

THE RALPH OPERA PROGRAM PRESENTS



OPERA SCENES

OCT. 20 & 22, 2023 | DIRECTED BY TIFFANY BLAKE

STUDIO THEATRE • UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR THE ARTS

SEASON SPONSOR:



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN OPERA IN SCENES AND ARIAS

The reigning Empress of Rome, Emperor Nero's wife, Ottavia, bemoans her fate and the cruelty of her husband who is attempting to replace her with his mistress, Poppea.

from ***L'incoronazione di Poppea*** (1643)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

“Disprezzata regina”

Ottavia: Kristy Shuck

Director: Susanna Jacobson

In one of the most sublime duets in all the operatic repertoire, Emperor Nero and his newly crowned mistress, Poppea, celebrate their love and their triumph.

“Pur ti miro”

Poppea: Sara Jo Reeder

Nerone: Aspen Ulibarri

The conquered Emperor of the Ottoman Empire, Bajazet, rages at his daughter, Asteria's, apparent meekness in accepting her fate and scorns his captor, Tamerlano.

from ***Tamerlano*** (1724)

G. F. Handel (1685-1759)

“Ciel e terra”

Bajazet: Chandler Peveto

Director: Amity Matthews

Orfeo enters the Underworld in search of his deceased wife, Euridice. His way to the Elysian Fields is blocked by the vengeful Furies who refuse to admit him passage. However, through the beauty of his singing and music, he breaks down their defenses.

from **Orfeo ed Euridice** (1762)

Christoph W. Gluck (1714-1787)

Act II

Orfeo: Susanna Jacobson

Furies:

Jaelyn Burch, Brianna Dene, Deklin Herman, Lauren Lang, Maddie McGinnis,
Amity Matthews, Chandler Peveto, MG Phillips, Sara Jo Reeder, Kristy Shuck,
Matthew Tabor, Aspen Ulibarri, Reid Vosburg, Hayley Wood

Idomeneo discovers Idamante and Ilia sharing an embrace after declaring their love for one another. Idomeneo tries to convince Idamante to leave Crete. Meanwhile, the jealous Princess Elettra seethes.

from **Idomeneo** (1781)

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

“Cosa vedo....Andrò ramingo e sola”

Idomeneo: Deklin Herman

Idamante: Susanna Jacobson

Ilia: Amity Matthews

Elettra: Jaelyn Burch

Count Almaviva finally reveals his true identity to Rosina, who is both shocked and pleased at the turn of events. Figaro tries to convince the lovers that they must flee before they are discovered by Don Bartolo.

from **Il barbiere di Siviglia** (1816)

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

“Alfine eccoci qua...Ah, qual colpo...Zitti, zitti, piano”

Figaro: Chandler Peveto

Il Conte: Brianna Dene

Rosina: Kristy Shuck

Isabella has become shipwrecked and rails against fate. However, she trusts her female charms will help her to master the situation.

from ***L'Italiana in Algeri*** (1813)

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

“Cruda sorte”

Isabella: Susanna Jacobson

Director: Kristy Shuck

A scheming Dr. Malatesta tries to sell his foolish friend, Don Pasquale, on a fictitious woman to marry.

from ***Don Pasquale*** (1843)

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

“Bella siccome un angelo”

Dr. Malatesta: Deklin Herman

Don Pasquale: Brianna Dene

Director: Brianna Dene

In a scheme to trick the lecherous Falstaff, Nanetta, the daughter of one of Falstaff's would-be lovers, pretends to be a fairy queen and instructs her “magical” fairies.

from ***Falstaff*** (1893)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

“Sul fil d'un soffio etesio”

Nanetta: Amity Matthews

Director: Chandler Peveto

In a “play within an opera”, the lovesick Harlequin serenades his lover Colombina.

from ***I Pagliacci*** (1892)

Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1857-1919)

“O Colombina”

Beppe: Brianna Dene

Director: Deklin Herman

Gianni Schicchi outlines his plan to rewrite Buoso's will. The relatives are eager to stake their claim on Buoso's estate. Little do they know, Schicchi is determined to fool them all.

from **Gianni Schicchi** (1918)

