

# Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Hill Hall — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

3:00 p.m. Sunday, February 19, 2012

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director



*Divafest*

*An Afternoon at the Opera*

## *Divafest*

### **Music Director Donald L. Oehler on “Why a *Divafest*?”**

My history with the UNC Department of Music Voice Division began in 1969 in the improbable locale of Teheran, Iran. I was performing as a member of the Teheran Symphony and the Teheran Opera Company orchestra when I met Wilton (Willie) and Martha Mason. Willie, then chair of the UNC-CH Department of Music, was teaching at the University of Teheran through a Fulbright Scholarship. At home in Chapel Hill, he and Martha had initiated many opera productions from the Department of Music. These involved the entire campus community. Faculty, students and community musicians played in the orchestra, friends and family sewed costumes and built props, and Willie and his faculty colleagues prepared their students to perform on the grand stage. Willie and Martha also communicated an infectious and persuasive love of Chapel Hill. Wouldn't you know it, the following season I found myself a new faculty member on the UNC-CH campus. I discovered a thriving and bold group of young vocalists whose talents rivaled those at the most prestigious institutions in the country. Over the many years since my early days in Chapel Hill, I have watched and heard the Music Department's voice program inspire countless young vocalists. Many of them have developed brilliant and wonderful careers and many more have carried the love of music and singing with them into diverse walks of life. It is noteworthy that three of our Department's Voice Division faculty members are former UNC Department of Music undergraduates: Terry Rhodes, now chair of the Department and soon to be a Senior Associate Dean; Louise Toppin, head of the Voice Division; and faculty colleague Jeanne Fischer.

Today the Voice Division comprises a large and vibrant group of faculty and students. Under the leadership of Stafford Wing, Terry Rhodes, and now Louise Toppin, the Division has grown to include sixty voice majors, as well as many music minor and non-major students. All students enjoy a variety of exciting performance opportunities, including solos in large choral works, solo recitals, chamber music and fully staged operas. UNC undergraduate voice students consistently have performed strongly in state, regional and national competitions and auditions. Many have earned graduate degrees in programs across the US and internationally, at the Manhattan School of Music, the Eastman School of Music, Peabody Conservatory, the New England Conservatory, the Royal Academy of Music, and many other prestigious institutions.

The Chapel Hill Philharmonia's program this afternoon offers a type of time machine – repertoire of the past and voices of the future – plus a unique opportunity to bring together community, university and wonderfully talented, young students who enjoy sharing with you some of the most exciting, beautiful and rich repertoire heard on the concert stage.

We recognize the vocal faculty of the Department of Music for their artistry and instructional skills, and their support and mentoring of these fine young singers: Jeanne Fischer, Nicole House, Andrea Moore, Terry Rhodes, Timothy Sparks, Louise Toppin and visiting artist-in-residence, tenor Anthony Dean Griffey. Their work shines and they have much of which to be proud. And to Willie and Martha – you would love the *Brindisi*!

***Les Toréadors* from the *Carmen Suite No. 1*****Georges Bizet (1838-75)****The Philharmonia**

Coming from a family of musicians, Georges Bizet began his musical education very early. He entered the Paris Conservatory of music at the age of nine and began to take piano and organ lessons. In his late teens Bizet composed his first keyboard piece, *Jeux d'enfants*, a suite for four hands piano. However, it was not until after his death that his works gained the fame they now enjoy. Bizet's best known work is ***Carmen***. Surprisingly unpopular at its premiere in Paris in 1875, *Carmen* has become one of the world's most performed operas. It is set in Seville, Spain and tells the story of the promiscuous gypsy Carmen and the soldier Don José who has been ordered to arrest her. Carmen entices Don José with a rendezvous at a tavern and convinces him to let her escape, leaving him to suffer the consequences. The tale unfolds in a beautiful procession of comic and sentimental scenes with Bizet's light orchestral accompaniment. ***Les Toréadors*** opens the opera with its quick spirited and rhythmic melodies. It later serves as the theme for the bullfighter Escamilio who becomes Carmen's new lover, provoking Don José's murderous jealousy. The ***Intermezzo*** opens Act III to a quiet scene in the woods where Carmen has joined a group of smugglers after rejecting Don José. This lovely orchestral interlude prominently features the flute and harp. *Carmen's* romantic story and colorful music maintain it as an audience favorite today.

