Sholund Scholarship Concert: Sacred Music of the Great Italian Opera Composers

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Spring 2010 Event Highlights

ART:
The Page ........................................................................................................ Feb 1 – Mar 12

THEATRE:
Bus Stop by William Inge, in repertory with
Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen ............................................................. Mar 12 – 14, 16 – 20
Student Directed One-Acts ................................................................. Apr 23 – 25, 29 – 30, May 1

MUSIC:
University Choirs Post-Tour Concert .............................................. Feb 5
Chapman Chamber Orchestra and University Singers ............... Mar 5
Stan Kenton Alumni Band with the Chapman Big Band ................. Mar 12
Chapman University Wind Symphony ............................................. Mar 13
Visiting Artist in Recital – Sergei Babayan, piano ....................... Mar 23
Opera Chapman presents: Mozart’s Cosi fan tutte ................... Apr 23 – 25
Sholund Scholarship Concert: Sacred Music of the
Great Italian Opera Composers ............................................................. May 8

DANCE:
Dance Works in Progress ........................................................................ Feb 27
Concert Intime ....................................................................................... Mar 25 – 27
Spring Dance Concert ........................................................................ May 12 – 15

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
Conservatory of Music

presents the

Sholund Scholarship Concert

Sacred Music of the
Great Italian Opera Composers

Stephen Coker, conductor

University Choir, Stephen Coker, conductor
University Women’s Choir, Keith Hancock, conductor
Chapman Chamber Orchestra, Daniel Alfred Wachs,
music director & conductor

Saturday, May 8, 2010 • 4 p.m.
Chapman Auditorium, Memorial Hall
Program

Messa di Gloria

I. Kyrie

II. Gloria

III. Credo

IV. Sanctus—Benedictus

V. Agnus Dei

~ Intermission ~

Va, pensiero, sull' ali dorate
(from Nabucco)

O salutaris hostia

Intermezzo sinfonico
(from Cavalleria rusticana)

Easter Hymn: Regina coeli
(from Cavalleria rusticana)

Giaccomo Puccini

(1858-1924)

Laura Smith, soprano; Alfredo Rodriguez, tenor

Brett Sprague, tenor; Yannick Lambrecht, baritone

Efrain Solis, baritone

Brett Sprague, tenor; Joshua Cavanaugh, baritone

Program Notes

Four generations of the Puccini family had been involved with church music serving in the capacities of composers and organists for the Cathedral of San Martino in the village of Lucca in the Tuscany region of Italy. Upon the death of young Giacomo's father in 1864 (when the boy was six years old), the town designated that the child be "heir" to the post of organist and maestro di capella when he became of age. The talented boy began to prepare himself to be the fifth generation of the family to assume this role, becoming a choirboy at the age of ten and a prize-winning organist in his late teens. Upon entering a music conservatory, he experimented with composition, and in 1880 for a final school project, he produced a Mass in A Flat which was performed in Lucca that summer to the public's delight. Despite the fact that the Mass was well received, it was neglected and all but forgotten, especially after Puccini turned to opera for his career focus. Fragments of the mass setting continued to live on in the composer's operas (the "Agnus Dei" became a madrigal for mezzo soprano in Manon Lescaut and the "Kyrie" appears in the little known Edgar), but it was not until the early 1950's that the Mass was again brought to light. In 1951, an American priest, Fra Dante del Fiorentino, traveled to Lucca to gather research on a biography of Puccini. Working with Puccini's former musical secretary, Fra Dante resurrected the old manuscript and had it edited under the new title of Messa di Gloria, paving the way to its first contemporary performance on July 12, 1952 at the Chicago Grant Park Concerts, some seventy-two years after its premier.

For orchestra and choir without soloists, the "Kyrie" in A flat major is gently ethereal, save for the more aggressive "Christe eleison" passages. The following "Gloria" movement in C major is the most extensive of the Mass. The opening motive in the women's voices seems almost "happy-go-lucky" until the men's voices (and later the full chorus and orchestra) transform it into a more rousing tune that reappears at several key moments throughout the movement. The tenor aria "Gratia agimus tibi" perhaps best foreshadows the composer's then future distinctive operatic style. The fetching "Qui tollis peccata mundi" music introduced by the choral basses is the Mass's "big tune," not at all unlike some of the well-known Verdi opera choruses of the time. The extended "Cum sancto spiritu" is deftly set as a four-part fugue that is eventually combined with the movement's opening motive. Other Verdian touches appear in the C minor "Credo" movement such as its sweeping declamatory opening, its tenor solo accompanied only by the chorus, and the ominous "Crucifixus" sung by the bass soloist. The beautiful "Et unam sanctam catholicam" is intoned by the chorus in unison, no doubt to reinforce the "singular" nature of the text ("I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church," and "I confess one baptism for the remission of sins."). Male soloists make more appearances in the Benedictus section of the "Sanctus" and as duetists in the closing "Agnus Dei." Here, the soloists sing the bulk of this lovely C Major movement—a movement that has been described as having the character of an 18th century minuet.
Verdi's opera Nabucco (1842) follows the plight of the Jews as they were conquered and subsequently exiled from their homeland by the Babylonian King Nabucco (in English, Nebuchadnezzar). An immediate success, Nabucco was universally interpreted by the Italian public as a symbol of that country's yearning for freedom from Austrian rule. “Va, pensiero” is actually a paraphrase of Psalm 137 (“By the waters of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the trees we hung our harps, for there our captors demanded of us songs of joy—'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' [But] how can we sing the songs of the Lord while [captive] in a foreign land?”). The opera chorus is sung by the Israelites on the banks of the Euphrates as a lament for their lost homeland. This heralded excerpt became then and remains today an unofficial national anthem of Italy; it made Verdi a national hero.