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

“Ah vittoria...Addio Firenze”

Gianni Schicchi: Chandler Peveto

Zita: Hayley Wood

Nella: Amity Matthews

La Ciesca: Kristy Shuck

Gherardo: Brianna Dene

Marco: Deklin Herman

Betto: Reid Vosburg

Simone: Matthew Tabor

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Director: Tiffany Blake

Music Director and Conductor: Tim Burns

Pianists: Juhyun Lee and Tim Burns

Production Stage Manager: Britney Juarez

Assistant Stage Director: Caelum Janski

Lighting Designer: Carlos Gutierrez

Assistant Lighting Designer: Ava Barbieri

Supertitles: Kristy Shuck

Costume Coordinator: Kristy Shuck

Light Board Operator: Trey Wallen

Deck Crew: Daren Cull and Grace Hellman

SYNOPSIS

L'incoronazione di Poppea

Monteverdi's final opera is based upon the life of the Emperor Nero and his pursuit to make his mistress, Poppea, his wife and queen. To do so, he must rid himself of his true wife and queen, Ottavia. The opera's plot is often described as a celebration of the anti-hero. Treachery, greed, and lust in the characters of Nero and Poppea are rewarded while the characters who embody virtue and honesty are punished either through death or banishment.

Orfeo ed Euridice

The classic Greek myth depicts a husband's devotion to his wife and his trials to return her from the dead. Orfeo is granted permission by the God of Love to travel to the Underworld to retrieve his recently deceased wife, Euridice. Orfeo uses his beautiful singing voice and his lyre to entrance the Furies and convince them to allow him passage to the Elysian Fields where he finds Euridice. His attempts to retrieve her are complicated by the condition laid upon him by the God of Love: he may not look upon her until they have travelled through the Underworld back to Earth.

Idomeneo

The King of Crete, Idomeneo, makes an oath to the God of the Sea, Neptune, to sacrifice the first person he encounters once he is brought safely to shore during a raging storm at sea. Unfortunately, the first person he encounters is his beloved son and heir, Idamante. Over the course of the opera, Idomeneo tries to convince Idamante to leave Crete forever, but cannot tell him why. Idamante feels spurned by his father and vows to regain his love and affection. Meanwhile, he falls in love with Ilia, the captive daughter of Idomeneo's defeated rival, the King of Troy. The arrogant Princess of Argos, Elettra, is horrified that Idamante would pledge himself to Ilia and not to her. Eventually, Neptune sends a sea monster to ravage the island of Crete because Idomeneo has not fulfilled his vow. Idamante slays the monster and Neptune declares that Idamante and Ilia will rule over Crete together.

Il barbiere di Siviglia

The Count Almaviva has fallen in love with Rosina, the ward and desired object of Don Bartolo's affections. The Count disguises himself as a poor student to ensure that Rosina loves him for who he is and not his money or status. With the help of his servant, Figaro, the Count successfully woos Rosina and they thwart old Don Bartolo.

Gianni Schicchi

The relatives of the recently deceased, wealthy Buoso Donati are horrified to discover that he has given his entire estate to a monastery. They are determined to get their hands on his estate and employ the assistance of a local charlatan, Gianni Schicchi. Schicchi promises to help them by disguising himself as Buoso and calling in a notary to re-write will. Schicchi wills each of the relatives a token piece of the estate, but in a twist, wills the choicest parts to himself!

PROGRAM NOTES

The modern concept of “opera” was developed more than 400 years ago, as Italian scholars and musicians tried to recreate their perceptions of Greek drama, which tied music and poetry closely together and told and retold mythological and historical stories.

Italian Opera in the Early Baroque (c. 1600–1675)

Around the year 1600, Italian musicians were already experimenting with different musico-dramatic forms. They used arias (songs), duets, trios, and recitative (musical dialogues to aid plot development) to portray a story. These narratives began as short performances between acts of comedies or dramas, often discussing Greek and Roman mythological stories and reserved for the wealthy and social elite. As they gained popularity, and with the help of composers like Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi, these interlude musical performances soon became stand-alone works. In 1637, the first public opera house opened in Venice, and soon operas were enjoyed by all classes that could afford the price of a ticket.

