The VMI Department of English and Fine Arts
and
The Timmins–Gentry Music Society

PRESENT

Bernardini in Concert

An evening of song

WITH

Don Bernardini (VMI, 1975)

Jeffrey Miller, pianist

♬

Jackson Memorial Hall
Virginia Military Institute
November 13, 2002
8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Dalla sua pace (from *Don Giovanni*) . . . . . Mozart

Don Ottavio has just been told by his fiancée that she believes that it was Don Giovanni who murdered her father. After she leaves, Don Ottavio reveals that he still finds it difficult to believe that a noble-born friend could be such a villain. He determines to get at the truth, and then sings this quiet, very sustained aria in which he declares that his peace of mind depends on that of his loved one, Donna Anna.

> *"My peace depends on hers. That which pleases her gives me life; that which displeases her kills me. If she sighs, I sigh too. That rage is mine; that mourning is mine, and I do not have joy if she doesn't."*

Il meo tesoro (from *Don Giovanni*) . . . . . Mozart

Don Ottavio is now convinced beyond any doubt of Don Giovanni's guilt. He declares to his friends Donna Elvira and Zerlina his determination to avenge this wrong and to bring comfort to his beloved Donna Anna.

> *"Go, then, to console my beloved, and try to dry the tears in her beautiful eyes. Tell her that I am going off to avenge her wrongs . . . that I will come back a messenger of ravages and deaths."*

Pietà, Signore . . . . . Niedermeyer

For many years, this very dramatic religious song was thought to have been composed by Alessandro Stradella. Then a 20th-century scholar "proved" that it was a work of Rossini. Further research, however, has revealed that was in fact written by the Swiss composer Louis Niedermeyer.

> *Have mercy, O Lord, upon me in my deepest despair. If my prayer reaches you, deal not harshly with me, but with less severity and more charity. Favor me with grace. Let me not fall into the flames of eternal damnation."*

In solitaria stanza . . . . . .Verdi

Although known primarily as the greatest Italian composer of operas of the 19th century, Giuseppe Verdi also wrote a dozen songs—six in 1838 and another six in 1845. The great man continued to compose for another fifty years, but never again returned to the song form as an outlet for his creative genius. "In solitaria stanza" was influenced by the style of Bellini and Donizetti, Verdi's predecessors.

> *"In a solitary room he languishes in atrocious pain. His lips are voiceless, his breast breathless. He is like an abandoned flower bed that is deprived of moisture. I, suppressing my desire, seek a remote life, and scream in a voice that could shatter the rocks, 'O God, save that heavenly beauty.'"*

Non t'amo più . . . . . .Tosti

Paolo Tosti was a popular song writer in Late Victorian and Edwardian England. His songs served to display the voices of some of the great singers of his day, including the great Enrico Caruso. He taught singing to members of the British royal family. He was knighted in 1908.

"Do you remember the day we met? Do you remember your promises? Mad with love, I followed you. We were in love, and at your side I happily dreamed of caresses and kisses melting into the bliss of heaven. But your words were false because your heart was made of ice. Do you still remember? Now my trust in you, my great desire for you, and my dream of love for you are no more. I do not seek your kisses. I do not think of you. I dream of another ideal. I love you no more!"

Marechiare . . . . . Tosti

"When the moon rises on Marechiare, even the fish tremble with love. The waves turn upside down in the bosom of the sea, changing color because they feel that joy is in the air. There is a window in Marechiare upon whose pane my passion beats its wings. Carnations surround it and frame its lintel, and below it there is a running brook. Who says the stars above are bright has not seen your eyes! Awake! The air is soft and I have waited a long time. To accompany my song I have brought my guitar."

Lamento de Federico (from *L'Arlesiana*) . . . . . Cilèa

Francesco Cilèa (1866–1950) was both a composer and a professor of composition at the Naples Conservatory. His two most famous operas are *Adriana Lecouvreur*, based on the life of a French actress, and *L'Arlesiana* (The Girl from Arles), from which this aria has been taken. Although he loves another woman, the young Federico has been forced by his family to marry a childhood sweetheart. He gazes reflectively at his young brother, who has fallen asleep while repeating a story that an old shepherd has often told him. Because he cannot forget the girl of Arles, Federigo envies his brother's peace of mind.

