

RELEASE

Arts & Culture



BU professors astound with vocals at First Friday

Rebecca Kiss/Contributing Photographer

On October 2, the United Presbyterian Church on Chenango Street hosted a faculty recital as a part of Downtown Binghamton's First Friday. Thomas Goodheart, Stephen Zank, Jean Goodheart, Mary Burgess and Joel Harder, five members of the Binghamton University music department, performed selections from Robert Schumann, Henri Duparc, Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms.

Faculty Recital showcases five Binghamton University voices at United Presbyterian Church

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Georgia Westbrook |
Contributing Writer

On October 2, the United Presbyterian Church on Chenango Street hosted a faculty recital as a part of Downtown Binghamton's First Friday. Five members of the Binghamton University music department — Thomas Goodheart, baritone; Stephen Zank, piano; Jean Goodheart, soprano; Mary Burgess, soprano and Joel Harder, piano — performed German and French selections from artists Henri Duparc, Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms, as well as the featured piece: Robert Schumann's Liederkreis, Op. 39.

The church was vast and carpeted, with excellent acoustics, and the event itself drew in a substantial crowd with people of all ages. Impressively, the performers engaged with the audience using much more than just their voices. Enthusiastically giving their all to each song, you could see the passion that they had for their craft.

Burgess, a soprano, seemed to steal the show. She sang with a soft voice that somehow projected at impressively high pitches. Burgess has a background in operatic performance, and it showed. Additionally, she used the show as an opportunity to show off a newer

member of the department.

“I chose songs by Franz Liszt because they are very pianistic and I wanted to introduce to our community our new faculty member, Joel Harder, assistant professor of collaborative piano, an absolutely outstanding player,” Burgess said. “The Liszt songs I chose tell interesting, dramatic stories which intrigue me, so that's another reason I chose them. I feel incredibly lucky to be able to learn and perform this repertoire and to share it with others. No one could love their work more than I do.”

Harder accompanied parts of the program for Ms. Goodheart, Burgess, and Mr. Goodheart.

Although each of the pieces were different in style and language, he handled them all with deft emotion that could connect with the audience. Harder joined the music department faculty just this fall, and found it easy to acclimate to the department.

“Tom [Goodheart] approached me at the beginning of the term about joining him in this concert, and I feel it has provided me a warm welcome from the faculty as well as a way to introduce myself as a collaborative pianist through collaboration on stage,” Harder said. “Working directly and creatively with my colleagues, as I have the privilege of doing here, is

a truly unique way of establishing connections and building relationships, and it has certainly been an important part of my transition to the Binghamton community.”

I was struck throughout the performance by the enthusiasm each performer conveyed, despite how long the songs were and the fact that it was the Friday evening of what seemed like a very long week.

This concert was part of a fall series sponsored by the music department. The next production, called “Roomful of Teeth: Music Now!” will be on October 11 at 3 p.m. in the Anderson Center.



Kaely Hankison/Contributing Photographer

Local resident Katie Sharp, 24, looks on at the exhibit in the Anthony Brunelli Gallery on State Street. As a part of last week's First Friday events, Binghamton University professor Alexandra Davis opened her exhibit, “Separation of Space,” at the Anthony Brunelli Gallery.

BU professor illustrates 'Separation of Space'

Alexandra Davis takes over Anthony Brunelli Gallery with new exhibition

Shauna Bahssin |
Contributing Writer

As a part of last week's First Friday events, Binghamton University professor Alexandra Davis opened her exhibit “Separation of Space” at the Anthony Brunelli Gallery.

The lithography-based showing is the adjunct professor of art and printmaking's most recent installation. The show featured scenes that appeared to come directly from idyllic, natural settings. Upon entering the gallery, the viewer is faced with a few smaller pieces, which, as one makes his or her way farther into the exhibit, grow in size. Perhaps the most striking work in the show was a large-

scale piece titled “Expanse,” which was allotted the entire back wall of the gallery. The focus of the piece is a deep lake set in between mountains, though a harsh cutaway to negative space, clearly intended to be the sky, which calls into question what the true expanse is. Similarly, each work in the gallery utilizes deep outlines to form clearly defined “separations of space.”

Davis grew up in an arts-oriented family and felt that her transition into teaching, after obtaining an MFA from SUNY New Paltz, was very organic.

“Some things just come naturally,” she said.

For her, teaching is one of them.

Like her decision to study art, Davis says that her connection to the subject matter of her work is something she considers to be inherent.

“Some people like nature,” she explained. “I've always been someone who enjoys hiking and the outdoors. I grew up that way. I did organic gardening before it was fashionable.”

The medium that Davis uses to create her work came about in a similar manner; her uncle studied lithography as well, which gave her some background in the art form. She describes the subject matter to be innately sculptural, similar to the process of creating etchings and collographs.

“Texture and nature is very

tactile,” she said. “The textures of mountains and the flow of water — those things are very important to me.”

Possibly the most interesting aspect of the work in Davis's exhibit is the movement of the pieces. One particularly striking piece titled “Decay” is a good example of this. Though the piece is rendered in deep greens and yellows, the colors twist and flow together in motion in a way that contradicts its name and suggests that there is something to be continued. A lot of her work revolves around the concept of the cyclical nature of life.

In terms of creating her work, Davis has one statement that truly encompasses the exhibit as a whole: “it's magical.”

Merlin's last show is anything but a drag

Downtown bar closes, says farewell to a community it has fostered since 2005

Rich Kersting |
Release

Once considered the prominent gay bar in Downtown Binghamton, Merlin's retired from the local scene and closed its doors with a final drag show. With three separate acts during Friday night's event, “The Last Drag” was not as much a formalized performance as it was one fluid social gathering. Packed with people, the bar welcomed everyone from drag queens to a couple dressed up as skeletons wielding skull scepters.

The Merlin's experience has always been a melting pot of diversity and self-expression. With an even mixture of young and old, “The Last Drag” catered to a varied group with a range of backgrounds, identities and experiences.

Drag shows are always eccentric, and their unpredictable nature is part of the appeal. But when the audience comes together as a cohesive body, an air of acceptance and support is prevalent.

The performers' passion was

clear and exposed during the performances, and their talent was celebrated. Since performers volunteered for spots, they were there truly because they wanted to be, and it showed. As the audience took a mosh pit format full of enthusiasm, “The Last Drag” show continued on while countless performers shared their eccentricities.

The cheering crowd climbed onto chairs, tables, boxes and even other audience members to get a better look at the performers. Despite the struggle to get a good view, it was definitely a worthwhile experience. The packed bar was a testament to the adoration so many felt for the unique venue.

Merlin's was a fixture in Binghamton for years, where drag was more than just leggy men in pantyhose and pop soundtracks. People knew that it was a place they were always welcome, where social restrictions did not apply. As Merlin's closes its doors and “The Last Drag” comes to an end, the question is posed: Where can this level of creativity find a new stage to share its talent?

“Where can this level of creativity find a new stage to share its talent?”

When one finds a bar they're comfortable with, it can be hard to suddenly change. The silver lining is that according to Merlin's owner Laura Hering, the LGBTQ community has become more mainstream. Local bars are becoming more “gay friendly.” But regardless, the loss of a concentrated location of unique and diverse culture cannot be replaced. Bars come and go, and with “The Last Drag,” Merlin's says farewell to the community it helped foster; a community that won't soon forget about it.