Musical Milestones

Dear Friends and Supporters of the YSO:

On behalf of the entire Yakima Symphony Orchestra organization, I hope that you had a wonderful summer and that you are ready to join us for another year of great music. The 2013-14 Season is called Musical Milestones and it will mark major anniversaries of some truly monumental events in history and will also pay tribute to some outstanding musical achievements.

Simply Sinatra
Opening Night of the Pops Series, September 14th, will feature music made famous by the greatest crooner of them all, Frank Sinatra. Steve Lippia, the number one interpreter of Frank Sinatra songs in the world, will join the orchestra for hits such as The Best is Yet to Come, Cheek to Cheek, I’ve Got You Under My Skin, Send in the Clowns, The Lady is a Tramp, Fly Me to the Moon, Luck Be a Lady, and My Way, just to name a few.

Verdi & Wagner Bicentennial Celebration
On September 28th, the Classical Series will start off with a bicentennial celebration of the births of Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. For this grandiose event, the YSO will be joined by the Yakima Symphony Chorus; Dr. Scott Peterson, Chorusmaster, as well as opera stars Gayla and Torrance Blaisdell. You will be treated to Verdi’s and Wagner’s greatest orchestral selections, choruses, soprano solos, tenor solos, and soprano-tenor duets. Verdi and Wagner were polar opposites, both musically and personally. While Verdi was, by all accounts, a good man, Wagner was, well, a dishonest, disloyal, anti-Semitic adulterer who slept with the wives of and denounced men who had helped his career and championed his music. Despite these differences, Verdi and Wagner had two things in common: they were the two most important opera composers of the 19th century and were both born in 1813. Our Bicentennial Celebration will include highlights from operas including Aida, La Traviata, Rigoletto, La forza del destino, Nabucco, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Lohengrin, Tannhäuser, and Götterdämmerung (from “The Ring” cycle) among others.

We have a terrific season lined up for you and we hope to see you at every concert. This season would not be possible, however, without the support of some very special people. I would like to personally thank the following individuals and couples who have joined my wife Cecilia and me in the inaugural Conductor’s Circle, a group of donors making single-season annual fund contributions of $10,000 or more. My most sincere thanks go to Neal Lessenger, Mitzi Casey, Virginia Hislop, John and Nancy Rossmieissl, Corinne Murphy-Hines and Sam Hines, Doug and Marj Peters, Bunker and Larry Frank, Paul and Terri Schaaake, Jack and Connie Bloxom, Mary and Pat Sundquist, and Herb Frank, who passed away just a few weeks ago and whom we will all miss very much. If and when you see any of these incredibly generous people, please thank them for their tremendous support of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra!

See you on September 14th and 28th at the Capitol Theatre as we embark on our journey through Musical Milestones!

Sincerely,

Lawrence Golan
The Helen N. Jewett Music Director
Yakima Symphony Orchestra
Lunch With Lawrence
Friday, Sept. 27, 2013
11:30am – 1:00pm
Zesta Cucina Restaurant, $25.00

Join Maestro Lawrence Golan for a lovely light lunch and convivial conversation about the pieces and composers featured in the YSO’s Verdi & Wagner concert on September 28. Please contact the YSO office (509-248-1414) or info@ysomusic.org to place your ticket order.

Open Rehearsal
Saturday, Sept. 28, 2013
10:30am – 1:00pm
The Capitol Theatre

See the final touches being put on the evening’s program! Our dress rehearsals for Classical series concerts at the Capitol Theatre are open to the public, and FREE to those who bring a canned food donation to benefit Northwest Harvest. Cash donations to the YSO are also welcomed. Ideal for families and for other patrons unable to attend evening concerts.

ConcertTalk
Saturday, Sept. 28, 2013
6:30pm in the Robertson Room
Capitol Theatre

Join YSO Principal Horn Jeff Snedeker before the YSO’s Verdi & Wagner concert for an inside look at the evening’s program. Dr. Snedeker’s extensive knowledge of music and entertaining style of presentation bring the music and the circumstances of its creation to life. ConcertTalk is well attended, so arrive early for a good seat!

