

Autumn Makes Me Sing

Key to the Door Weekly

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By Colin Welford

This week AFT is gearing up to a special event in our calendar - our annual fall "Equinox Concert". Well, it's not really *annual* in the sense that we haven't actually done one since 2005, but as the sun reliably crosses the equator around this time every year (that's the 'equinox' bit) with blatant disregard for AFT's scheduled performances, we figure we have some catching up to do!

The concert series originated as a way for AFT performers to showcase their talents differently than within the context of the character-roles they play in our summer shows. As AFT's main mission is to produce musical theatre written by us or specifically for us, it does mean that there is much other wonderful and pre-existing music that is rarely heard from AFT performers' lips. The Equinox events were thus a rare opportunity to hear our performers sing all the great songs and pieces of music they already knew and that must have been bursting to be heard.

When AFT Board members excitedly approached me with the plan to revive this concert series this year, I was immediately hooked.. They recollected warm and intimate evenings of music in the atmospheric Great Room at Bjorklunden led by AFT founding member and lyric tenor Fred Alley. It sounded quite a contrast from the rollicking fun of our summer season, and an opportunity to craft a unique event featuring beautiful solo and group singing of all styles.

I started by looking up the word "Equinox" as I wasn't really sure what it meant.

The answer I found was complicated and seemed to have some kind of oblique connection to the Greek goddess Persephone. As far as I could decipher, she was a kind of 'vegetation goddess'. When she was not busy being abducted into the underworld by Zeus she managed to find the time to spring up from the ground in a personification of spring shoots, and then to withdraw into the earth after harvest.

I'm sure this is dreadful over-simplification, but you get the picture. As a result, the idea of producing an 'autumn concert' quickly expanded to the creation of a program that celebrates ALL the seasons, and particularly the way that each season follows the last one until the year comes around again. The turning of the seasons is something we mostly take for granted, yet it only takes a look out of a Door County window imagining the view in all the year's different colors for us to be reminded of this miracle.

Quick research reveals that there are literally tens of thousands of songs written about the seasons, with a vastly unfair majority being about the spring: spring trees, spring rain, spring love, spring chicken...you name it. But with such a treasure trove of musical material to select twenty songs from, I figure it's a sure-fire thing that the music we have chosen for our event is going to be gorgeous, evocative and memorable.

I'm happy that once again the *annual* Equinox Concert entitled "Autumn Makes Me Sing" will sing forth in the beautiful Great Room at Bjorklunden on October 1st, as our unusually large cast of twelve singers and musicians (including AFT's Jeff Herbst, Steve Koehler, Jake Endres, Karen Mal, Katie Dahl, Molly Rhode with mezzo-soprano Cyndy Stiehl) weave an extraordinary tapestry of poetry, music and atmospheres.

I hope you will come and experience the falling leaves, the wintery frost, some spring chicken, and a lazy summer's evening with us – and still be home before midnight!



Colin Welford is the music director for American Folklore Theatre.