"It is the shepherd's familiar tale. The poor lad tried to tell it and went to sleep. In sleep is oblivion. How I envy him! I, too, would be glad to sleep like that and find peace in sleep. I seek peace alone, and wish to forget everything. But every effort is in vain. I always see before me the vision of her sweet face. I am bereft of peace! Why should I suffer so? She, always she, speaks to my heart. Fatal dream, leave me alone. You are killing me."

No puede ser (from *La Taberna del Puerto*) . . . . . Sorozabal

This powerful and moving aria from The Tavern Girl of the Port, a Zarzuela (Spanish operetta), was practically unknown until Placido Domingo brought down the house with his singing of it at the first Three Tenors concert. The young Leandro defends the girl he loves, the tavern-girl of the title, against the threats and insults of an angry mob of townspeople.

"It cannot be! This woman is good. It cannot be that she is bad. In her glance, as in a vision, I have seen that she is ill-fated. It can't be that she is a common whore who has poisoned the hours of my life, because I have seen her pray, love, cry. Eyes that weep don't know how to lie. Bad women don't look like this. I saw tears trembling in her eyes, and now I dream that they tremble for me. Live on, light of my illusion. Be merciful because I don't know how to be false. I don't know how to be silent. I don't know how to live."

INTERMISSION

Lunge da lei . . . De' miei bollenti spiriti (from *La Traviata*) . . . . . .Verdi

In the first act of *La Traviata,* the young Alfredo Germont declares his love for the beautiful courtesan Violetta Valery. At the country estate where they now live, he rejoices at his great good fortune in having convinced Violetta to leave the society in which she reigned as queen and come to live with him alone.

"Far from her there is no joy for me. Three months have already flown by since Violetta abandoned everything for me. An now we are content in these pleasant surroundings. Here, with her, I feel reborn and revitalized by the breath of love. I forget, in its joys, all of the past. With her calm smile she has tempered the youthful ardor of my burning spirits. Since the day she said, 'I want to live, faithful to you alone,' I have lived almost in paradise, unconscious of the world beyond."

L'Esule . . . . . Verdi

The text of "The Exile" was written by Temistocle Solera, Verdi's librettist for *Nabucco, I Lombardi, Joan of Arc,* and *Attila.* Even more powerfully than the great chorus of captive Jews in *Nabucco* it expresses the longing for home. Verdi used the extended form of recitative and aria for this song, which is more complex than many of his opera arias. The "exile" of the song is that of the soul.

"Look! The white moon shines on the hills. The evening breeze makes waves on the pretty tomb of the calm lake. Here all is joy, yet I am

condemned to weep. I have traversed lands, deserts, and forests, seen places scented by flowers, and walked among dances and feasts, but always with sorrow as a companion. Why should I live a life that forces me to be miserable? Come, come, O death, to him who invites you. In death, the soul of my first joys will return. Then native shores will no longer be forbidden to me, nor its breezes, nor the waves on which my spirit will fly. I will kiss the loving cheeks of my dear mother and dry the tears of the unseen, unhappy ones."

Ah! la paterna mano (from *Macbeth*) . . . . . Verdi

Macbeth is the first of Verdi's three Shakespeare operas. (It was followed by *Otello* and *Falstaff*.) Although the chief musical interest of the opera is centered on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Macduff is also musically important, as this somber and very effective fourth-act aria indicates. Macbeth has slaughtered Macduff's wife and three children. He laments their loss and swears revenge.

"O children! O my children! By that tyrant you and your mother were all slain. Ah, did I leave mother and children in the claws of that tiger? Alas, your father's hand was not there to shield you, my dear ones, from those treacherous assassins who killed you. And with your last sob and dying breath you called to me, a fugitive in hiding, to no avail. Bring me face to face with this tyrant, Lord, and if he escapes me, then extend to him Thy arms in pardon."

Maria (from *West Side Story*) . . . . . Bernstein

Bring Him Home (from *Les Miserables*) . . . . . Schonberg

And This is My Beloved (from *Kismet*) . . . . . Forrest

Ave Maria . . . . . Mascagni

Notes by Jeffrey Miller

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