**Vincent L. Povaszay**

*The spurned lover Don José fatally stabs Carmen*

***Così fan tutte* (They're All Like That) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)*****Fra gli amplessi*****Noelle Harb, soprano & Chris Nickell, tenor**

Fiordiligi decides to go to the battlefield to find her lover Guglielmo, who she believes had marched off bravely to war. In fact Guglielmo and his friend Ferrando, on a bet from the cynical Don Alfonso, have disguised themselves as "Albanians" and are trying to woo each others' partners – Ferrando courting Fiordiligi and Guglielmo her sister Dorabella. Ferrando seals the deal with Fiordiligi in this duet ("In the embraces"). It appears, as Don Alfonso wagered, that no woman can be trusted! But has Ferrando himself fallen harder than he intended?

***Soave Sia il Vento*****Joanna Burke & Pam Revak, sopranos & Ben Boecker, baritone**

Don Alfonso has conspired with Guglielmo and Ferrando to test the fidelity of their lovers, the sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella, respectively. Alfonso convinced the two young dandies to court their ladies while disguised as foreigners, but to switch places. To prepare the trap, Guglielmo and Ferrando announce that they are “going off to war.” In this trio the girls wish their guys a safe journey and swift return, accompanied by Don Alfonso who, of course, is in on the trick.

***Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute)****Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*****Der Hölle Rache*****Jessica Hiltabidle, soprano**

The Queen of the Night is furious that her late husband gave the Sevenfold Circle of the Sun to her enemy Sarastro instead of to herself. She demands that Pamina kill Sarastro in his Temple and threatens to renounce her daughter if she refuses: “The wrath of Hell within my breast is burning, / Death and despair flame about me! If Sarastro does not through you feel / The pain of death, / Then you will be my daughter nevermore.”

***Don Giovanni*****Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*****La ci darem la mano*****Kristen Barney, soprano & Ben Boecker, baritone**

Zerlina, a peasant girl who is soon to be married, has sparked the interest of Don Giovanni, a notorious womanizer. When the rake gets the girl alone, he tries to seduce her. Zerlina knows she should not go with this man, but his charm overtakes her.

***O Statua Gentilissa*****Dan Silva & Taylor Weddle, baritones**

In this scene Don Giovanni and his sidekick Leporello stand in the shadow cast by a statue of the Commendatore, who Don Giovanni murdered in a duel at the beginning of the opera. When Giovanni orders him to invite the statue to dinner, Leporello trembles and is rendered mute by his fear. Giovanni arrogantly issues the invitation himself. To his amazement, the statue nods in affirmation, sealing the reprobate's eventual doom.

***Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro)****Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*****Sull'aria*****Emily Siar & Kayla Hill, sopranos**

Susanna and the Countess Almaviva plot to trick the habitually unfaithful Count, who has incessantly pursued Susanna despite her engagement to his valet Figaro. In the "Letter Duet" the Countess dictates a suggestive message inviting the Count to meet Susanna at nightfall in the garden. Little does the philanderer know, his infidelity will soon be exposed, for his own wife, disguised in Susanna's cloak, will be awaiting his arrival!

***Intermezzo from the Carmen Suite No 1*****Georges Bizet****The Philharmonia****Vincent L. Povazsay, conductor*****Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Tales of Hoffmann)****Jacques Offenbach (1819-80)*****Les oiseaux dans la charmille*****Caroline Mason, soprano**

The inventor Spalanzani winds up the mechanical doll Olympia to entertain his guests. She sings about *l'amour*: "The birds in the hedges, the star of daylight in the sky, everything speaks to a young girl of love."



*The unlucky lover Hoffmann becomes infatuated with the doll Olympia in a 1951 film version of Offenbach's opera by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. Here Moira Shearer dances as Olympia, while New York City Opera star Robert Rounseville (Hoffmann) admires her on bended knee.*

### **Lakmé**

**Léo Delibes (1836-91)**

#### ***Vien Mallika...Dome epais***

**Sarah Humphrey, soprano & Laura Buff, mezzo-soprano**

The opera is set in British-ruled India. This beloved duet between the title character Lakmé and her servant Mallika depicts the beauty and serenity of the river where they are bathing, but also expresses Lakmé's fears for her father's safety in a tide of negativity toward his religious practices.

### **Gianni Schicchi**

**Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)**

#### ***O mio Babbino Caro***

**Maria Palombo, soprano**

Lauretta is in love with Rinuccio, but due to tensions between their families her father has threatened to break them up. Lauretta begs her father's permission to marry Rinuccio, saying she would rather die than live without her beloved.

