

Opera Now

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James Baillieu and Lise Davidsen in Snape Maltings Concert Hall | Photo: © Marcus Roth

Reviews

Lise Davidsen and James Baillieu Schubert recital at Aldeburgh Festival | Live Review

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To watch Lise Davidsen sing Schubert is to witness an important moment of history play out in real time



It would be a crime if Decca didn't issue a Lise Davidsen Schubert album after this tour. Davidsen and her miraculous creative partnership with pianist James Baillieu has held firm for many years now and most recently sees them touring a programme of Schubert, twice at the Wigmore, then to Bergen and now Aldeburgh.

It's anchored very much to text and has a strong emotional structure. In the Snape Maltings Concert Hall on the second day of the Aldeburgh Festival, this included surtitling of the English translations of Schubert's German lieder – a game-changing decision which only amplified the emotional impact of the recital.

Davidsen's voice begins where many sopranos' voices end, and the magic of her presence is further increased by personal, deeply thoughtful introductions, contextualising the texts of Goethe, Schober and Rückert with true humanity.

Like many good things, Davidsen's Schubert starts slowly, building with emotional intensity until there's nothing left but to sit and experience. 'Am Bach im Frühling', starting the recital, brought an insight into Davidsen's extraordinary sense of geography and line. Through 'Ganymed' and 'Der Zwerg', Baillieu proved himself to be the ultimate steward, though with a matched presence. The '4 Gesänge aus "Wilhelm Meister"' were magically woven, the utter devastation of the words bringing voice and piano completely inside one another.

The second half saw Davidsen enter into agility mode, beautifully skipping across the arpeggios of 'Der Musensohn'. Some of her voice's most tender, darker colours invited us in for 'Suleika I', with tender, emotional resonance pouring out for 'Der blinde Knabe' and 'Du bist die Ruh'. Davidsen and Baillieu have the ability to draw out the finest nuance in the simplest of Schubert's songs. Nowhere was this more in evidence than in 'Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen', the lullaby-esque piece that ended the recital with a luminous spiritual veil.

There are rare moments where you feel as an audience member that you are witnessing an extraordinary moment in history. Being in the same room as Lise Davidsen certainly reveals this feeling.