A Note from the Executive Director

The opening of a new season is always special for a variety of reasons. First and foremost is the excitement of bringing great music back to the stage of the Capitol Theatre – the collective energy of musicians and audience and the physical impact of a live symphonic performance is an experience unlike any other. It is also a delight to encounter unexpected musical gems and gain new perspectives on long-time favorites, to learn new faces and renew old friendships.

This is also a time of anticipation for our next generations of performers and lovers of music. Our youth orchestras, YYSO and Yakima Ensemble for Strings, began rehearsals late last month, and each has an exciting season planned. Our community partner, YAMA, begins a new school year with a busy performance schedule to follow up their astonishing first six months as an ensemble. As classes begin at Central Washington University at the end of September, a number of their orchestra members will begin to prepare for a rare student opportunity to perform Stravinsky’s monumental Rite of Spring with the YSO in November.

This fall, I am especially pleased to join Maestro Golan in recognizing the leadership and generosity of the founding members of our Conductor’s Circle. These twelve individuals and couples have set a new standard of commitment to symphonic music in Yakima. We are also proud of the continuing sponsorship of our Pops series by Memorial Hospital and Memorial Physicians, and we are happy to welcome KYVE47, our local PBS station, as the sponsor of our new Sinfonietta series. Our symphony has come a long way in 42 years, and we are grateful for the community vision these gifts represent for the decades to come.

Finally, thank you for your involvement with the Yakima Symphony Orchestra. It’s going to be a great season, and all the more meaningful because we have so many friends and neighbors with whom to share it. See you at a concert soon!

- David Rogers

Stay in touch for music, podcasts and concert information.
ysomusic.org

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Affiliate & Partnership Updates

Yakima Symphony Chorus (YSC)
Dr. Scott Peterson, Chorusmaster

*Bringing Music to Life!* The YSC started its 2013-2014 season with rehearsals and auditions on Tuesday, August 27th. Upcoming performances are as follows:

**YSC Performances with the Yakima Symphony Orchestra**
- September 28, 2013: Verdi & Wagner Bicentennial Celebration, 7:30pm at The Capitol Theatre
- October 26, 2013: Día de los Muertos, 7:30pm at The Seasons Performance Hall
- December 8, 2013: Christmas Pops Spectacular, 4:00pm at The Capitol Theatre
- April 26, 2014: “Don Giovanni,” 7:30pm at The Capitol Theatre
- May 17, 2014: World War I Centennial, 7:30pm at The Capitol Theatre

**YSC Performances**
- October 5, 2013: Autumn Leaves, 5:00pm at The Seasons Performance Hall
- March 8, 2014: The YSC Celebrates the USO! Yakima Valley Museum

The YSC is an affiliate of the YSO. For information, please visit [http://choral.wix.com/chorusmaster](http://choral.wix.com/chorusmaster).

Yakima Youth Symphony Orchestra (YYSO) & Yakima Ensemble for Strings (YES!)
Bruce Walker, YYSO Conductor and YSO Cover Conductor

Christy Baisinger, YES! Conductor

Join the YYSO and YES! in our 2013-2014 season, *Just Add Music!* Our winter concert will feature music of the Italian Masters including Vivaldi, Rossini, Verdi, Bellini and Ponchielli. The KinderKonzert, themed “Karnival!,” is an annual family favorite with student-led instrument demonstrations and instrument petting zoos. Our spring concert “To Music: With Love!” will feature pieces by Grieg, Beethoven, Bizet and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

**2013-2014 Performance Schedule**
- October 27, 2013: Halloween Concert, 3:00pm (location TBD)
- December 1, 2013: Winter Concert, 3:00pm at the Capitol Theatre
- December 7, 2013: Concert at the Yakima Valley Museum
- February 23, 2014: KinderKonzert, 3:00pm at the Capitol Theatre
- March 21, 2014: Waltzing with the Youth Symphony at the Harman Center
- April 27, 2014: Spring Concert, 3:00pm at the Capitol Theatre

The YYSO and YES! are affiliates of the YSO. For information, please visit [www.yyso.org](http://www.yyso.org).

