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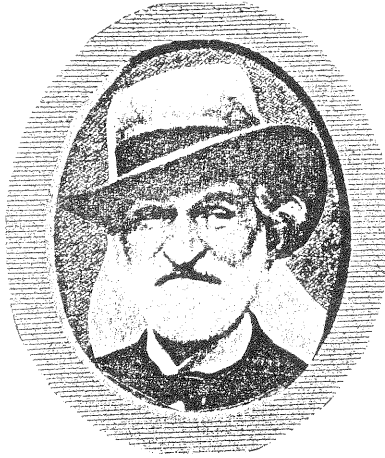
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Chapman University School of Music

presents

Shakespeare in Opera



Peter Atherton, Artistic Director

• Louise Thomas, John Ballerino, Musical Directors •

Andrew Seifert, Chorus Master & Conductor

April 19 & 20, 2002 • Memorial Hall • 8:00P.M.

SHAKESPEARE IN OPERA

A connection between Shakespeare and song can be easily traced back to the time of the great bard himself. Thomas Dekker, a contemporary of Shakespeare wrote, "Let the Poet set the note of his Numbers, even to *Apollo's* owne Lyre, the Player will have his owne Crochets, and sing false notes in despite of all the rules of Musick." In Elizabethan times actors were likely to be subjected to musical criticism. A review of the eras greatest actor, Richard Burbage, praised him for his musicality: "Beauty to the Eye, and musick to the Ear." There was "as much difference betwixt him and one of our common Actors, as between a Ballad-singer who only mouths it, and an excellent singer, who knows all his Graces, and can artfully vary and modulate his Voice, even to know how much breath he is to give to every syllable." To be sure, the plays of Shakespeare are pre-eminently aural theatre, as is, of course, opera. (After all, no matter how visually glorious a production might be, audience appreciation would wane if the aural experience does not match or surpass the visual.) Who better than George Bernard Shaw to create a link between Shakespeare and opera? In the following quote from one of Shaw's essays it is difficult to tell which of the two art forms he is referring to. "Nothing but death made sensational, despair made stage sublime, sex made romantic, and barrenness covered by sentimentality . . . plenty of bogus characterization . . . At the great emotional climaxes we find passages which rely on symmetry of melody and impressiveness of march to redeem a poverty of meaning." These barbs could easily be aimed squarely at opera but were written about the works of William Shakespeare. And so his dramatic oeuvre has inspired over three hundred musical settings throughout the past three hundred years. I have chosen scenes from seven operas, the first composed in 1692, and the last in 1960. It is my sincere hope that this evenings' performance will stimulate your interest in drama, both operatic and Shakespearean.

P. A.

OPERA PROGRAM

The Fairy Queen

by

Henry Purcell
(1659-1695)

after

William Shakespeare's
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Part II: Night and Silence

Night - Allison Harding (4/19), Stephanie Denman (4/20)

Mystery - Marja Kay

Secrecy - Ken Kasovac

Sleep - William Sovich & Ensemble

Purcell's genius as a composer for the stage was hampered by the fact that there was no public opera in London during his lifetime. Throughout the latter part of his career he wrote for the theatre, and most of this music consists simply of instrumental music and songs interpolated into spoken drama, with occasional opportunity for more extended musical scenes. In 1689 Purcell wrote *Dido and Aeneas*, his only true opera, for a boarding-school for young gentlewomen! From that time until his death, he was constantly employed in writing music for the public theatres. These productions included *King Arthur* (1691), and *The Fairy Queen* (1692), an anonymous adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which the texts set to music are all interpolations. In these works Purcell showed not only a lively sense of comedy but also a gift for passionate musical expression that often proves more exalted than the words.

Hamlet

by

Ambroise Thomas
(1811-1896)

Libretto by

Michel Carré & Jules Barbier

Act IV - Scène et Air d'Ophélie - Zoie Lamb

Ambroise Thomas wrote twenty operas, but only two have achieved any real popularity: *Mignon* (1866), and *Hamlet* (1868) premiered at the Paris Opéra. Thomas, an excellent musician and a fine pianist, devoted six years to the "serious project" of *Hamlet*. Thomas' librettists, Barbier and Carré, were very experienced writers of opera texts. In addition to preparing the libretto for *Mignon*, they also made the adaptation for Gounod's *Faust*. Barbier and Carré reduced Shakespeare's cast from more than thirty to fifteen. In addition to these reductions the librettists added several incidents not in Shakespeare's play, most notably

Hamlet's drinking song. Ophelia's elaborate and extended Mad Scene occurs in Act 4. In the opening recitative, "A vos jeux, mes amis", she asks if she may be allowed to join the courtiers in their games. In the second section, "Partagez-vous mes fleurs", she distributes wild flowers to the courtiers, which Ophelia also does in the play. In the third, "Et maintenant écoutez ma chanson", she sings a Ballad about the Willis, or water sprite, who entices faithful lovers to their death by drowning. The Ballad gives the soprano opportunity for cascades of coloratura, ending with a spectacular assent to a high E.

