

## Daniel Taylor Hits a High Note

“There is a purity to this music which is almost fragile,” says Daniel Taylor about baroque music. His love for it is obvious. “A certain vulnerability is created by the harmonies which is most beautiful.” Taylor is the award-winning Canadian countertenor who, along with his Theatre of Early Music, will be performing *Dido and Aeneas*, on February 7 and 8 at Westminster United Church.

Wondering just what a countertenor actually is? You’re not alone. The vocal category is quite rare. It is a male voice with the same range as a mezzo-soprano or even, as in Taylor’s case, that of a soprano. Of course, much as great sopranos employ different vocal techniques within their range, countertenors, too, vary in style.

“I personally follow the aesthetic tradition of the British countertenor,” says Taylor. “Although I fully employ my vocal chords the majority of the time in order to offer a palette of colours that includes a naturally occurring vibrato.”

Taylor is a great Canadian talent. He has been singing since the age of six and has lent his voice to over 95 classical recordings.

The founder of the Theatre of Early Music, as its Artistic Director and Conductor, Taylor has assembled a group of highly skilled classical musicians, soloists, and choir members who together explore “the depth and substance of early choral and instrumental literature.” The group consists of over 100 rotating artists whom Taylor has personally selected.

“I look for musicians that have like goals – individuals that do not want to have concerts turn into ‘business as usual.’ This approach is what I feel helps us make this process one in which we search for the sacred.”

The group performs over 30 concerts every year, touring Europe, South America and across North America. This year, they make their debut at Carnegie Hall.

The group seeks to “reveal the original beauty of ancient works,” and Taylor compares the process to restoring Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine Chapel for modern enjoyment and appreciation.

*Dido and Aeneas* certainly fits the bill. The opera is England’s oldest, and originates from the baroque era, which is known for being extremely ornate and complex. Taylor is particularly enthusiastic about the cast.

“Alexander Dobson is a charismatic Aeneas and I’m a great believer in his gift as an artist. Grace Davidson, Belinda, is a young star from the United Kingdom and I find her captivating. Noemi Kiss (Dido) is a discovery for me; there is a silvery quality mixed with fragility which I find very moving. There is luxury casting too in the role of tenor Benjamin Butterfield, one of Canada's finest tenors.”