

Art Song ALIVE!

A soprano and her love for music

by michelle groleau engel '97



Somebody told **Anne Marie Church '70** that solo voice recital was a dying art. Instead of accepting that dismal prediction, the soprano from New Jersey made it her mission to bring solo recital back to life.

"Solo voice recital wasn't growing," Anne Marie explained. "It didn't reach out to people, and classical voice recital had built a forced wall between the performer and the audience."

Her primary area of performance is American art song. Art song is often defined as "a marriage of poetry and music." It is collaboration between poet, composer, singer and accompanist – most often a pianist. American art song features the work of American composers and poets.

"Once you blend the poetry and the music, they become one," explained Anne Marie, "and it becomes almost impossible to imagine them separate."

"You shouldn't have to know anything about it. It should touch you."

Anne Marie has sung leading operatic roles in New York and New Jersey, and has performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Among others, she has appeared with the Adrian Symphony Orchestra, the New York Grand Opera Orchestra, the New Jersey Chorale Society and the North Jersey Philharmonic. She has recorded two CDs.

Although she didn't know her singing talent would lead her to American art song and solo performance, Anne Marie always knew she would do something involving music.

"I was given a voice," she said. "It was a gift, and I knew it. Sometimes, I am grateful, and sometimes I feel driven to utilize the gift God has given me. There was never any question that I was going to try to find something to do with it."

Although she performed often while growing up, Anne Marie entered Adrian College with no formal music training. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in speech and a minor in music. Anne Marie also completed further study at the Juilliard School and the Mannes College of Music.

When she got to AC, Art Jones, chair of the music department, approached Anne Marie about studying music.

"Dr. Jones was a big supporter of mine," she said, "he had a lot of faith in what I could do."

Anne Marie also got involved in theatre at AC. In the spring of her freshman year, she played a servant and was part of the chorus in "My Fair Lady."

"I had so much fun with that performance, I've never really forgotten it," said Anne Marie.

She continued to perform in theatre productions at AC, and incorporates her acting skills with her singing skills.

"Most pieces have characters, and I've learned to put the subtext in that helps get their different emotions across," explained Anne Marie.

"That's the missing link that has kept people away from classical solo performances," she added. "People often say, 'I don't know anything about it.' You shouldn't have to know anything about

it. It should touch you."

Anne Marie's "American Art Song Today – Alive!" series had its international premiere in Prague, the Czech Republic in 1995 and its premiere at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in the spring of 2000. The series, which consists of songs by American composers (many of whom have never been recorded or published), is Anne Marie's baby.

"I wanted to have something to market that was different," said Anne Marie. "I felt strongly about American art song and wanting to do new music."

When she isn't on the road performing, Anne Marie is running her record company, Josara! Records, doing freelance marketing, and performing at the Second Reform Church in Hackensack, New Jersey. She is working on her third recording, "Schubert's Heirs," which she hopes to release in time for the holidays.

"My life has never been just music or just business," said Anne Marie. "It's always been a combination. Freelancing allows me to perform when the opportunity comes up."



Anne Marie Church '70 currently has two recordings available: *American Art Song Today – Alive!*, an introductory CD to her concert series; and *Dream Songs*, an a cappella collection of gentle

songs and lullabies. Both are available at Amazon.com.