

As a composer for whom “heart-on-sleeve emotion is his main stock in trade” (Swafford), it comes as no surprise that **Tchaikovsky** completed 11 operas. However, his **Capriccio Italien, op. 45**, an orchestral work begun in Rome in early 1880 and completed after returning home to Russia in March of that year, is operatic, not in expressive content, but in the use of melodies that would appeal to ‘the people.’

Tchaikovsky came to Italy after a period of upheaval in his life. His marriage to an obsessive, unstable music student had dissolved disastrously – the composer had entered into it largely in the vain hope of reversing, or at least covering up, his own confirmed homosexuality, a capital crime in the repressed society of tsarist Russia. Joining his brother Modeste in Rome, he spent hours sightseeing and enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of the city’s annual Carnival. As described to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck, with whom he maintained for many years an ambiguous special relationship from afar, Tchaikovsky conceived a plan “to compose something like the Spanish fantasias of [Russian composer Mikhail] Glinka.” The following week he wrote, “I have already completed the sketches for an Italian fantasia on folk tunes for which I believe a good fortune may be predicted. It will be effective, thanks to the delightful tunes which I have succeeded in assembling partly from anthologies, partly from my own ears in the streets.” His prediction for a popular reception was correct, and the work, although among Tchaikovsky’s least profound, helped usher in a period of increasing musical success (subsequent compositions included many masterpieces), financial independence, and international recognition.

The *Capriccio Italien* weaves together five folk-based sections. It begins with trumpet and horn fanfares, apparently inspired by a bugle call repeated nightly at the barracks of the Royal Cuirassiers adjacent to Tchaikovsky’s hotel in Rome. The sources for a gloomy melody in the strings, a lively tune introduced by the oboes, and a march remain undetermined. The concluding wild dance is a *tarantella* (taking its name from the southern Italian town Taranto) known as *Cicuzza*.

– Mark Furth

Chapel Hill Philharmonia

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		English Horn Nancy Wilson	Harp Laura Byrne	Librarian Laura Lengowski	* section principal
		Bassoon Chris Myers* Colette Neish	Trombone Scott Smith* Steve Magnusen John Morrison		

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Chapel Hill Philharmonia

“A Taste of Italy”

Hill Hall — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

3:00 p.m. Sunday, October 19, 2008

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Overture to ‘La Forza del Destino’ Guiseppi Verdi (1813-1901)

Largo al factotum della citta, from ‘The Barber of Seville’ Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
Jay Dolan

Dove sono, from ‘The Marriage of Figaro’ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Clare FitzGerald K. 492

Deh vieni non tardar, from ‘The Marriage of Figaro’ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Catherine Park K. 492

Bella siccome un angelo, from ‘Don Pasquale’ Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)
Zachary Ballard

Smanie implacabile, from ‘Cosi Fan Tutti’ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
JoAna Rusche K. 588

Batti, batti, from ‘Don Giovanni’ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Kathleen Sharpe K. 527

O mio babbino caro, from ‘Gianni Schicchi’ Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
Lydia Rusche

Parto, parto, from ‘La Clemenza di Tito’ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Sarah Dempsey K. 621

Capriccio Italien Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Op. 45

Please join us for a reception in the Hill Hall Rotunda after the concert.

“Opera is as it is because we fundamentally crave romance. We want plumes and velvet somewhere in our lives.”
– Mary Fitch Watkins

“You may have the universe if I may have Italy.” – Giuseppe Verdi

This afternoon’s concert, “A Taste of Italy”, is not about olive oil, pasta, or chianti. The subject is sustenance for the musical palate. Naturally, the menu features selections from **opera** – ‘invented’ in Italy in the late 16th century (though proto-musical theater probably dates to the beginning of human speech). Italian opera, often in that nation’s language, became a model adopted by composers world-wide. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, the archetypal representative of 18th century German Enlightenment, stands as a prime example. While he contributed wonderful *Singspiels* in his native tongue (“Abduction from the Seraglio” and “The Magic Flute” are best known), Mozart rose to great heights in operas with Italian libretti. Arias from four of these works appear on our program, alongside examples from Italians **Gioachino Rossini**, **Gaetano Donizetti**, and **Giacomo Puccini**. Adding a spoonful of caviar to the festivities, we open with the Overture from *La Forza del Destino* (“The Force of Destiny”), written by Giuseppe Verdi, arguably Italy’s greatest opera composer, but first performed in Russia. Symmetrically, we conclude with *Capriccio Italien*, Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s homage to Italy, begun during a vacation there.

Today’s program also celebrates eight young *divas* and *divos*, meaning literally (vocal) “goddesses and gods”, but without the terms’ common connotation of egomaniacal, airheaded celebrity. (Paris Hilton? Not...) The singers are students in the Department of Music, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or at Greensboro. The Chapel Hill Philharmonia acknowledges deep gratitude for an exemplary town/gown relationship with the UNC-CH department over our 26 year history. The use of university facilities and instruments, access to scores and parts, outstanding performances and compositions by department members, and the leadership provided by conductors drawn from the department’s faculty – notably our current Music Director, Professor Donald L. Oehler – have been essential to the orchestra’s growth and development. We give back as we can, purchasing music and occasionally affording performance opportunities to department members. One of the Philharmonia members’ favorite activities has been the occasional “**DivaFest**”, an evening devoted to reading arias with student vocalists, often their first opportunity to sing with a live orchestra. It is now a singular privilege for us to share with our audience an inaugural concert performance with some of these talented emerging artists,