Monteverdi (1567–1643) is the earliest composer whose works are still regularly performed. He is most famous for taking the work of previous scholars, poets, and artists and using them to innovate new conventions in Baroque music, earning himself the title “Father of Opera.” Monteverdi relied on three styles to show the underlying meaning of a text through musical techniques: *concitato* (agitated), *temperato* (moderate), and *mole* (soft/relaxed). He also was one of the first to use da capo aria, characterized by two sections that return to a reprise the first. Monteverdi’s final work and third Venetian opera, *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, portrays the quest of the title character (Roman Emperor Nero’s mistress) to become empress. The work is especially interesting because there is no surviving original score, and the two remaining copies have significant differences, which has led to debate as to how much of the modern versions of this opera are truly the musical work of Monteverdi. In the final duet scene of the production, Poppea and Nero sing a love duet, “Pur ti miro,” regarded by educator Timothy Judd as “one of opera’s most intimate and blissful expressions of romantic love.”

In the later Baroque era, opera began to split into sub-genres based on content and theme. *Opera seria*, the most popular Baroque opera genre, often was based on historical subject matter, noble characters, and themes of love and honor, continuing the earlier tradition. George Frideric Handel’s contributions to Italian Opera are almost unmatched. In the words of Eugene J. Johnson, “Italian Opera is defined in terms of language rather than by the nationality of its creators,” and Handel is an excellent example of this truth having been born in Germany and later becoming a naturalized English citizen. He was known as a self-critical composer, showcased by his willingness to alter first drafts, which was uncommon in this era. His opera *Tamerlano* is no different and received marked revisions. The opera opened the sixth season of the Royal Academy of Music and is serious throughout, dealing with the overthrow of emperors, confrontation, loving concern of a parent, and an intensely dramatic death scene.

Italian Opera in the Classical Era (c. 1675–1800)

In the post-Enlightenment age, Classical era composers searched for ways to keep audiences interested in (and attending) opera performances. Serious works continued, although the focus became more on the singers than the storyline. Some composers began to stray. A new kind of *opera buffa* was generally tongue-in-cheek and had a certain level of self-awareness. It included comic elements and generally remained natural and human-centered in content. Composers aimed to avoid overdone and predictable methods, especially related to arias and recitative. Subsequently, Christoph Gluck (1714–1787), widely regarded as the most pivotal composer in opera reformation, advocated for a return to serious subjects, but with more consideration of the storyline as it related to the music. His methods especially influenced successive composers such as Mozart and Berlioz. In his opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, based on the same subject matter Monteverdi had used 150 years earlier, Gluck uses reformist principles and moments of comedy to keep audiences captivated, even while providing dramatic interpretation of a Greek myth with which patrons were familiar. After its successful Italian-language debut, Gluck went on to release a French version of the opera, spreading his impact on the music scene in Europe even further. In the portion of Act 2 presented in this production, Gluck uses instrumental backing and chorus responses (representing furies in hell, meant to torture sinners) during the final aria to break from the monotony found in traditional *opera seria*. Gluck may have been German, but his contributions to Italian opera, much like Handel, are extremely valuable.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was a master of almost every genre of his time, and opera is no different. He followed in the footsteps of Gluck by contributing a number of reformed operas to the genre—twenty-two to be exact. *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* are perennial favorites, but the lesser-known *Idomeneo* showcases Mozart’s ability to break away from convention. The scene with “Andrò ramingo e sola” depicts a father and son (and his two love interests) preparing to face the repercussions of a deal Idomeneo made with Neptune. It is a theatrical work, ending with a beautiful four-part quartet singing: “To suffer more is impossible. Such great grief is worse than death. No one ever suffered a harsher fate or greater punishment.”

The Classical era closes with a blurring of lines between *opera buffa* and *opera seria*, as composers continued to seek ways to honor tradition and strive for progress, keeping an ever-expanding audience engaged.

