

The Community Band of Brevard

Presents

Opera, As You Like It

Chairman's Message

The Community Band of Brevard has explored many areas of music over the last decade with its theme concerts. Opera is one theme we have long thought about, but, realizing that opera is commonly perceived to be the domain of the elite, we kept it on the back burner. Inspired by the fact that this is the centennial year of Verdi's death, we decided that now is the right time for us to do this program.

Contrary to the perception that opera is only for the elite, historically it actually has been a popular art form intended to entertain ordinary people. It has brought into the world some of the most beautiful, exciting and expressive music ever written. It has been instrumental in developing the human voice to a level I am sure Mother Nature must be in awe of.

Opera is considered by many to be the ultimate performing art. It combines music, poetry, action, dance, drama, visual art and stagecraft into a unified dramatic work. It requires sets, costumes, lighting, and all the other accoutrements of a theatrical performance. Opera has the potential to confront nearly all of our senses.

The seeds of opera as we know it were planted by the ancient Greeks. Beginning in the fifth century B.C. the works of Sophocles, Euripides and others were chanted or sung in order to be understood in the amphitheaters.

In the middle ages, congregations of churches in Germany, Italy, France and England were becoming bored and restless with the services and sermons they were expected to endure. Concerned church authorities responded by staging musical performances of religious stories or various aspects of religious thought. People came out in droves. In fact so much so that the clergy felt that people may have started missing the true messages and tried to gradually back out of that practice. The practice did however leave a marked effect on the people and their tastes for the sets, costumes, masks and music introduced to them by the liturgical musicals.

Then came the Renaissance, which brought a mania for all things Greek and Roman. Florence became a major center of Renaissance thought and ideology. A Florentine count, Giovanni Bardi, was caught up in the fervor and formed a group, called the Camerata, whose goal it was to recreate the musical ideals of the ancient Greeks. They met regularly and focused their efforts on ways of uniting music and words into a plot. They were very successful and created a brand new artistic genre. The Camerata's true legacy is the "recitative", a sung script that they created to connect a work's arias and scenes. One of the Camerata members, Jacopo Peri, was the first to try his hand at creating a Greek-like opera. He called it *Dafne* and based it on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It was first performed in 1597 and gets credit for marking the birth of opera. Unfortunately, Peri's opera has been lost.

As noble as the goals of the Camerata were, there was none among its members with the genius to create a lasting work that would make the opera idea stick. That fell to Claudio Montverdi, a true genius. His opera, *Orfeo*, first performed in 1607, is the earliest opera still performed. Montverdi's innovations, expressiveness and dramatic impact defined him as the true pioneer of opera. He established many of the lasting conventions that define the operatic art form as we know it.

Opera is much more than entertainment. It has actually had major impacts on civilization. Italy is a very young nation. Perhaps that surprises you, but it only came into existence in the last half of the nineteenth century (1861). Additional acquisitions in 1866 and 1870 completed today's Italy. Before that time, Italy was a geographical region

containing a number of separate states. The unification of those states into Italy, the nation, was the result of three wars; common customs, religion, traditions and language; and Verdi's opera. His music was strongly identified with the national cause and choruses from his operas were often sung in patriotic demonstrations.

Germany also is a young nation. As united nations, both Germany and Italy are younger than the United States. In the 1840's, Germany was a loose federation of thirty-nine separate states. A strong nationalistic movement resulted in a single Germany, officially proclaimed in 1871 at a ceremony in Versailles. German opera was a strong partner in the German nationalistic movement. It was strongly influenced by the nationalistic movement, and, at the same time, served as a rallying and inspiring force for the movement. The fervid Germanic works of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) are examples of that. His operas used German folklore and old Teutonic myths for their plots. Wagner's operas, with their innovativeness and vastness of scale, were exceedingly popular and gained him the patronage of the wealthy King of Bavaria, Ludwig II.

If you are already a lover of opera, I hope you enjoy our presentation. For the rest, I hope we will bring to you a new appreciation of the ultimate performing art.

