

61st Season 2006-2007
Greater Bridgeport Symphony
Gustav Meier, *Music Director / Conductor*
The Klein, Bridgeport, 8:00 PM

Saturday, October 7, 2006

MAESTRO'S TOP PICKS

Andrew Armstrong, Piano

Prokofiev March and Scherzo from
The Love of Three Oranges
Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3 in C
Rachmaninoff Vocalise
Rachmaninoff Symphonic Dances

Saturday, November 4, 2006

ROMEO & JULIET

The story of the most famous lovers
through the music of Bellini, Berlioz,
Tchaikovsky, Kabalevsky & Bernstein

Saturday, December 2, 2006

GERSHWIN'S GREATESTS

Ben Loeb, Guest Conductor/Pianist

Tchaikovsky Swan Lake
Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue
Gershwin American in Paris
Ellington/Tchaikovsky,
arr. Tydzik Nutcracker

Saturday, March 3, 2007

LATIN PASSION

Allen Vizzutti, Trumpet

Strauss Don Juan
Vizzutti Concerto Mexicana (*World Premiere*)
Bizet Carmen Suite
Koff/Mendez La Virgen de la Macarena
Ravel Alborado del gracioso
Rodrigo, arr. Vizzutti Theme from
Concierto de Aranjuez

Saturday, April 21, 2007

TOSCA (Concert Version)

Donna Balson, Soprano

Arnold Rawls, Tenor

Kristopher Irmiter, Bass-Baritone

Curt Olds, Baritone

& The Mendelssohn Choir of CT

Carole Ann Maxwell, Artistic Director

All programs, dates, and artists are subject to change.

GBS Program Notes are now available online at www.bridgeportsymphony.org.

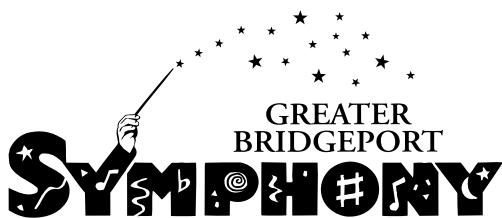
GREATER BRIDGEPORT SYMPHONY OFFICE

446 University Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604

TICKET RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION are available by calling the Greater Bridgeport Symphony office weekdays from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. at (203) 576-0263.

The box office at Klein Memorial Auditorium, 910 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, is open only on concert days starting at 1 P.M. for telephone reservations at (203) 576-8115.

Walk-up sales start at 5 P.M.



Gustav Meier
Music Director
60th Season
5th Subscription Concert
Klein Memorial Auditorium
Saturday, April 22, 2006
8:00 p.m.

Gustav Meier, Conductor
The Mendelssohn Choir of Connecticut
Carole Ann Maxwell, Artistic Director

VERDI	Otello	Act I	Chorus: <i>Una vela! un vessillo!</i>
	Don Carlo	Act II	Chorus: <i>Spuntato ecco il di</i>
	Nabucco	Act III	Chorus of the exiled Jews: <i>Va pensiero</i>
	Macbeth	Act I	Chorus: <i>Che faceste? Dite su?</i>
		Act III	Chorus: <i>Tre volte miagola</i>
			Ballet
		Act IV	Chorus: <i>Patria oppressa</i>
		Act IV	Chorus: <i>Vittoria!</i>

INTERMISSION

VERDI	La Forza del Destino	-	Overture
MASCAGNI	Cavalleria Rusticana	-	Chorus: Regina Coeli
		-	Intermezzo
VERDI	Il Trovatore	Act II	Gypsy chorus: <i>Vedi! Le fosche notturne</i>
PUCCINI	Madama Butterfly	Act II	Humming Chorus
VERDI	Aida	Act II	Chorus: Gloria all Egitto Triumphal March Ballet Chorus: Gloria

Tonight's concert is made possible in part by generous grants from People's Bank and the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism.