The Merry Wives of Windsor

by

Otto Nicolai
(1810-1849)

Libretto by
Josef Blatt

Act I, scene 1 - Alice Ford - Erica R. Austin
Meg Page - Alane L. Alfaro

Nicolai composed *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* in 1845 while he was Kapellmeister at the Vienna Hofoper. He was expected to compose German operas but upon offering his setting of the Shakespeare play for production it was turned down and he resigned his position. In 1847 he went to Berlin, also as Kapellmeister for the Hofoper, and conducted the highly successful premier in 1849. Today the opera enjoys continued success throughout Germany. The opening scene of the opera finds Alice Ford reading a love letter from Falstaff; Meg Page joins her and they realize that he has sent them identical letters. Nicolai neatly portrays the ladies spirited outrage as they plan to take their revenge for the portly knight's brazen behavior.

Macbeth

by

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

Libretto by
Francesco Maria Piave
and
Andrea Maffei

Act IV - Patria oppressa - Opera Chapman Ensemble
Ah, la paterno mano - Macduff - Ernest Alvarez

Macbeth was Verdi's first Shakespearean subject and he approached it with special care. He wrote to his librettist, Piave, "This tragedy is one of the greatest creations of man!" The première took place in Florence on March 14, 1847 and was a great success. In 1864 the French publisher Léon Escudier asked Verdi to add ballet

music to *Macbeth* for a revival at the Théâtre Lyrique, Paris. Verdi agreed but replied that he wanted to make substantial changes to some numbers that were "lacking in character". Among those changes was a new chorus at the beginning of Act IV. *Patria oppressa* is one of Verdi's great choral movements. Macduff's aria that follows is a conventional *romanza* beginning in minor key and ending in major.

Near Birnam Wood a band of Scottish refugees bemoan their oppressed homeland, caught in the bloody grip of Macbeth's tyranny. Macduff voices his impassioned grief over his murdered wife and children.

Ensemble: "Oppressed homeland, you cannot bear the sweet name of mother now that you have become a tomb for your sons. From orphans, and those who mourn, some for husbands, some for children, at each new dawn a cry rises up to wound heaven. Heaven replies to that cry, as if moved to pity it would proclaim your grief forever, oppressed homeland. The bell tolls constantly for death, but no one is so bold as to shed a vain tear for those who suffer and die. Oppressed country! My homeland!"

Macduff: "My children! You have all been slain by that tyrant, together with your wretched mother. How could I have left a mother and children in the clutches of that tiger? Alas, a father's hand was not there to shield you, dear ones, from the treacherous assassins who put you to death. And in vain you cried out for me with your last gasp, your last breath. Lord, bring me face to face with this tyrant and if he escapes me, open your arms to pardon him."

Roméo et Juliette

by

Charles-François Gounod

(1818-1893)

Libretto by

Jules Barbier & Michel Carré

Act I -Je veux vivre - Juliette - Lisa M. Austin (4/19), Courtney R. Taylor (4/20)
Gertrude - Katrina Herrera

Roméo et Juliette was premiered in Paris during the Exposition Universelle of 1867. It achieved a spectacular success for Gounod and quickly received productions at Covent Garden and in major theatres in Germany and Belgium. Although *Roméo and Juliette* never reached the popularity of Gounod's *Faust*, it remains standard repertoire in opera houses throughout the world.

A masked ball at the Capulet home celebrates the introduction of Juliette to society. Eager to taste the joys of her new adult life Juliette is engaged in trying to escape her nurse Gertrude. Gertrude praises the young count Paris and proclaims him a worthy suitor. In the famous *valse-ariette* Juliette sings light-heartedly that she has dreamed of marriage but longs to let her heart have its springtime.