In June, our concert will be titled *Americana*. A very exciting thing to me about that concert will be the return of Aaron Collins. Aaron is from Cocoa Beach and now is a student at the University of Florida. He is a wonderfully talented composer and musician. We premiered one of Aaron's works under his baton last March and it was a smashing hit with both the audience and the Band. In our *Americana* concert we will include Aaron's *The Joy of Humankind* (Aaron said the name is tentative)- a double concerto for saxophone, piano and band written in the styles of Aaron Copland and George Gershwin.

Please mark your calendar and tell your friends. Some day you will brag about the fact that you attended the premiere of a work by Aaron Collins.

Enoch Moser

Concert Program

Marriage of Figaro Overture..... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Arranged by Earl Slocum

E lucevan le Stella (from *Tosca*)..... Giacomo Puccini
Arranged by Leonard B. Smith
Vocalist: Fred Kilgallin

Un bel Dì (One fine day) (from *Madama Butterfly*) Giacomo Puccini
Arranged by Leonard B. Smith
Vocalist: Barbara Ziegler

La Gazza Ladra Overture (The Thieving Magpie)..... G. Rossini
Arranged by Lucien Cailliet

O mio babbino caro (from *Gianni Schicchi*)..... Giacomo Puccini
Vocalist: Barbara Ziegler

La Donna è mobile (from *Rigoletto*)..... Giuseppe Verdi
Arranged by Leonard B. Smith
Vocalist: Fred Kilgallin

Jolly Robbers Overture..... Franz von Suppé

Intermission (15 Minutes)

Tannhäuser Overture..... Richard Wagner
Arranged by V. F. Safranek

Italian Street Song (from *Naughty Marietta*).... Victor Herbert
Vocalist: Barbara Ziegler

O Sole Mio... Music, Eduardo di Capua/Lyrics, Giovanni Capurro
Arranged by L. P. Laurendeau
Vocalist: Fred Kilgallin

La Forza Del Destino..... Giuseppe Verdi
Arranged by M. L. Lake and H.R. Kent

Hänsel and Gretel Selections..... Englebert Humperdinck
Arranged by Fitzgerald
Vocalists: Barbara Ziegler and Fred Kilgallin

Orpheus in the Underworld..... Jacques Offenbach
Arranged by Lawrence Odom

Program Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756 Salzburg
Died December 5, 1791 Vienna

Marriage of Figaro Overture

The *Marriage of Figaro* is a comic opera in four acts with libretto in Italian by Lorenzo Da Ponte. It may be the most beloved of all operas and has the distinction of being the oldest opera in the permanent repertoire of virtually every lyric stage in the Western world. The opera is revolutionary both in the societal comments it makes and in its music. It is a supreme example of Mozart's ability to create real people and to musically portray their conflicted feelings.

The first performances were so immensely successful that Joseph II issued a decree forbidding encores of the ensemble passages.

The Overture

Originally, Mozart considered an overture for this opera in the conventional Italian form- a slow section sandwiched between two fast ones. But he discarded the slow section and presented a swiftly moving little masterpiece that is just as tuneful as the opera itself and as consistently high-spirited. It is a perfect piece of mood-setting.

Mozart is considered to be among the greatest and most prolific composers in history. His parents, Leopold Mozart and Anna Maria Pertl, had seven children but only Wolfgang and his sister Anna Maria ("Nannerl") survived. Leopold was a talented and accomplished composer and violinist who would still be remembered by musicologists even if his son's existence were not his main claim to fame.

When Wolfgang was three years old, his incredible talent was recognized by Leopold. A child prodigy must have been an enormous financial asset to a hard-pressed family, and Leopold squeezed the utmost commercial advantage out of his son's genius while he was still a child and thus a phenomenon. By the age of 15, Wolfgang had been on the road nine years. Some say that young Mozart was unfairly exploited by his father, but we know from his letters that young Mozart enjoyed his hectic, exciting childhood and his travels to foreign countries, and also that, although music was his entire life, he was a high-spirited and amiable child. He received his entire education, in music and in the humanities, from his father. His letters also reveal a total dedication to and respect for his father, as well as much love and affection for all of his family members.