PROGRAM NOTES

Opera is a triple-barreled art form, combining the forces of music, drama and set design. Developed in Florence, Italy in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, where it was part of the “rebirth of learning” that characterized the High-Renaissance, opera gradually became to Italians the equivalent of a movie to Americans after the first public opera house opened in Venice in 1637. Voice was the preeminent element of Italian operatic style (when Puccini was asked what an opera singer needed, he answered “voice, voice and more voice”), but plots needed realism and dramatic truth as well as melodies by the time Verdi appeared in the mid-19th century: their social, political and moral circumstances could be far-reaching and the set forms of recitative, aria and the occasional chorus required a more continuous musical framework which Verdi was capable of supplying, the chromatic harmony of his day could support and more versatile symphonic instruments, including valved brass, could execute (not that Handel, Mozart and others hadn’t been moving in this direction). Choruses are the predominant operatic excerpts on tonight’s program and they are all plausible parts of their dramas. For instance, the central political struggle in 19th century Italy was toward *risorgimento* (unification) and many Verdi librettos set in distant lands and times were disguised pleas for Italian freedom from foreign domination. This evening’s *Va pensiero* (*Go, my thought*) from Nabucco became a national battlecry after its 1842 first performance: the Jewish exiles in Babylon were a stand-in for the Italian populace chaffing under Austrian rule. Mascagni’s hot-blooded Sicilian story in *Cavalleria Rusticana* is taken as an early example of *verismo*, an especially direct presentation of an everyday, contemporary story, usually violent, here involving a double chorus with one choir inside and another of peasants and townspeople outside of a church at Easter. Puccini’s 1904 *Madama Butterfly* came near the beginning of the 20th century’s East-meets-West dialogue which certainly today is a crescendo: Cio-Cio-San’s Japanese code of honor clashes with the pragmatic insularity of the insensitive American naval officer, Pinkerton, and the Humming Chorus, sung tonight, is one of the poignant results.

Choral and Instrumental Excerpts

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 -1901)

Otello

Una vela! un vassillo

Don Carlo

Spuntato ecco il di

Nabucco

Va pensiero

Macbeth

Che faceste? Dite su?

Tre volte miagola

Ballet

Patria oppressa

Vittoria

In the first scene of **Otello**, Othello, victorious over the Turks, comes to Cyprus to be governor in a devastating storm. *‘Una vela! un vassillo’* (a sail! a vessel!) the chorus starts, continuing with “scattered, destroyed, engulfed, buried in the fearful deep” are the enemy. “Victory! Victory!”

In Act II, scene II of **Don Carlo**, the scene is a vast cathedral square in Madrid, but there is a lower square down some steps in which a stake is driven. A chorus of people, difficult to control, sings *‘spuntato ecco il di’* (rejoicing today...we honor King Phillip), with pomp and sway befitting a royal occasion, but a group of monks in their midst is solemnly leading those condemned by the Inquisition to the stake at the same time: However, the panoply returns, *‘onor al Re’* (glory to the King!), the chorus ends.

In Act III of **Nabucco**, Jewish exiles in chains are at forced labor along the banks of the Euphrates river (think modern Iraq, but this operatic (and historical) event was in 586 B. C. and the place one of the cradles of civilization). The exiles sing *‘Va, pensiero’* (‘Go, my thought’) continuing with “on golden wings” where the sweet breezes of our native land are fragrant.”, (think 19th century Italy with its longing for freedom from external rule). How little changes!

For **Macbeth**, the first of his three Shakespeare operas, Verdi worked out the scenario himself and lavished care on details in the music to create an early masterpiece. First heard in 1847, the 1865 revision for Paris to which the ballet was added is now generally performed. Verdi made of Shakespeare’s three witches a chorus in three groups, characterized by macabre humor, they are “totally unconcerned with the misery they cause.” (Osborne) Their chorus, *‘Che faceste? Dite su!’* (What did you do? Where were you?), opens Act I. Leading on Macbeth with ambiguous prophesies will be a diversion. They sing their Act III chorus, *‘Tre volte miagola’* (Three times yammering a roving cat I heard), as they tend their cauldron deep in a cave in a thunderstorm. The ingredients are awesomely gruesome, - bat blood, spider’s sting, tiger’s claw, lizard’s leg and much more - everyone of us has work to do. ‘Spirits, devils, goblins’ appear to start the ballet around the cauldron. King Macbeth is summoned. Do the witches set all this in motion or are they symbols of his ambition? In any case the stage direction says “Macbeth’s destruction shall not be delayed any longer”. Returning to reality, Scottish exiles sing the next excerpt, the chorus *‘Patria oppressa’* (oppressed country) that opens

Act IV. War has devastated the country. The final chorus, 'Vittoria, vittoria' (Victory, victory) follows Macbeth's defeat and death.