After Rossini had composed over forty operas in a span of some twenty years, he retired from the opera stage at a relatively young age in 1829, largely due to failing health. Yet, in the final decade of his life, the composer recovered well enough to resume a substantial compositional career in Paris in the 1850's. With a bit of self-mockery, Rossini described these late compositions (numbering in the several hundreds) as “Sins of My Old Age.” Among these works were some sacred choral compositions—among them, the well known major work, Petite Messe solennelle, as well as some smaller works such as his “O salutaris hostia” (1857). The latter is a setting for four-part unaccompanied mixed choir that alternates quiet contemplations with vocal outbursts when the text speaks of threatening warfare.

Pietro Mascagni's Cavalleria rusticana was the composer's first opera (and only real success); it premiered in Rome in 1890 after having been entered in a competition organized by a Milan publisher. Now an almost inseparable double-bill companion of Pagliacci by Ruggero Leoncavallo, Cavalleria (as well as Pagliacci) was concerned with portraying a realistic sense of the rural Italian life of the time. Set in a Sicilian village in the 1890's, the opera plot is one of love, betrayal, jealousy, violence, and death. There are several famous excerpts from this popular opera that are performed frequently: the wrenching “Voi lo sapeste,” an aria sung by the tragic heroine, Santuzza; the stunningly beautiful “Intermezzo sinfonico” which is played at the end of the daily Mass scene and which seems to embody Santuzza's despair and desertion; and the triumphal “Easter Hymn.” This opera chorus not only adds local color to the story, but also shows the fervent religious devotion of Santuzza and the townspeople. Dramatically, this scene acts as a successful foil, contrasting the wrenching “CV oi lo sapete,” an aria sung by the tragic heroine, Santuzza; the stunningly beautiful “Intermezzo sinfonico” which is played at the end of the daily Mass scene and which seems to embody Santuzza's despair and desertion; and the triumphal “Easter Hymn.” This opera chorus not only adds local color to the story, but also shows the fervent religious devotion of Santuzza and the townspeople. Dramatically, this scene acts as a successful foil, contrasting the purity of this spiritual expression to the baseness of the brewing, inevitable catastrophe of the opera's plot.

**Program Notes by Stephen Coker**

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**Translations**

**Messa di Gloria**

* (Sung in Greek & Latin)*

**Kyrie**

Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy; Lord have mercy.

**Gloria**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to those of goodwill. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee. We give thee thanks for thy great glory.

Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who taketh away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; have mercy on us.

Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only art most high, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**Credo**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being of the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the father. Amen.

And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Sanctus—Benedictus**

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the Highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

**Agnus Dei**

Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; grant us peace.
Fly, my thoughts, on wings of gold; go settle upon the slopes and the hills, where, soft and mild, the sweet airs of our native land smell fragrant!

Greet the banks of the Jordan and Zion’s toppled towers ... Oh, my country so lovely and lost! Oh, remembrance so dear and so fraught with despair!

Golden harp of the prophetic seers, why do you hang mute upon the willow? Rekindle our bosom’s memories, and speak of times gone by!

Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem, either give forth an air of sad lamentation, or else let the Lord imbue us with fortitude to bear our sufferings!

O salutaris hostia
(Sung in Latin)

O Redeeming Sacrifice, which opens the gate of heaven: enemies threaten wars; give us strength; send aid.

Easter Hymn: Regina coeli
(from Cavalleria rusticana)
(Sung in Latin & Italian)

Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia! For He whom you are worthy to bear, Alleluia! Has risen as He has said, Alleluia!

Let us rejoice that our Lord is not dead, and in glory has opened up the tomb. Let us rejoice that our Lord is risen again, and today is gone up into the glory of heaven!
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Tanya Dorsey
Tiffany Liu
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Names are listed in alphabetical order

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