In 1791, Mozart's health deteriorated. On November 20, Wolfgang took to his bed and during the following two weeks suffered from very high fever and severe headaches. His hands and feet became swollen and he underwent severe bouts of sickness. He grew weaker each day until he no

longer had the energy or the concentration to work on the *Requiem*, his last piece, which was finished by a student in strict accordance with Mozart's instructions. Then, early in the morning on Monday, December 5, 1791, Wolfgang died.

There has been much speculation about the cause of Mozart's death, including suspicion that he was poisoned by a jealous contemporary composer- Antonio Salieri. Even though Mozart himself sometimes claimed that Salieri was poisoning him, and Salieri, when near his own death and delirious, claimed he had poisoned Mozart, historians generally refute that, and attribute his death to rheumatic fever or a uremic coma following a lengthy kidney disease. His funeral, though not a pauper's, was the cheapest available and he was interred in a "common" grave. Common graves at that time in Vienna were about seven and a half feet deep, and coffins, when they were used, were buried in three layers. The graves were not marked, and to this day the location of Mozart's is not known.

Giacomo Puccini

Born December 22, 1858 Lucca, Italy

Died November 29, 1924 Brussels, Belgium

E lucevan le Stella (from *Tosca*)

Tosca is an opera in three acts based on the play *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou. Sardou's play, which he wrote for Sarah Bernhardt, was highly successful and performed over three thousand times, according to Sardou. Puccini's *Tosca* was first performed in Rome on January 14, 1900. The story centers on Tosca, a prima donna, who promises to make love to the police chief, Scarpia, in return for his sparing the life of her lover, Cavaradossi. As Scarpia is claiming his reward, Tosca stabs him. Scarpia, however, has doublecrossed her and Cavaradossi is shot. Tosca leaps to her death.

In act III, Cavaradossi tries to write a farewell letter to Tosca. He is facing the firing squad for protecting a political prisoner, and asks the jailor to deliver a letter and a ring to Tosca after his death. After writing a few lines, engulfed by memories, he leaves off writing and sings his heart out in the aria *E lucevan le Stella* (Translation: when stars were brightly shining).

Un bel Di (from *Madama Butterfly*)

Madama Butterfly is an opera in three acts based on a play by David Belasco, which was, in turn, based on a short story by John Luther Long. Its libretto was written by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. Its first performance was at La Scala on February 17, 1904. It was Puccini's favorite of his own operas.

The opera tells the tragic story of Cio-Cio-San (*Madama Butterfly*) with whom an American navyman contracts for marriage and who bears his child. The navyman returns to America and, while awaiting his return, Cio-Cio-San sings *Un bel Di* (translation: One Fine Day). For her the marriage contract is binding, but for him it is not and when he returns with his American wife, Cio-Cio-San kills herself.

Madama Butterfly was a complete disaster on its opening night. The audience whistled and shouted through the entire performance. Puccini worked on improving it and consequently it became a great success. From the royalties, Puccini bought a yacht, which he named Cio-Cio-San.

O mio babbino caro (from *Gianni Schicchi*)

Gianni Schicchi is a comic opera in 1 act with libretto by Forzano. It tells the story (actually an episode in Dante's *Inferno*) of a medieval Florentine rogue who dupes a family out of their legacies.

Gianni Schicchi is part of *Il Trittico* (The Triptych), which consists of three unrelated operas intended to be performed in a single evening. *Il Trittico*'s first performance was in 1918 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

The famous aria *O mio babbino caro* (translation: My dear father) is sung by *Gianni Schicchi*'s daughter

as she threaten's to kill herself if he will not let her buy a wedding ring.

Giacomo Puccini's father was a musician who died when Giacomo was four years old. Giacomo showed signs of musical talent at an early age and through the efforts of his mother was able to afford to study with Ponchielli at the Milan conservatory. After some local successes with his operas, his success and reputation rapidly spread abroad. He was particularly gifted at creating expressive melodies and at creating female roles, many of which dominate his operas. Though he composed only ten operas, most of them are still in the standard repertoire. In addition to operas, he composed choral, orchestral, and chamber works and songs.