Overture from La Forza del Destino

Verdi

Il Trovatore is one of Verdi's three operas based on Spanish plays. The composer "matched their raw, elemental passion with equally straightforward passionate melody" (Martin) - this rather than a tightly woven drama with no loose ends. Written originally for the Russian theatre in St. Petersburg in 1861-62, the Overture was added when Verdi revised the work several years later. It is a pot pourri of melodies from the opera beginning with the theme of 'fate' (destiny) which seems to shipwreck the hero's best intentions and goes on to the heroine's prayer to the virgin, "Mother, cleanse my sin. Do not forsake me." It ends in dramatic, but dark fashion.

Cavalleria Rusticana Excerpts

Pietro Mascagni (1863 - 1945)

Regina Coeli

Intermezzo

The choir in church sings the chant, 'Regina Coeli' (Queen of Heaven) to which the second choir outside in the square add 'alleluias'. It is Easter. All then kneel and join in the Resurrection hymn, 'Inneggiamo, il Signor non e morto' (let us sing his praise, the Lord is not dead). Against this background of religious splendor a passionate story has been unfolding: Santuzza loves Turiddu who courted her on the rebound, but Turiddu still wants the fickle Lola, who married Alfio while Turiddu was away, and his mother, Mamma Lucia, watches somewhat helplessly. While the square is empty during the service, the orchestra plays the "Intermezzo" which is possibly the most famous of Italian opera instrumental interludes - as Kobbe wrote, "it is melody and yet it is drama". After church there is socializing, but the inevitable duel with stiletos between Alfio and Turiddu takes place off stage and Turiddu is killed.

Gypsy Chorus (Vedi!) from Il Trovatore

Verdi

Like La Forza del Destino, Il Trovatore is adapted from a Spanish play and is also passionate, melodic and dark, if sometimes falling into pot-boiler commonplaces as well. At the beginning of Act II, the gypsies sing the famous anvil chorus as dawn breaks over their camp. "See! The endless sky casts off her somber nightly garb...To work - strike, my hammer!"

Humming Chorus from Madama Butterfly

Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924)

In Madama Butterfly the geisha Cio-Cio-San

marries the American naval officer, Lieutenant Pinkerton, in defiance of her family. For her a life-long commitment, for him it is only a foreign liaison until orders take him home. After three years, he returns. Cio-Cio-San and her maid strew cherry blossoms around the room in anticipation and the Humming chorus wafts across the exquisite scene, but Pinkerton has come with an American wife only to take the son born to Cio-Cio-San and him while he was away. The devastated Cio-Cio-San kills herself.

Excerpts from Aida

Verdi

Gloria all' Egitto

Triumphal March

Ballet

Gloria al Egitto

Aida is perhaps the grandest of all grand operas in the Italian style and it is this Act II 'Gran finale' that is its crowning scene. Egypt has defeated Ethiopia in battle. This triumph is celebrated before the populace as the stage fills with King, Officials, Priests, Captains, Fan bearers and Standard bearers, as the score calls for, who are followed by the victorious army, slaves, dancing girls carrying the spoils of war and finally the conquering General himself. Only the largest opera houses in the world can handle such numbers adequately (sometimes horses are included) and their respective entrances take place during the chorus, *Gloria all' Egitto* (Glory to Isis), the Triumphal March and the Ballet. Next the conquered army is led in, including its King who is incognito. The complicated personal relationships among the principals in the cast now come to the fore, but without soloists this evening, the return of the chorus *Gloria all' Egitto* ends these excerpts, as it does the opera itself.

About complaints over all the deaths in his operas, Verdi once wrote, "but after all, death is all there is in life. What else is there? Apropos of biting remarks made at the death of Cavour, a prime mover of Italy's reunification and friend, he commented "Oh what an ugly race we are." Death is a major factor in most Puccini operas also, the plots of which often place the heroines in impossible situations. and Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* ends in a tragedy brought on by passion. The 20th century seemed to become even more uncaring in its wholesale destructiveness than the 19th - the WMD's (weapons of mass destruction) came into being. Of course there were comedies in both centuries, but the works of all three composers selected tonight take a darker view of life's possibilities.

-Burton Hatheway