

# PORTLAND ROSSINI CLUB

143rd Season

The Cathedral Church of St. Luke  
Portland, Maine

3:00 PM  
Sunday, September 22, 2013

President  
Program Chair

Elizabeth Harmon  
Richard Roberts

**Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner Centennial Concert**  
**Mark Rossnagel and Richard Roberts, Piano**

## Program

### **“O, dischiuso e il firmamento”**

G. Verdi

from *Nabucco*

Heather Gallagher, mezzo-soprano

Fenena, Nabucco's daughter, has been condemned to death for falling in love with an Israelite and converting to Judaism. In this aria, she sings a prayer to God as she is led in chains to be sacrificed with the other prisoners.

--“*Oh, the firmament is opened up. My soul longs for the Lord ...*

*He smiles upon me and reveals to me hundred upon hundred of joys everlasting.*

*Oh, splendour of the stars, farewell! God floods me with His holy light!*

*From this mortal body that, heavy as lead, detains us here, my soul escapes already and wings its way to heaven!”*

### **“Tutte le feste al tempio”**

G. Verdi

from *Rigoletto*

Lurette Saul, soprano

Joshua Miller, baritone

Gilda has been seduced and abducted by the Duke of Mantua. She recounts the whole story to her father, Rigoletto, the whole story. He is at first furious over the loss of his daughter's honor, but then relents and comforts her.

### **“Un di se ben rammentomi”**

G. Verdi

from *Rigoletto*

Lurette Saul, soprano

Heather Gallagher, mezzo

Josh Witham, tenor

Joshua Miller, baritone

Rigoletto tells Gilda that the Duke is a notorious womanizer, but she refuses to believe him. To convince her, Rigoletto takes Gilda to spy on the Duke as he tries to seduce another woman, Maddalena.

### **“Pace, pace mio dio”**

G. Verdi

from *La Forza del Destino*

Kimberly Ouellete, soprano

Leonora has been living for years in seclusion after her lover, Don Alvaro, accidentally killed her father. She still loves Alvaro and asks God for peace for her tortured soul.

--“*Peace, peace, my God ! Cruel misfortune constrains me, alas to languish, as it has from the first day so many years ago... My suffering continues. Peace, peace, my God !*

*I loved him, it is true ! But with the visage and valor which God endowed him to such*

*A great extent, I loved him still. Nor do I know how to tear his image from my heart. Fatal destiny! A crime has separated us here below!” Alvaro, I love you and up in the Heavens it is written: I will never see you again!*

*O God, God, let me die, for only death can bring me peace. In vain this soul of mine here sought peace,*

*a prey to so much woe. Wretched bread, you come to prolong my inconsolable life. - But who comes here, daring to profane this sacred retreat? A curse! A curse!*

**“O du mein holder Abendstern”**

R. Wagner

from *Tannhauser*

Joshua Miller, baritone

Wolfram is secretly in love with Elizabeth, who loves Tannhauser. He finds her praying, and in despair believing that she will never see Tannhauser again. She dies – and Wolfram asks the evening star to guide her on her way.

--“*Like a premonition of death, darkness covers the land, and envelops the valley in its sombre shroud; the soul that longs for the highest grounds is fearful of the darkness before it takes flight. There you are, oh loveliest star, your soft light you send into the distance; your beam pierces the gloomy shroud and you show the way out of the valley.*”

*Wesendonk Lieder*

R. Wagner

**Shmerzen**

**Der Engel**

Mary Johnston, soprano

Richard Roberts, piano

The cycle, published in 1857, is a setting of poems by Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of one of Wagner's patrons. Some believe that Wagner and Mathilde had a love affair and that this affair inspired *Tristan and Isolde*. Wagner subtitled two of the songs in the cycle "studies" for *Tristan und Isolde*, using musical ideas that are later developed in the opera.

