

A Nordic Tapestry with Soprano Elly Erickson

By Eva Stenskär
New York

ASF fellow Elly Erickson made an ordinary Thursday evening lovely with a concert featuring Nordic songs of love, joy, and melancholy at Scandinavia House. Erickson, whose ancestors were Swedish, grew up in the Bronx, and is the recipient of a number of awards, she was the 1st Place Winner in the 2003 Jenny Lind Competition, and has received grants from the Swedish Institute, The American-Scandinavian Foundation, and the Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr. Foundation among others.

"We've given her the ASF grant twice," said Lynn Carter, Vice President of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. "In 2005, when we supported her studies in Sweden, and now in 2007 when she'll go back to Sweden and Norway to further work on her Scandinavian repertoire."

Brian G. Andersson, Commissioner of New York City's Department of Records and Information and a well-known figure in the Scandinavian community in New York, introduced Erickson.

"I first read about Elly in *Nordstjernen* after she had won the Jenny Lind competition," Andersson said. "It said she was from the Bronx, and I am from the Bronx and few Swedes are, so I contacted her. It turned out she didn't have any contact with the Scandinavian community. So I said 'Kid, we've

got to get you connected!' And so here she is, I'm very proud of Elly, she's great!"

And she sure is. With a flexible coloratura soprano and a flair for acting, Erickson offered an assortment of Nordic music, everything from a Norwegian cow call, Jean Sibelius' *Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte*, Ture Rangström's *Pan* and Edvard Grieg's stunning *Jeg elsker Dig* to Lars Johan Werle's *Godnattvisan* from the Swedish musical "Animalen".

"I wanted to have both classical pieces and folk songs in my concert," Erickson explained, "because in Scandinavia they greatly influenced each other. This year marks the centennial of Edvard Grieg, the most famous of all Scandinavian composers, who put Scandinavia on the map of classical music. And he was a romantic, and would go into the woods and the little villages and listen to the folk songs there. You can actually hear the folk songs in his classical pieces."

Erickson looked lovely in a bronze-colored strapless dress, and was accompanied on piano by Craig Ketter, who also played a few solo pieces. As her last piece, Erickson sang *Ack, Värmeland, du sköna*.

"It is really the reason I'm singing for you here today," she explained. "Because *Ack, Värmeland, du sköna* is one of my favorite songs."

For more information:
www.scandinaviahouse.org
www.ellyerickson.com



Photo: Eva Stenskär

Soprano to watch: Elly Erickson has already collected several awards and grants for her beautiful voice. Here with Brian G. Andersson, who helped Erickson get connected with the Scandinavian community in New York.