Yakima Music en Accion (YAMA)
Stephanie Hsu, Director

YAMA expects 40 students this fall in their first full season at Garfield Elementary School, up from 30 students in their debut semester last spring. YAMA is a high-quality, intensive, orchestral music program that is accessible to all children, regardless of financial barriers. Its goal is to use music education to disrupt cycles of poverty for children and families in need. YAMA is modeled after *El Sistema*, the internationally-acclaimed youth orchestra system from Venezuela that has produced exceptional musical and social outcomes, even in Venezuela’s highest risk neighborhoods. YAMA is committed to bringing high-quality orchestral learning opportunities to children with greatest financial need and promoting their positive and healthy social development. Participants rehearse two hours daily throughout the school year and perform public shows all around town.

For information on upcoming performances, or to learn more about the program, sign up for the YAMA newsletter at [http://www.yvoic.org/yama.html](http://www.yvoic.org/yama.html). YAMA is a community partnership of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra, Opportunities Industrialization Center of Washington and the Yakima School District.
The years 2013 and 2014 are remarkable ones in that they mark major anniversaries of some truly monumental events in history. The Yakima Symphony Orchestra will be celebrating these events, as well as other great achievements in music history, throughout its 2013-2014 season, Musical Milestones.

**SUBSCRIBE!**

Reserve your seat now for an entire season of *Musical Milestones*. Subscribe to the Complete Season for the maximum discount. Subscribe to an individual series for 20% savings over single ticket prices. Save even more by subscribing to the YSO Capitols Series or the Complete Season. Call today!

**FOUR WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE:**

- **COMPLETE SEASON**
  Five Classical Concerts, Four Pops Concerts and Two Sinfonietta Concerts

- **YSO CAPITOL SERIES**
  Five Classical Concerts and Four Pops Concerts at the Capitol Theatre

- **CLASSICAL SERIES**
  Five Classical Concerts at the Capitol Theatre

- **POPS SERIES**
  Four Pops Concerts at the Capitol Theatre

For concert descriptions and prices please visit [www.ysomusic.org](http://www.ysomusic.org)

**CALL THE YSO OFFICE TO ORDER SEASON TICKETS:**

(509) 248-1414

For single tickets call: 853-ARTS or (877) 330-ARTS

Online: [ticketswest.rdln.com](http://ticketswest.rdln.com)
Steve Lippia has become one of the most prominent, in-demand vocalists and has quickly established his place among the finest interpreters of “standards” and traditional pop music in the nation. Steve’s youthful, energetic talent and powerful show create a perfect blend of “classic” with “today.” His show introduces a new generation to this timeless music, while appealing to long-time listeners.

Steve has headlined in highly successful, extended engagements at the Rio Suites Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas and Resorts Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, where SRO (Standing Room Only) audiences lined up more than two hours before show time to vie for seating. He has performed in multiple engagements for Hilton Atlantic City and Casino Windsor, among others.

Steve has performed to sold-out symphony audiences across North America, including: Akron, Alabama, Albany, Allentown, Amarillo, Austin, Bangor, Bartlesville, Battle Creek, Boulder Philharmonic, Bowling Green, Brampton-Ontario, Buffalo, Calgary, Cape Cod, Charlotte, Chattanooga, Cleveland Pops, Colorado, Columbus Indiana, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Danville, Dayton, Duluth-Superior, Edmonton, Elgin, Erie, Evansville, Fort Smith, Fort Wayne, Fort Worth, Fresno, Grand Rapids, Great Falls, Greensboro, Greenville, Harrisburg, Hartford, Hershey, Hilton Head, Huntsville, Indianapolis, Irving, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Kingston (Canada), Knoxville, Lafayette, Las Cruces, Lexington, Lima (OH), Louisiana, Louisville, Mississippi, Missouri, Music in the Mountains, Napa, Naples, New Haven, New Jersey, North Arkansas, North Carolina, Ocean City Pops, Omaha, Orchestra Kentucky, Oregon, Palm Beach Pops, Peter Nero and The Philly Pops, Phoenix, Portland (ME), Quad City, Richmond, Rochester, Rockford, St. Louis, San Angelo, San Antonio, Shreveport, Signature-Tulsa, Sioux City, South Arkansas, South Dakota, Southwest Michigan, Stockton, Tacoma, Toledo, Toronto, Tucson, Utah, Vancouver, Virginia, West Michigan, Williamsburg, Winnipeg, Winston-Salem and York (Canada).