Falstaff
by
Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)
Libretto by
Arrigo Boito

Act I, scene 2 - A Courtyard

Meg Page - Alane L. Alfaro
Alice Ford - Elizabeth Anne Robinson
Dame Quickly - Mary Louise Stoner (4/19), Elana Cowen (4/20)
Nannetta Ford - Courtney R. Taylor (4/19), Lisa M. Austin (4/20)
Dr. Caius - Duke Rausavljevich
Bardolf - Aaron M. Gonzalez
Fenton - Doo Suk Yang (4/19), Ernest Alvarez (4/20)
Pistol - Spencer Washburn
Master Ford - Jeremy D. Bolin

During the latter part of his career Verdi began to comment publicly that he would like to write a comic opera. The problem was finding an acceptable libretto. It was Arrigo Boito, his librettist for *Otello*, who suggested a work based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Verdi was immediately enthusiastic and at the ripe age of seventy-six began work on *Falstaff*. Verdi took considerable time composing the opera, due in part to bouts of depression, and fearing that he would not complete the project. The triumphant première took place at La Scala on February 9, 1893. *Falstaff* has maintained its place in the international repertory ever since.

The scene opens in the courtyard of Alice Ford's house. Alice and her daughter Nannetta are met by Meg and Dame Quickly. Meg and Alice discover that Falstaff has sent them identical 'colorful' letters. After reading the letters the ladies enjoy a good laugh. In an unaccompanied quartet they vow to seek their revenge. Aware of the sudden presence of intruders the ladies quietly withdraw. Ford, Caius, Fenton, Bardolf and Pistol enter, all trying to outspoke the other. Employing graphic physical embellishments, Pistol and Bardolf tell the gullible Ford of Falstaff's romantic intentions towards his wife. Ford resolves to pursue the matter cautiously. The ladies return briefly, but at the sight of each other the two groups exit, giving the young lovers Fenton and Nannetta time to steal a few kisses. The ladies return to elaborate upon their plan, deciding that Quickly will visit Sir John and arrange a supposed assignation with Alice. A second scene with the young lovers follows, but is interrupted by the re-entry of the men. Unaware of the wives' plans, the men concoct their own scheme: under an assumed name, Ford will visit Falstaff to ensnare him and gain his revenge. The men and women simultaneously restate their feelings, and after the men depart the wives mock Falstaff's presumption with a final burst of laughter.

INTERMISSION

A Midsummer Night's Dream
by
Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)
Libretto by
Benjamin Britten & Peter Pears

Act III Finale

Theseus - William Sovich
Hippolyta - Chelsea McDonald (4/19), Sara A. Price (4/20)
Helena - Hemi Song
Hermia - Kimberly A. Harmon
Lysander - Doo Suk Yang
Demetrius - Aren Rodriguez
Quince - Jeremy D. Bolin
Flute - Duke Rausavljevich
Snout - Aaron M. Gonzalez
Starveling - Gregory Norris
Bottom - Adonis Duque Abuyen (4/19), Matthew Wight (4/20)
Snug - Conor Jamison
Cobweb - Melissa Williams
Mustardseed - Carly E. Shepard
Peaseblossom - Julia Tometich
Moth - Shauna Crahan
Oberon's Fairy - Sarah Shields
Puck - Jenny Hock
Tytania - Stephanie Denman
Oberon - Ken Kasovac

A Midsummer Night's Dream was Benjamin Britten's ninth opera. It was composed in 1960 to celebrate the reconstruction of Jubilee Hall at the Aldeburgh Festival. Approximately thirty-nine composers made some sort of attempt to transfer Shakespeare's play to the operatic stage. Of those attempts, only two other composers have left their mark: Purcell and Mendelssohn. Although relationships can be drawn with other of Britten's works, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has a distinct atmosphere all its own. Britten sharply delineates three sets of characters; the Lovers, the Fairies, and the Rustics. In this finale you will notice three distinct styles of music: a Baroque atmosphere for Oberon, Tytania and the fairies; a Romantic feel for the Lovers; and a parody of Bel Canto opera for the Rustics.

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Adonis Duque Abuyen
Alane L. Alfaro
Ernest M. Alvarez
Erica R. Austin
Lisa M. Austin
Jeremy D. Bolin
Elana Cowen
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Stephanie Denman
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William Sovich
Mary Louise Stoner
Kathleen Sullivan
Courtney R. Taylor
Julia Tometich
Spencer Washburn
Matthew Wight
Melissa Williams
Doo Suk Yang

I wish to thank the members of Opera Chapman for their dedication and spirit. It has been a great pleasure working with you this year. I look forward to our future artistic endeavors with eager anticipation.

Peter Atherton

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Music Preparation and Direction
Chorus Master and Conductor

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Flute
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Acknowledgements

Dean, School of Music
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Lynn Cole-Adcock, Susan Ali, Peter Atherton,
Robin Buck, Christina Dahlin, Margaret Dehning,
Patrick Goesser, Jonathan Mack, Artist-in-Residence -
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For Tickets, call 714-997-6812