— notes by Drew Bradley

Romantic Italian Opera (c. 1800–1870)

As the 18th-century came to a close, the musical stylings in Europe began to shift. A new era of European art music began to take on a more emotionally charged approach to harmony, melody, and expression. Even Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)—partially to his chagrin—began experimenting with this new form of expressive musicality, and the notable arias of his later works serve as excellent examples. Rossini was quoted, as if in mourning, of the departure from the old Italian style of beautiful, controlled, and smooth, even singing, but as the subject

matter of major works began to diverge more and more from older traditions, so too would the delivery and melodic expression from musicians.

Bel canto, a term often used for this old style, was criticized for its lack of drama and lyrical context. The argument to evolve from *bel canto* singing was to allow for greater expressivity, which could better highlight musical content and context. While techniques and theories developed in this old Italian singing school are full of merit and are very much still utilized today, the Romantic era of opera yearned for more. The use of vibrato is particularly noteworthy, as early schooling actually believed it to be a sign of poor control of one's voice and should thus be avoided. Singing loudly, and at higher points in an individual's register naturally brings vibrato, and teachers would instruct their students to sing lighter the higher their pitch climbed, so as to avoid any vocal tumultuousness or in Robert Toft's word, "tremulousness." As singing technique matured, however, the recognition of the benefits to one's tone, along with increased expression and evocation of feel and emotion allowed composers to lean more heavily into the technique. The dramaticism in Rossini's "Cruda sorte," from *L'Italiana in Algeri*, or "Alfine eccoci qua," from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* would have been lost on this older style alone.

The Romantic era also brought new subject matter to the stage. While composers had already begun to stray from the traditional stories of mythology or tales of conflict solved by the benevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient ruling class, audiences were treated to more stories involving real people. *Don Pasquale* by Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848), for example, tells the story of an aging uncle seeking to father an heir to replace his nephew, the current recipient of his inheritance. The characters are unremarkably human: flawed, yet relatable, and they reflect the directions that opera had already begun to proceed.

This is not to say the more traditional yarns disappeared in composers' repertoires of musings. Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)'s 1893 opera *Falstaff*, based on the Shakespearean cowardly knight of the same name, is set in the stories of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV*—works written nearly 400 years prior. This *opera buffa* took Verdi quite some time to complete and is less frequently heard and performed than his mid-period works. However, Verdi had already been pushing the proverbial envelope for quite some time with operatic subgenres, inserting comedic scenes into otherwise serious operas, leading to an emergence of mixed genre, or *opera semiseria*. *Falstaff*, though an old tale, brought a humanistic caricature to the upper class, very much in line with the more personal, less grandiose narratives of adventures.

Verismo and into the 20th Century (c. 1870 and beyond)

Verismo was a style of opera born from realist literary movements in Italy of the same name. It sought to shift the focus of opera from the heroic or mythological nature to previously less typical—or downright avoided—subject matter, such as struggles of poverty, and the lives of everyday people. Although the movement experienced its most significant development in the 1870s, an influence was already in motion. Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857–1919)'s *I Pagliacci*

was based on a newspaper crime report involving a murder spawned of jealousy, infidelity, and rage. *Pagliacci* epitomizes veristic opera, not only in subject matter, but also in particular devices throughout the libretto, orchestration, instrumentation, and trajectory of character arches.

Morally questionable protagonists had become a regular theme; Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924), whose career lasted through end of the Romantic era into this more modern period of music, produced several stories in which characters made self-indulgent, questionable, or even despicable decisions. *Gianni Schicchi* tells of one such individual, who disguises himself as a dead man to help a family regain their inheritance, but ends up keeping the most coveted part for himself, leaving the audience to ponder the consequences. Mussolini's Italian reign brought an end to *verismo*. Since that time, Italian composers have continued their operatic influence, but in ways more aligned with a growing global community.

— notes by Sean Sullivan

SHOW YOUR CSU RAMS PRIDE.



Your Pride Should Go Where You Do.

Show your pride year-round with our exclusive CSU Visa®

Debit Cards, free with any FNBO Checking Account.

Visit us online, or stop by a branch to open your account today.



The Bank
of CSU

fnbo.com/csu



FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF
SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE EVENTS

PLEASE VISIT:

WWW.CSUARTSTICKETS.COM



UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR THE ARTS **SEASON SPONSOR**

