Recital unified by an arbitrary decision
6. Researching songs to fulfill a specific need
7. Supporting materials for your audience

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY:
STEPHEN SWANSON has been professor of voice at the University of Iowa (UI) since 1994. He earned degrees from North Park College and Northwestern University and served young artist apprenticeships with the Wolf Trap Company and at Zurich Opera. Before joining the UI faculty, Mr. Swanson worked full time as a concert and opera singer for 24 years, first in the Chicago area and later in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. Throughout his career Swanson has performed as a soloist with many renowned conductors, including concerts under Sir Georg Solti, Rafael Frübeck de Burgos, Margaret Hillis, and Vance George; and operas under Giuseppe Patanè, Nello Santi and Ferdinand Leitner. An extremely versatile performer, he sings works from the Baroque to the avant-garde as well as standard baritone concert repertoire, such as Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem,* Mendelssohn's *Elijah,* and his signature piece, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. At Iowa Stephen Swanson has concentrated on presenting theme-based art song recitals. Two examples of these, *Was my brother in the battle? Songs of War* and *Animal Songs: Bestiaries in English, French, and German* are available on CD from Albany Records. He is currently exploring the connection between art song literature and foreign language acquisition.
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