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini

Born February 29, 1792 Pesaro, Italy

Died November 13, 1868 Paris, France

La Gazza Ladra Overture (The Thieving Magpie)

***La Gazza Ladra* is an opera in two acts with libretto by Giovanni Gherardini. Its first performance was on May 31, 1817 at La Scala. The story is that of a maid servant who is sentenced to death for the theft of a silver spoon that, just in the nick of time, is found to be the work of a magpie.**

The opera's overture is very famous. Its use of two snare drums was an innovation in orchestration.

Rossini was the son of a trumpet player. He studied in Bologna and spent most of his creative life in Venice and Milan. He composed operas as well as religious, choral, orchestral, and band works. Several of his operas are staples of the repertoire (e.g. *The Italian in Algiers*, *The Barber of Seville*, *La Gazza Ladra*, and *William Tell*).

He composed at a terrific speed, completing 38 operas in 23 years. He suddenly and mysteriously quit writing operas at the age of 37 and spent 10 years completing his *Stabat Mater*. He ultimately settled in Paris and was the witty leader of the artistic world until his death. He was highly regarded as a cook and his dinner parties were renowned. He invented a number of recipes including Tournedos Rossini, a perennial favorite.

Giuseppi Verdi

Born October 10, 1813 Le Roncole, Italy

Died January 27, 1901 Milan, Italy

La Donna è mobile (from *Rigoletto*)

***Rigoletto* is an opera in three acts (often given in four) based on Victor Hugo's play *Le roi s'amuse*. Francesco Maria Piave wrote the libretto. *Rigoletto* was first performed on March 11, 1851 and was initially found to be so shocking and dangerous that censors required significant changes be made to it.**

***La Donna è mobile* (translation: woman is fickle) is one of the most celebrated of arias for tenor.**

La Forza Del Destino

***La Forza Del Destino* (The Force of Destiny) is an opera in four acts with libretto by Piave and based on the Spanish drama by the Duke of Rivas. It was first performed in St. Petersburg on November 10, 1862. This tragic story is built on the effect of a curse that is finally atoned by the dying heroine.**

The opera originally opened with a prelude- music which leads directly into the action unlike an overture that stands alone and is separated from the first act. Verdi was quite unhappy with Piave's libretto and wanted it rewritten. Piave was very ill however and he gave the task to Antonio Ghislanzoni. It was as part of this revision that Verdi rewrote the opening music and made it into an overture. Built on melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material from the opera, the overture quotes and combines several of its most striking melodies.

Verdi's parents were of peasant stock. While Verdi showed prodigious talent at an early age, his greatest works were produced late in his life. Though he wrote operas in his early years, operas which gained him wide recognition, they are rarely performed today. *Rigoletto* (1851) marked the beginning of his march to greatness which he achieved with such masterpieces as *Aida*, *La Traviata*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. The latter two works were created after the age of seventy. During his lifetime Verdi became a highly revered figure in his native country. During his funeral, great masses of people lined the streets of Milan to watch the procession and express their grief. A massed choir, accompanied by the La Scala orchestra

directed by the young Arturo Toscani, sang *Va Pensiero*, “The Slaves’ Chorus”, from Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*. Today Verdi’s name is synonymous with Italian opera.

Franz von Suppé

Born April 18, 1819 Spalato, Dalmatia

Died May 21, 1895 Vienna, Austria

Jolly Robbers, Overture

***Jolly Robbers (Banditenstreiche)* was a very successful one-act operetta. The *Overture* has remained quite popular over the years.**

***Jolly Robbers* opened on April 27, 1867 at Vienna's Carltheater, where the composer was Kapellmeister for 17 years. The overture opens with trumpet fanfares and then accelerates into an allegretto portraying the robbers' gait as the 'desperadoes' race their steeds in a furious trot to a brilliant climax.**

Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé Demelli (aka Franz) was of Belgian descent. He grew up in Zara, the capital of Dalmatia. His musical abilities manifested themselves early. He learned to play the flute which remained his favorite instrument. He composed a Mass for the Franciscan church at Zara at the age of 15 and forty years later published it as *Missa dalmatica*. After studying law at Padua, he studied music in Vienna where he became third kapellmeister of the Theater in der Josefstadt in 1840. He conducted and performed as an opera singer in various cities. Throughout his career he was a prolific composer of works for the theater- operas, operettas, and incidental music. He also wrote choral and orchestral works.

