One of the primary missions of the Lotte Lehmann Foundation is the promotion and support of Art Song. Each year the Foundation offers its “World of Song Award,” presented in a three-year cycle honoring living pianists, singers, and composers in turn who have made significant contributions to the field.

This year the World of Song Award was presented to baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau on the occasion of his 80th birthday on 28 May 2005.

The list of recipients already includes some of the most prominent names in the field: in 2001, the pianist Dalton Baldwin on the occasion of his seventieth birthday; in 2002, the composer Ned Rorem, who celebrated his eightieth birthday; and in 2004, the pianist and song scholar Graham Johnson.

The inscription on this year’s award reads in part:

“For the intelligence, poetic sensibility, command of nuance, beautiful voice and musical artistry that you brought to the art of Lieder singing;

To honor your willingness – to explore all aspects of the Lieder repertoire, including contemporary song – and to re-record your vital interpretations of the standard works;

In acknowledgement of your 45 year singing career which brought the joy of Lieder to the world;

In appreciation of your teaching, master classes, books, conducting and reciting.”

Lehmann Masterclasses Reissued on DVD

VAI has announced the release of two DVDs of Lehmann’s master classes filmed in 1961 at the Music Academy of the West by National Educational Television, the precursor of PBS. VAI had access to the original tapes, now housed in the Library of Congress, resulting in sound and picture far superior to the original video release. The first DVD features Lehmann’s operatic master classes and the second focuses on her Lieder classes. In addition, VAI has discovered a 21-minute Lehmann interview from 1963 with the CBC, which will be included as a bonus on the opera DVD.

Throughout the classes, Lehmann demonstrates her rapport with her students as well as an easy command of the stage undimmed by her 73 years. Highlights include her reenactment of her legendary Rosenkavalier Marschallin, whose monologue is delivered in a baritonal whisper, and her unforgettable silent performance of the final measures of Schumann’s Frauenliebe und Leben, underscored by the piano postlude.

Throughout, Lehmann spontaneously and without notes translates the song or sets the scene for the aria, effortlessly demonstrating why she was considered the greatest singing actor of her day. Highlights include her reenactment of her legendary Rosenkavalier Marschallin, whose monologue is delivered in a baritonal whisper, and her unforgettable silent performance of the final measures of Schumann’s Frauenliebe und Leben, underscored by the piano postlude.

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Update on Lehmann Tribute CD


The response of those who have already recorded their contributions has been uniformly positive. We look forward to a 2006 release.

First Lehmann Foundation Benefit

On 10 May 2005 an appreciative group of art song enthusiasts gathered at the Century Association for a wonderful catered meal and entertainment of the highest order. Ned Rorem read his own tribute to the guest of honor, Phyllis Curtin, who had sung many of Rorem’s songs with him at the piano. Soprano Valerie Komar, the Grand Prize Winner of CyberSing 2004, and Richard Hurt, this year’s Joy in Singing Winner, performed art songs specially selected for the event, with Brian Zeger, the pianist. President Daron Hagen said, “It’s this level of event that lets the classical music world know that the Lehmann Foundation has arrived, is active and growing.”
All participants in CyberSing, the Foundation’s international web-based art song competition, are required to prepare a song written especially for the competition. In past years, such songs have been commissioned from Ned Rorem and Libby Larsen.

Mr. Welcher expressed his enthusiasm upon receiving the commission: “I am very excited about this. The Art Song Pilot Project is a wonderful opportunity for me and for the students of Frank Sinatra High School. While tenor Paul Sperry’s repertoire extends from Monteverdi to Britten, he is particularly renowned as one of today’s outstanding interpreters of American music. In addition to his performing, which includes frequent performances as a music director, Dan Welcher has composed over 80 works, including more than twenty orchestral works, two operas, wind ensemble, choral music and many combinations of chamber music. His music is represented on more than twenty seven CD recordings on the New World, Marco Polo, Crystal, Giaiupo, Summit, and Klavier labels.”