

PRESS RELEASE

KATHRYN WHITNEY

“An extraordinary voice, an enchanting performer;

a new artist of exceptional calibre”



“Beautiful”, “touching”, “charming”, “prophetic” – these are just some of the words currently being used in the press to describe the exquisite voice, expert musicianship and wonderfully engaging stage presence of award-winning singer Kathryn Whitney.

A Canadian citizen with British nationality, Kathryn now performs regularly in both countries and is already making a considerable contribution to both Canadian and British national musical life.

Born in Alberta and raised on Vancouver Island, Kathryn Whitney began her studies at the Victoria Conservatory of Music, going on to complete a BA in music and German at the University of Toronto, a masters and doctorate in music from the University of Oxford, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Performance from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, England.

When she was an undergraduate in Toronto, Kathryn regularly travelled to New York for lessons with the renowned singing teacher Cornelius Reid. It was usual to take four or five lessons a week in Cornelius Reid’s West End Avenue living-room studio and it was *de rigueur* to spend long afternoons sitting in on other students’ lessons – an important education for any aspiring singer. Upon moving to Oxford, Kathryn studied for two years under the famous English soprano Emma Kirkby, travelling to London for private lessons over cups of herbal tea in Emma Kirkby’s Notting Hill flat. Emma Kirkby imparted to Kathryn the importance of striving to achieve the utmost technical precision and never straying from the singer’s ultimate purpose: to convey in the most honest and direct possible terms the meaning of the text. These standards were put to the test in 1998, when Kathryn performed as a soloist alongside Emma Kirkby in Pergolesi’s beautiful *Stabat Mater*, an evening that has been described as “transcendent” and “mesmerizing”.

Upon finishing her doctorate at Oxford in 1999, Kathryn went on to study singing full time at London’s prestigious Guildhall School of Music, where she gained her place on Emma Kirkby’s recommendation, and where she was supported by a generous scholarship from the Worshipful Company of Drapers of London. At Guildhall, Kathryn began work with her principal teacher, Susan McCulloch, also a professor at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and one of the most sought-after teachers in London. Kathryn has also appeared in masterclasses with a number of musical luminaries, including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Rudolf Jansen, Elly Ameling, Stuart Hamilton, Timothy Vernon, Peter Barcza, Laura Sarti, Robin Bowman and Lillian Watson.

Kathryn is the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards in addition to the Drapers' Performing Arts Award, including a Pollock Performance Scholarship, a Halstead Scholarship and two separate Graduate Scholarships, all from the University of Oxford, plus grants from the British Council, the Mountainview Festival of Song and Chamber Music in Alberta and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Upon graduating from the Guildhall School of Music in 2001, Kathryn's exceptional musical talent and winning personality were immediately recognised, and she was honoured with the Wolfson Creative Arts Fellowship at the University of Oxford (2002-2005), a position that made her an Artist in Residence in the famous ancient university town where she had finished her degree two years earlier. The Wolfson Creative Arts Fellowship exists to encourage the career of promising artists, and offers its incumbent room and board in Oxford, plus a stipend to cover expenses, for a period of three years.

Under the patronage of the Wolfson Creative Arts Fellowship, Kathryn's career has gone from strength to strength. She has completed three international recital tours, recorded her first solo recital disk, established collaborative relationships with prominent Canadian and British composers, and premiered 16 new works, the majority of them written especially for her voice. She has been heard on CBC radio on a number of occasions during this time, including a special extended interview with Sheryl MacKay on North-by-Northwest in 2004. She performed with numerous orchestras and opera companies in the UK and Canada, and she expanded her current repertoire to include a number of principal mezzo roles and well over 300 solo songs.

As Wolfson Creative Arts Fellow, Kathryn also performed three solo song recitals in Oxford each year, gave a number of lecture-recitals on the song repertoire and developed a special Sunday afternoon concert series in Wolfson College. Proceeds from all of these events went to the AIDS charity AMREF, raising considerable funds for their Doctors in Africa programme.

2005 was a banner year for Kathryn. She sang concerts for 12 professional recital series in the UK and Canada, including return appearances in Oxford, London, Vancouver, Nanaimo and Victoria, and she performed her London début recital – an important watershed for any young singer – at the prestigious and historic St John's Smith Square in Westminster in March. She also premiered new song cycles written for her by Canadian composer Lorna Paterson (Sylvia Plath Songs) and British composer Susan Wollenberg ('The Survivor' to texts by Primo Levi).

Kathryn made her Canadian provincial arts showcase début in 2005, appearing in the Stars for Saskatchewan series at the OSAC Saskatchewan Showcase for the Arts, where she was supported by a generous grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. She returns to perform her first recital tour in Saskatchewan and Alberta in April 2007, which will include a concert for the historic Regina Musical Club.

Kathryn's exceptional talent and her commitment to metropolitan and rural recital touring and to the song repertoire was recognised in 2005 by a high-profile joint commission from the Arts Council of England, the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust and the British PRS Foundation, who engaged the famous British composer John McCabe, CBE, to create a new extended solo vocal chamber piece for her voice.

She performed the world première of the new work, 'Heloise to Abelard', with pianist Michael Brownlee Walker in Oxford within a month of its completion. The Canadian première followed in Nanaimo with pianist Charlotte Hale in November 2005. 'Heloise to Abelard', which is dedicated to Kathryn, is now available internationally through the leading London music publisher, Novello & Co.

Under the patronage of the Wolfson Creative Arts Fellowship, Kathryn's talent and her career have blossomed, and she has quickly established herself as a professional singer of the highest calibre with a beautiful, exciting, colourful voice and a wonderful stage presence. A relaxed and humorous performer with a special gift for charming and amusing audiences as well as entertaining them with beautiful and interesting programs, she is a natural interpreter, in particular of the song repertoire, a trait that has her much in demand as a solo concert artist at an unusually early stage in her career.

Kathryn Whitney's international profile is ever-expanding, with plans underway for concert tours in Canada, Britain and in continental Europe over the next two years. In February 2007, she premieres no fewer than three new song cycles written for her by British composers Susan Wollenberg, John Caldwell and David Maw. In April 2007 Kathryn will showcase on the mainstage in Vancouver at the annual professional booking conference of the British Columbia Touring Council for the Arts – the only classical soloist to be independently promoted this year by the BC Touring Council.

Kathryn Whitney is a talented new musician of exceptional calibre, whose magical performances will be remembered for many years to come.

We welcome enquiries from all presenters and press agents interested in further information about this exiting new singer.

For further information, please see: www.kathrynwhitney.net

Press and presenter contact address: booking.enquiries@kathrynwhitney.net