Verdi melded beautiful singing (*bel canto*) and melodrama, cornerstones of Italian opera as popular art, together with intense nationalism, and elevated them to a high emotional plane. At a time when the German Richard Wagner (born, like Verdi, in 1813) was constructing elaborate theories of drama and rewriting the rules of harmony, “Verdi had no theories, only powerful instincts and a tradition going back to Monteverdi, founded on strong feelings expressed by soulful melody.” (Jan Swafford). In two decades, 1839-59, he completed 16 operas, many now staples of the repertoire – *Nabucco*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*. He grew wealthy, bought a farm, and, upon Italy’s unification in 1861 after years of Austrian occupation, served in the first national parliament. He continued to compose, at a less urgent pace, but with consistent integrity. Verdi’s late works included *Aida*, *Otello*, a magnificent *Requiem*, and his one successful comic opera, *Falstaff* (1893).

La Forza del Destino was commissioned for the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre, St Petersburg, Russia, and was first performed in 1862. An ambitious, sprawling work, it reflects a fundamentally pessimistic world-view. The impetuous love between the heroine Eleonora and her half-Incan suitor Don Alvaro, a perceived slight to her noble father’s honor, and his unintended death at Alvaro’s hand conspire to set off in Eleonora’s brother Carlos an implacable drive for revenge. The lovers escape separately and seek redemption, Eleonora as a religious



Enrico Caruso (c) with Rosa Ponselle (r) in *La Forza del Destino*



La Scala, Milan

hermit in a cave. Aided by seemingly random workings of fate, Carlos eventually discovers and kills them both, but dies as well. Verdi himself found the level of gore disturbing, and softened the ending in an 1869 revision for Milan’s *La Scala* Theater. The Overture, written for the latter version, still captures the violent, headlong rush of fate in a recurrent motif first introduced by the strings. This ‘Destiny’ music contrasts with a prayerful melody from an aria by the doomed Eleonora. Will Crutchfield, who directed a recent production, argues for the contemporary relevance of *La Forza*’s dark vision. “It is untenable to consider this ridiculous in a world where teenage girls are still beheaded by their relatives for losing their virginity, where parents excommunicate their gay children, where unstable fathers murder their whole families before committing suicide, where neighbors butcher one another for being Hutu or Tutsi, Sunni or Shia, Jew or Gentile when war breaks out. The relentless force of blind, irrational, murderous passion still lives below the surface of civilized life, and breaks through that surface oftener than we like to consider in daily life. Verdi felt this keenly both as a man and an artist.”



The Barber of Seville, 1876 poster

“The opera is to music what a bawdy house is to a cathedral.” – H.L. Mencken (critic)

“How wonderful opera would be if there were no singers.” – Gioacchino Rossini (composer)

“Every theatre is an insane asylum, but an opera theatre is the ward for the incurables.” – Franz Schalk (conductor)

The young performers in our *Diva/DivoFest* are aware that opera often goes ‘over the top.’ They may have been stung by barbs like those quoted above. Yet, they know that their art can transcend such flippancy to forge powerful human bonds. Composer Luciano Berio (1925-2003) recognized this strength, and evoked an idealized sense of community he wished to see restored: “Opera once was an important social instrument – especially in Italy. With Rossini and Verdi, people were listening to opera together and having the same catharsis with the same story, the same moral dilemmas. They were holding hands in the darkness. That has gone. Now perhaps they are holding hands watching television.”

Guest Artists

Jay Dolan, baritone, is from Morrisville, NC. He graduated in May 2008 from UNC-CH, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree with Honors. He studied with Terry Rhodes.

Clare FitzGerald, soprano, is from Raleigh. She is a UNC-CH senior majoring in Music. She studies with Jeanne Fischer. She participated in the “*Si Parla, Si Canta*” Program in Urbania, Italy, 2008.

Catherine Park, soprano, is from Raleigh. She is a UNC-CH junior Music major. She studies with Dr. Rhodes.

Zachary Ballard, baritone, from Mooresville, NC, is a UNC-CH senior Music Performance major. He studies with Valentin Lanzrein. He participated in the “*Si Parla, Si Canta*” Program in Urbania, Italy, 2008.

JoAna Rusche, mezzo-soprano, is a UNC-CH senior Music Performance major (voice/piano). She holds a Sidney M.

Dowd Music Scholarship at UNC-CH and studies with Dr. Fischer.

Kathleen Sharpe, soprano, comes from Winston-Salem, NC. She is a UNC-CH junior Music major and studies with Dr. Rhodes.

Lydia Rusche, soprano, is a freshman Music/Business major at UNC-Greensboro, where her teacher is Clara O’Brien. She did summer study in Tuscania, Italy, 2008.

Sarah Dempsey, soprano, is a UNC-CH senior carrying a Music/English double major. She studies with Dr. Lanzrein.

All these students have gained recognition for their talents. A number have received 1st or 2nd place awards in state and regional competitions of the National Association of Teachers of Singing and the Music Teachers National Association. We are proud to honor their gifts and hard work.

“You can listen to what everybody says, but the fact remains that you’ve got to get out there and do the thing yourself.” – Joan Sutherland