***Shmerzen***

*Sun, each evening you weep  
Your pretty eyes red,  
When, bathing in the mirror of the sea  
You are seized by early death.*

*Yet you rise in all your splendor,  
Glory of the gloomy world,  
Newly awakening in the morning  
Like a proud, victorious hero!*

*Ah, why should I then lament,  
Why, my heart, are you so heavy,  
If the sun itself must despair,  
If the sun must set?*

*And if Death gives rise only to Life,  
And pain gives way only to bliss,  
O how thankful I am, that  
Nature gives me such anguish!*

***Der Engel***

*In childhood's early days,  
I often heard them speak of angels  
Who would exchange Heaven's sublime  
bliss  
For the Earth's sun*

*So that, when an anxious heart in dread  
Is full of longing, hidden from the  
world;*

*So that, when it wishes silently to bleed  
And melt away in a trickle of tears;*

*So that, when its prayer ardently  
Pleads only for release,  
Then the angel floats down  
And gently lifts it to Heaven.*

*Yes, an angel has come down to me,  
And on glittering wings  
It leads, far away from every pain,  
My soul now heavenward!*

## Requiem

G. Verdi

**Quid sum miser**

**Recordare**

Lurette Saul, soprano

Heather Gallagher, mezzo-soprano

Josh Witham, tenor

The Requiem was composed in memory of Alessandro Manzoni, an Italian poet and novelist much admired by Verdi. The first performance in Milan on 22 May 1874 marked the first anniversary of Manzoni's death. It is typically not performed in the liturgy, but instead as a concert.

*Quid sum miser* : What shall a wretch like me say? Who shall intercede for me, when the just ones need mercy?

*Recordare*: Remember, kind Jesus, my salvation caused your suffering; do not forsake me on that day.

*Faint and weary you have sought me, redeemed me, suffering on the cross; may such great effort not be in vain. Righteous judge of vengeance, grant me the gift of absolution before the day of retribution.*

**“Dio che nell'alma infondere”**

G. Verdi

from *Don Carlos*

Joshua Witham, tenor

Joshua Miller, baritone

Don Carlos, son of King Phillip II is in love with his father's wife. His friend Rodrigo finds him distressed and praying at his grandfather's tomb. Rodrigo reminds him of his commitment to the cause of the oppressed Flemish people, and both pledge themselves to the cause of liberty and swear eternal friendship.

## Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner

There are remarkable parallels between the lives of Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. Both were born in 1813 into families which were far from wealthy. Verdi's family were tavern keepers and owned a small amount of land. Wagner wasn't even sure who his father was – he was probably a clerk in the local police department, but may have been a friend of his mother's named Geyer who gave young Richard his first introduction to music. While neither was a prodigy, both showed interest and aptitude for music at an early age, and both had begun composing by the age of 16. Wagner studied at the University in Leipzig; Verdi was turned down by the conservatory in Milan but studied composition privately instead. Verdi became a town music master in Busseto in 1836, while Wagner was a chorus master in Würzburg in 1833 and music director of the opera houses in Magdeburg and Königsberg by 1836. Both were married for the first time in 1836. Each had early failures, and first success in 1842 - Verdi with *Nabucco*, Wagner with *Rienzi*. Both were strongly attracted to politics, and chose libretti with political themes.

Verdi and Wagner pushed their respective national operatic traditions far beyond traditional boundaries, writing the first great operas of the romantic period and often stretching the musical language beyond the comfort of some of their patrons. In spite of these similarities, however, it is the artistic differences between Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi that are far more important. Verdi's operas were both tragedies and comedies. He combined a new romantic sense of plot, a strong patriotic streak, and great drama with the traditional Italian operatic elements – solo arias, duets and small ensembles, and big choruses. His stories were human stories.

Wagner's operas, by contrast, are almost entirely spun from myth and legend. His libretti are based upon Northern European tales and are populated by elves, dwarves, gods and goddesses, giants, spirits, knights, the holy grail, and only the occasional human. There is only one completed Wagnerian comedy, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Unlike Verdi, who stayed comfortably within diatonic harmonies, Wagner pushed the limits of tonal music. The opening chord of *Tristan und Isolde* has been called “the beginning of modern music”. He was controversial in his day, and even now his personal and musical merits are debated by passionate partisans.

Verdi died in Milan in 1901. Wagner died in Venice in 1883. Two hundred years later the music of both composers is performed all over the world. They are giants of opera, and will continue to compel audiences for centuries to come.