Signed contracts with symphonies for the 2013-2014 season include Anchorage, Boston Pops, Boston Philharmonic, Chattanooga, Colorado, Forth Worth, Jacksonville, Midland, North Charleston Pops, Rochester, Saskatoon, Symphony Silicon Valley, Tallahassee and Yakima.

Steve has headlined to SRO crowds at the legendary “Birdland Jazz Club” in New York City, backed by the Nelson Riddle and Woody Herman Orchestras. He performed in a highly successful European Jazz Festival Tour which resulted in a nationally televised special on Finnish TV2.

Steve has performed at numerous prestigious special events:
- A $1,000 per plate gala event for the world-renowned JazzAspen Festival
- Special event at the estate of producer Irwin Winkler in Beverly Hills
- Special event at the estate of Aaron Spelling in Beverly Hills
- Gala fundraiser honoring Mrs. Betty Ford in Vail, Colorado
- Multiple events for the Walton Family, the Crown Family, Donald Trump and Michael Dell
- Multiple special and ticketed events with Keith Lockhart and Boston Pops

Steve’s TV appearances include EXTRA, FOX’s Good Day New York, CNN’s Showbiz Today, ABC and the BBC.

Steve’s much acclaimed, self-titled CD was recorded at Warner Brothers’ Studio in Los Angeles with a 41-piece symphony. In addition, Steve has recorded “Steve Lippia Live,” a collection of some of his live performances. His much anticipated third CD, titled “Steve Lippia in Concert,” was released June 16, 2009 to rave reviews.

Steve is a native of Southington, Connecticut. He makes his home in Las Vegas, Nevada with his wife and two miniature German Schnauzers.

Meet Steve Lippia!

Steve Lippia will be available after the concert in the lobby. He will be glad to greet you and to sign CDs!

$15.00 for one CD
$25.00 for two CDs

Cash or check (made out to Steve Lippia)
Scott R. Peterson, Chorusmaster, Yakima Symphony Chorus

Scott R. Peterson is in his 36th season as chorusmaster of the Yakima Symphony Chorus, resident chorus of the YSO. During his tenure, the Yakima Symphony Chorus has performed major works from the orchestral/choral literature and has performed, in its own right, as one of the finest community choral ensembles in Washington State. They have performed all over the world including Carnegie Hall in New York, Switzerland, France, China, and, most recently, at the 2009 Advent Festival in Vienna, Austria, and Prague, Czech Republic.

Over the past three and a half decades, Dr. Peterson has been active as a performer outside the Yakima area and was a member of Male Ensemble Northwest, which is made up of professional choral conductors and has produced four CDs. In 1993, he made his Carnegie Hall debut conducting Mozart’s Requiem. He conducted the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival Chamber Chorale and Festival Chorus at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, from 2001 through 2007. He is active as an adjudicator, clinician and guest conductor throughout the region. In 2009, he conducted the Washington Music Education Association Junior High All-State Choirs in Burien and Spokane.

Dr. Peterson is a recently retired member of the music faculty at Yakima Valley Community College, where he conducted the YVCC Concert Choir and Chamber Singers. He received the Robert Leadon Teaching Award, the most prestigious faculty award at YVCC, and the President’s Award and Choral Leadership Award from the Washington State Chapter of the American Choral Director’s Association. He is also a recipient of both the Distinguished Alumni Award and the Teaching and Mentor Award from his alma mater, Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska. He now is an adjunct professor in the Choral Studies program at Central Washington University and is conductor of the CWU Men’s Chorus.

A native of Iowa, Scott Peterson received his DMA degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Washington where he conducted the UW Opera Chorus. He was granted CWU’s first MA degree in conducting, where he formed and conducted the Central Chorale, and a BA degree in music education from Midland University where he conducted the Freshmen Chorale. He also twice performed as a member of the Robert Shaw Festival Singers in Carnegie Hall under Robert Shaw. Scott and his wife, Jane, live in Yakima where she retired from the Yakima School District as a music specialist and is co-conductor of the Yakima Children’s Choir.

