

August, 2006

Music / Leslie Gerber Wine and song

Since I've enjoyed almost all the Woodstock Fringe events I've attended, I was sorry to see that this year's schedule didn't include any art song concerts, a feature of the previous Fringe Festivals. I'm hardly surprised, since the recitals were not well attended, but they brought something to Woodstock's musical life that has been almost completely absent otherwise. (I can hardly remember the last song recital at Maverick, for instance.) However, we did get one program of theater songs called *Unheard Of: A Musical Review*, which I heard Thursday night, August 17. Watson Heintz, a talented singer and actress, collaborated with composer and pianist Jared Dembowski on a program of theater songs (some from actual shows, some not) by little-known composers -- including Dembowski himself. It was interesting to hear how conservative the style of these songs was (several were even in ragtime style), but most of the material was engaging and so were the performances.

Heintz is a well trained singer who knows how to bring character and meaning to a song, and her diction is excellent. She can also sing a climax in a small theater like the Byrdcliffe Theatre without hurting your ears. Dembowski plays well, and he is so good at the arcane art of page-turning that he worked from a bound collection of music printed on one side of a page! Most pianists forced to turn their own pages would have re-copied the scores on both sides to cut the page turns in half, but not Dembowski. His songs were among the more entertaining items on the program, and "My News Is Old News" actually had me laughing out loud. I'm sorry now that I didn't get to hear an earlier performance of this show so that I could have gotten a review out while it was still running. Watch for these performers next year.