Richard Wagner

Born May 22, 1813 Leipzig, Germany

Died February 13, 1883 Venice, Italy

Tannhäuser Overture

***Tannhäuser* (full title, translated: *Tannhäuser and the Song Contest at the Wartburg*) is a three-act romantic opera for which Wagner wrote both the music and the libretto. Its first performance was in 1845 in Dresden. It received a storm of criticism largely because of innovations with which the audience was not familiar. In spite of its initial critical failure, Franz Liszt produced the work three years later at Weimar, Germany. A revised version began in Paris in 1861. The story, based on a legend told in the German poem *Der Sängerkrieg*, takes place in the thirteenth century and is that of Heinrich Tannhäuser, a more or less historical German knight who also sang and composed. Tannhäuser is in love with both Venus and Elizabeth. For Venus, his love is carnal. For Elizabeth, his love is ideal or sacred. At a song contest, Tannhäuser sings about his love of Venus and Elizabeth dies of grief. When the Pope's staff bursts into bloom, signifying that Tannhäuser's sins have been forgiven, he dies too.**

Today *Tannhäuser* is considered one of Wagner’s most important early works. It’s splendid and well-known overture presents many of the themes that are developed in the course of the opera.

Wagner was an extreme egocentric. For that we must be grateful since, as objectionable a person as he must have been, otherwise he would never have dared to conceive and produce the music, such as *The Ring of the Niebelung*, which is unparalleled for immensity of design and vastness of scope. It has been called by some the greatest work of art ever produced by a single man, and by others the most colossal bore. It is fair to say that there is truth in both observations.

Wagner was the chief proponent of German romantic music and one of the most important innovators in the art of opera. He introduced the leitmotif (a melodic passage or phrase associated with a specific character, situation, or element) and the concept of music dramas (words and music welded together into an integrated work of great emotional intensity).

Victor Herbert

Born February 1, 1859, Dublin, Ireland

Died May 26, 1924, New York City

Italian Street Song from *Naughty Marietta*

Naughty Marietta was first produced in 1910 and is one of the very successful operettas for which Herbert is most remembered. The *Italian Street Song* from *Naughty Marietta* is a nostalgic recollection of the city of Naples whose words were written by Rida Johnson Young. In the motion picture adaptation of the operetta (MGM, 1933), it was sung by Janette McDonald. Jane Powell sang it in the motion picture *Holiday in Mexico* (MGM, 1946).

Victor Herbert's operettas, comic operas, and many other songs have been very popular, and the list of his compositions is long and varied.

Herbert worked extensively as a cellist in Germany and Austria. Shortly after his marriage in Vienna in 1886, he moved to the United States and became the principal cellist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. In 1892, he succeeded Patrick Gilmore as the leader of the famous 22nd Regiment Band of the New York National Guard. In 1893, he became the leader of Gilmore's civilian band, Gilmore having died in 1892. He was the conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony from 1898- 1902.

Herbert was, along with John Philip Sousa and others, a founder of ASCAP, which protects copyrights and collects royalties on behalf of the organization's members.

Eduardo di Capua

Born Italy 1864

Died 1917

O Sole Mio

O Sole Mio is the most famous Neapolitan song ever written. Interestingly, this "hymn to the sun" wasn't written in Naples and it has a rather odd history.

In 1898, di Capua was in Odessa in the Ukraine on tour with a Neapolitan dance orchestra entertaining the Russian nobility. His considerable gambling debts, coupled with the financial failure of the tour group, made it impossible for di Capua to support his family. Needing money, and inspired by a set of lyrics that his friend Giovanni Capurro had given him at the train station as he left Naples, di Capua wrote *O Sole Mio*.

Upon returning to Naples, di Capua entered his new composition in a song contest held each year. This particular contest has seen the debut of such songs as *Funiculi, Funicula* and *Santa Lucia* which made fortunes for their composers. Di Capua, however, had no such luck and his song did not immediately catch on. A crestfallen di Capua all but gave up songwriting after this disappointment and went to his grave a pauper.