2013-2014 Yakima Symphony Chorus Schedule

Performances with the YSO

Sept. 28, 2013: Verdi & Wagner 7:30pm The Capitol Theatre
Oct. 26, 2013: Día de los Muertos 7:30pm The Seasons
Dec. 8, 2013: Christmas Pops 4:00pm The Capitol Theatre
April 26, 2014: Don Giovanni 7:30pm The Capitol Theatre
May 17, 2014: WWI Centennial 7:30pm The Capitol Theatre

YSC Performances:

Oct. 5, 2013: Autumn Leaves 5:00pm The Seasons
March 8, 2014: The YSC Celebrates the USO! Yakima Valley Museum

http://choralc.wix.com/chorusmaster

YSC: 2013-2014

Anne Schilperoort, Accompanist
Sopranos
Christina Anderson
Sandy Baxter
Joann Benson
Janet Buege
Anne Chapman
Carole Franklin
Renee Frederickson
Natalie Gore
Noël Groves
Denise Hillis
Nita Hinman
Joyce Hollenbaugh
Monica Juarez
Tanya Knickerbocker
Samantha Larsen
JoAnn Layman
Nora Ann Ranta
Ellen Rowley
Kimberly Ruck
Jean Scheid
Jennifer Thompson
Mary Winterfeld
Altos
Diana Abramson-Tilley
Jan Carlson
Mary Duren
Kristina Harris
Robin Kisala
Karen Merola Krueger
Christine Lavik
Rondi Marsh
Corinne Murphy-Hines
Jane Peterson
Kathryn Pratz
Virginia Prochnow
Mary Stephenson
Kris Vestad
Kathy Wilcox
Tenors
Samuel Hines
Noel Kelley
Sam Kim
Carl North
Conor Otey
Mike Scheid
Robert Swires
Basses
George Braff
Doug Dahlke
Gary Graves
Ron Gray
Andrew Meyer
Manuel Pedrosa
Robert Reynolds
Ken Shelton
Kirt Stueckle
John Svendsen
Giuseppe Verdi (October 9/10, 1813 - January 27, 1901)

Giuseppe Verdi, a child prodigy, went through four phases in his compositional career, identified by the subject matter of his operas: to 1848, heroic subjects (e.g., Nabucco); 1849-1853, personal “human” stories (e.g., Rigoletto, La Traviata, Il Trovatore); 1854-1871, political themes with a French grand opera twist (e.g., Aida, La forza del destino, Un ballo in maschera); and 1880s on, operas based on Shakespeare. He single-handedly transformed Italian opera from an aria-centric style to a more realistic, continuous style. His focus on melody and the voice throughout his career kept his style rooted in Italian tradition and contributed to his amazing popularity.

Richard Wagner (May 22, 1813-February 13, 1883)

Richard Wagner is most often associated with his late operas of Der Ring des Nibelungen. His first major steps were Rienzi (1842) and Der fliegende Holländer (1843), followed soon after by Tannhäuser (1845/1861) and Lohengrin (1850). During this time, he began his own musical revolution in opera, manifested in the four operas of the Ring cycle, Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried, and Götterdämmerung (1876). Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (1868) was undertaken during a “break” from the Ring. Wagner's concept of opera as a total artform (Gesamtkunstwerk) transformed the genre, and his music had a profound influence on subsequent generations of composers. It also is interesting to note that his personal life, one of adultery, dishonesty and prejudice (especially anti-Semitism), creates a stark counterpoint with such beautiful and influential music.

Program Notes

This concert marks the 200th birth anniversaries of two monumental composers of the 19th century.

Gayla Blaisdell

Gayla Bauer Blaisdell joined the music faculty at Central Washington University in the fall of 2008 as assistant professor of voice and opera where she is Vocal Area coordinator, has a vibrant studio of aspiring singers and directs the nationally award-winning CWU Opera Ensemble.

In addition to teaching, she has maintained a busy performance schedule. Gayla appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival and made her Carnegie Hall debut as soprano soloist in Beethoven’s 9th Symphony with the American Composers Orchestra. She has sung in many major New York City venues including Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, and Symphony Space, among others. In New York, she performed regularly with the Azure Ensemble, a contemporary chamber ensemble, and was featured in a recital at the Kosciuszko Foundation by the American Accent Concert Series. Gayla often appears with the CWU ensembles to premiere contemporary works and collaborates with colleagues from CWU and around the country in recitals here in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere.