### **La bohème (The Bohemian)**

**Giacomo Puccini**

#### ***O Soave Fanciulla***

**Lydia Rusche, soprano & Ryan Griffin, tenor**

The seamstress Mimi knocks on Rodolfo's door one night in search of a match to light her extinguished candle. She finds herself falling for the Bohemian poet – a feeling she quickly discovers is mutual. The pair share stories of their lives and backgrounds until Rodolfo's friends call from downstairs for him to join them in a night out. Mimi shyly asks to join the party. They exit arm-in-arm, singing "Love! Love! Love!"

***La Traviata*****Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)*****Brindisi*****Ryan Griffin, tenor &  
Caroline Mason, soprano**

The beautiful but consumptive courtesan Violetta Valéry throws a party in her salon, celebrating her recovery from a bout of illness. One of her 'benefactors' introduces Violetta to Alfredo Germont. This young nobleman, unbeknownst to her, is an ardent admirer who visited daily while she was on her sickbed. When Violetta's current lover declines to offer a toast, the honor passes to Alfredo, who raises his glass and exhorts the company to "drink from the joyful goblets." Violetta joins in the festive drinking song. She urges her guests to live for the moment and enjoy the delight of love, "a flower which blooms and dies." The words foreshadow her imminent death from tuberculosis.



*The legendary Maria Callas as  
Violetta*

**Overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*****Richard Wagner (1813-83)****The Philharmonia**

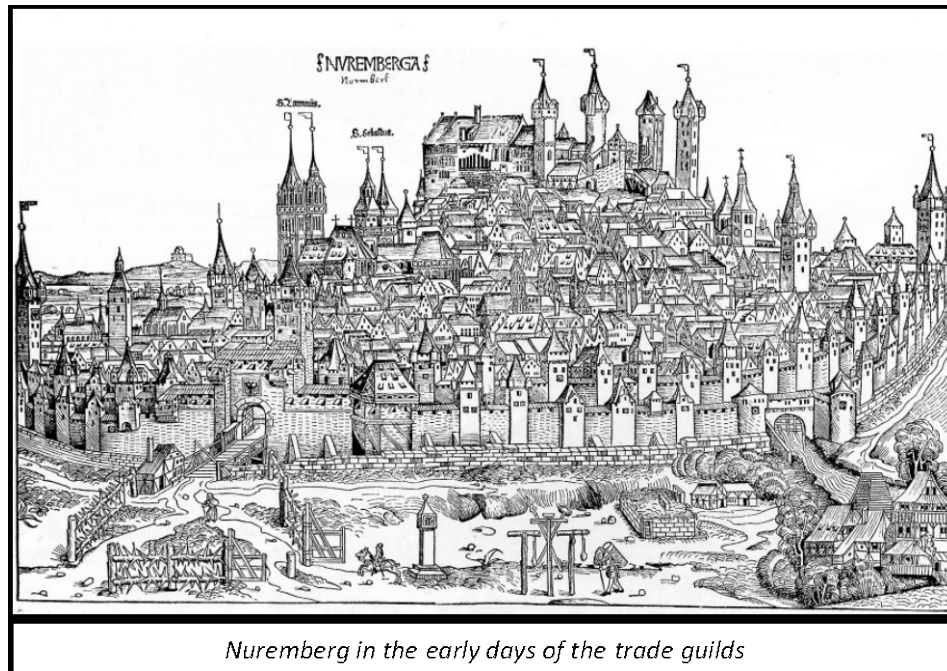
Trade guilds, comprising apprentices, journeymen and masters, were important elements of German society from the late middle ages until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ongoing German tradition of amateur male singing groups, which sometimes hold competitions with prizes awarded, forms the background for Richard Wagner's only comic opera, ***Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg***. (The title refers to singers who were masters in their trades.)

In the plot Wagner sketched before he was forced to flee Dresden in the 1848 revolutions, the masters of Nuremberg plan a competition for original song, the winner to get the hand of a beautiful young lady. The town clerk, Sixtus Beckmesser, figures to win easily until a stranger, Walther von Stolzing, appears. The former composes his songs by the strict rules he has learned; the latter is a freer spirit. Competition between these two aspects of art is the basis of the story. In the end, unfettered inspiration (representing Wagner himself, of course) wins out over pedantry.

Wagner wrote the overture before starting work on the opera itself, and led its first performance six years

before the opera's 1868 premiere. The essential musical elements, already fully developed in his mind, are presented. First is a grand theme representing the masters, followed shortly by a pompous fanfare that announces their entry in the final act. Then violins and violas sing the melody of Walther's song, which won the prize. In the development these themes plus one representing the apprentices are woven together in an extended display of counterpoint. This gives way to a reprise of the fanfare, and finally to a grand ending on the initial theme.

Lawrence Evans



*Nuremberg in the early days of the trade guilds*