Gradually, though, the song did catch on, particularly after Caruso's celebrated recording for the Victor Talking Machine Co. in 1916 and it attracted even more attention at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, Belgium. A bandmaster had forgotten to bring the music for the Italian national anthem to the bandstand for the opening ceremonies and at the last minute substituted the only Italian song he had - *O Sole Mio*. The song has since gone on to become a staple of operatic tenors everywhere and pop stars such as Jerry Vale. It was even reincarnated by Elvis Presley as *It's Now or Never*.

Over the years ownership of the very valuable rights to *O Sole Mio* has been seriously contested in the courts. At one time they were bringing in over 300 million liras a year. That's not bad for a song sold to a publisher for only 25 liras!

Eduardo di Capua was a Neapolitan violinist and songwriter. Many of his songs are well known in Italy (e.g. *Maria Mari, I' te vurria vasa*, and *Torna a maggio*), and his *O Sole Mio* is known around the world.

Engelbert Humperdinck

Born September 1, 1854 Siegburg, Germany

Died September 27, 1921 Neusterlitz, Germany

Hänsel and Gretel Selections

***Hänsel and Gretel*, Humperdinck's most famous work, is an opera (or more specifically a musical fairy story or Märchenspiel) for which his sister, Adelheid Wette, wrote the libretto based on a fairy tale by the brothers Grimm. In the story the opera's namesakes get the better of a witch. Humperdinck wrote it for the entertainment of his children and the very first performance took place in a small private theater in Frankfurt.**

The composer later revised the work for public performance and the new edition was first performed on December 23, 1893 in Weimar under the direction of Richard Strauss. It was an immediate and substantial success.

Englebert Humperdinck was an architectural student. At the age of 25, he heard music he had written for a Goethe play and became convinced that he should become a professional musician. Consequently, he studied at the Cologne conservatory and at the Munich conservatory. He met Wagner in Naples and helped him prepare *Parsifal* for its premiere. Wagner continued to be a powerful musical influence for him. He taught at several conservatories and was a music critic for various publications. He wrote some chamber and orchestral music but was most regarded for his choral music, songs, and music for the stage. He wrote incidental music for four Shakespeare plays. He wrote several operas but the only one he is remembered for is *Hänsel and Gretel*.

Jacques Offenbach

Born June 20, 1819 Cologne, Germany

Died October 4, 1880 Paris, France

Orpheus in the Underworld, Overture

In Greek mythology Orpheus was the greatest human musician. He was so great that two and a half centuries ago he was worshipped as a God in the religion named after him- *Orphism*. Composers have always been attracted to his story, and the oldest opera score extant is based on it (*L'Euridice*, by Jacopo Peri, 1600).

The music in this overture from Offenbach's version of the story is known the world over. It opens with a bristling fanfare which is followed by a tender love song and an "infernal" passage. The finale, after a fairly complex waltz, is the renowned can-can.

Offenbach, though German by birth, is most strongly identified with French comic opera. He was the son of a Jewish cantor whose real family name was Eberst. After marrying and taking a job as a cantor in Cologne, Offenbach's father changed his name to Offenbach, the name of his hometown. Jacques' birth name was Jakob.

In 1833, Jacques entered the Paris Conservatory to study cello. Academics were not to his liking, so he dropped out of the Conservatory and became a performer with an orchestra. As a performer he was very successful, but he couldn't find much success as a composer. To overcome that lack of success, he started his own theater and finally caught the public's attention with his *Orpheus in the Underworld*. This exciting and shocking work was the beginning of a veritable stream of operettas that were highly successful in major cities on both sides of the Atlantic. His success can be attributed to the lively, witty, and melodious nature of his music.

In 1876 Offenbach visited America to participate in its Centennial Celebration. While that visit was ill-fated in the sense that audiences who expected him to be a lively and witty personality akin to his music were disappointed to discover that he was really a mild and likable fellow. For bandmen, however, fate could not have been harder at work because Offenbach hired John Philip Sousa to play first violin. It was while performing with Offenbach that Sousa had the opportunity to hear Gilmore's band and consequently to pursue the incredibly successful career with which we all are familiar.

Program Notes by Enoch Moser

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