Gayla has appeared at Benaroya Hall in Seattle as the soprano soloist in Carmina Burana by Orff, the soprano soloist in the Hovhaness Gloria and most recently as a featured soloist in a concert with the Seattle Wind Symphony. Gayla has appeared with the Yakima Symphony Orchestra performing orchestrated Schubert lieder and as the soprano soloist in the Verdi Requiem. She is delighted to return to the Capitol Theater to perform tonight’s concert of Verdi and Wagner arias and duets with the YSO and her tenor husband, Tor Blaisdell. In the spring of 2014, Gayla will join the Wenatchee Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro as the Countess.

Gayla holds a PhD in Vocal Performance from New York University where she also was a member of the NYU Adjunct Voice Faculty for seven years. She holds a Graduate Diploma in Opera and a Master’s Degree in Vocal Performance from New England Conservatory and a Bachelor’s Degree in Voice and a Bachelor’s Degree in Music Education from the Eastman School of Music. Gayla also trained at the Steans Institute at Ravinia, Tanglewood, Opera North, the International Institute of Vocal Arts in Italy and Dorian Opera Theater.

Torrance Blaisdell

Tenor Torrance Blaisdell has appeared on opera stages across the United States, Europe and Asia. His professional career spans more than 15 years, singing with such companies as Opera Monaco, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Lyric Opera Dublin, Arizona Opera, Kentucky Opera and Opera Boston. Recently he has performed in the world premiere of David DiChiera’s Cyrano with Michigan Opera Theatre and with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and as Don Basilio in The Marriage of Figaro in Michigan and Monostatos in The Magic Flute with Intermountain Opera. With Opera Boston, his roles have included The Nose in Shostakovich’s opera of the same title, and Baron Puck in Offenbach’s La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein.

For two years Mr. Blaisdell appeared in the Broadway company of Phantom of the Opera as a member of the ensemble and in the principal role of the Italian Opera Singer, Piangi. He has also performed with the National Symphony Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin in a concert version of Salome.

Mr. Blaisdell received a Bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College and a Master’s in Vocal Performance and Opera from the New England Conservatory of Music. His postgraduate training includes apprenticeships with Des Moines Metro Opera, Sarasota Opera, Central City Opera and Glimmerglass Opera. Mr. Blaisdell studied opera and opera technique with Mr. John Moriarty and voice with Susan Clickner and, most recently, Jane Olian of Manhattan.
Prelude to Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg), Wagner’s only comedy, takes place in Nuremberg during the middle of the 16th century with a real-life guild of Meistersinger, an association of amateur poets and musicians. Surprisingly, the story has no supernatural or magical elements—the process of composing music is at its heart. The overture is forthright and celebratory.

Celeste Aida

Aida (1871) was the last opera of Verdi’s French Grand Opera phase. “Se quell guerrier io fossi/Celeste Aida” (If Only I Were That Warrior/Heavenly Aida) is sung by Radamès, a young Egyptian warrior who dreams of gaining victory on the battlefield and the hand of the Ethiopian slave girl, Aida, with whom he is secretly in love.

“La donna è mobile”

Verdi’s Rigoletto (1851), based on the play Le roi s’amuse by Victor Hugo, is a tragic story about the licentious Duke of Mantua, his hunch-backed court jester Rigoletto and Rigoletto’s beautiful daughter Gilda. In Act 3, as Rigoletto and Gilda, who loves the Duke, arrive outside the Duke’s house, the Duke is heard singing “La donna è mobile” (The woman is fickle), chastising women for their infidelity and fickle nature. The inherent irony is that it is the Duke himself who is fickle.

Elisabeth’s Greeting (“Dich, teure Halle”)

Wagner’s Tannhäuser is based on German legends of Tannhäuser and the song contest at Wartburg. Tannhäuser is a knight whose singing voice attracts the attention of the goddess Venus. After spending time with her in Venusberg, he returns to earth, encountering conflicts of spiritual and worldly love. In Act 2, Tannhäuser’s earthly love, Elisabeth, in seclusion since his disappearance, hears of his return and joyfully agrees to host a singing contest. As she enters the hall, she sings “Dich, teure Halle” in anticipation of greeting the guests who will be attending.

Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves (“Va’ pensiero”)

Of Nabucco (1841), Verdi said, “this is the opera with which my artistic career begins. And though I had many difficulties to fight against, it is certain that Nabucco was born under a lucky star.” The opera follows the plight of the Jews as they are assaulted, conquered and subsequently exiled from Judea by the Babylonian King Nabucco (short for Nebuchadnezzar). The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, “Va’, pensiero, sull’ali dorate” (Fly, thoughts, on golden wings), is sung on the banks of the Euphrates River in Act 3, as the Israelites long for their homeland. So stirring is this chorus that it was initially regarded as an anthem of Italian patriotism.

Love Duet (“Teco io sto”/“Non sai tu”/“O qual soave brivido”)

Un ballo in maschera (A Masked Ball, 1859) is based on the story of the 1792 assassination of King Gustav III of Sweden at a masked ball, the result of a political conspiracy against him. After encountering a number of difficulties from censors, Verdi surprisingly changed the location of the controversial opera out of Europe, to Boston during the British colonial period. In Act 2, Amelia comes to the outskirts of town alone at midnight to pick a magical herb she has been told will bring peace to her tormented love for Riccardo, who is not her husband. She is surprised by Riccardo, who has come to meet her, and, in “Teco io sto...” the two declare their love for each other.

Arrival of the Guests: March and Chorus (“Freudig begrüssen wir die edle Halle”)

Later in Act 2 of Tannhäuser, Elisabeth and the Landgrave (her uncle, Count Hermann) sing “Freudig begrüssen wir die edle Halle,” welcoming their guests for the singing contest, local noblemen in rich attire who march into the hall, singing praises to the Count.

Overture to La forza del destino

The story of La forza del destino (The Force of Destiny, 1862) is as crazy as the music is dramatic—an accidental shooting leads to an amazing sequence of events. The stirring chords that begin the overture set the mood for the tragedy to come.

“D’amor sull’ali rosee”

Il trovatore (The Troubadour, 1853) takes place in the 15th century in the Spanish town of Aragon, a story of war, love and revenge. Manrico, a knight, has been captured in an attempt to save his mother from being executed. In “D’amor sull’ali rosee,” Leonora, who has come to the prison in disguise in order to see and perhaps free him, declares her love.

Lohengrin’s Farewell (“Mein lieber Schwan!”)

The story of Lohengrin is taken from the medieval German Knight of the Swan tradition. Set in Antwerp in the 10th century, Lohengrin appears as an answer to the prayer for salvation by Elsa, the Duke’s sister, who has been accused of murder. He defends her honor on the condition she does not ask his name. Unfortunately, she is later influenced to ask and he must depart. As a beautiful swan floats towards them, Lohengrin sings “Mein lieber Schwan!” saying goodbye to Elsa.

Dawn and Siegfried’s Rhine Journey

Wagner’s Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods) refers to a war prophesied in Norse mythology that ultimately results in the burning, immersion in water and renewal of the world. At dawn, Siegfried and Brünnhilde emerge from their cave, high on a mountaintop surrounded by magic fire. Bearing Brünnhilde’s shield and mounting her horse, Grane, Siegfried rides away as his Rhine Journey begins.

Anvil Chorus (“Vedi! le fosche notturne”)

“Vedi! Le Fosche Notturne,” also known as the Anvil Chorus from Il Trovatore, is sung by a chorus of gypsies taking a respite from the hardships of their lives, praising the joys of gypsy life. As they sing, they pound their hammers on their anvils.

Bridal Duet (“Das süsse Lied verhallt...”/“Wie hehr erkenn’ ich uns’rer Liebe Wesen!”/“Atmest du nicht mit mir die süßen Düfte?”) from Lohengrin

In the bridal chamber, fresh from the marriage ceremony, Elsa and her new husband (Lohengrin) express their love for each other, singing the Bridal Duet “Das süsse Lied verhallt...”

Brindisi (“Libiamo ne’ lieti calici”)

“Libiamo ne’ lieti calici” (Let’s drink from the joyful cup), a duet with chorus from Verdi’s La Traviata (1852), is a brindisi, a lively drinking song. Alfredo Germont, a young man who is in love with party host Violetta Valéry, is convinced to show off his voice, later joined by Violetta and the rest of the guests.