



Program Notes for kids

Verdi: Viva L'Italia
Sunday, May 7
4:00 p.m.
Hill Auditorium

Rossini	<i>Semiramide Overture</i>
Verdi	Opera Choruses: <i>Triumphal March</i> from <i>Aida</i> <i>Gypsy and Matador Choruses</i> from <i>Traviata</i> <i>Anvil Chorus</i> from <i>Il Trovatore</i> <i>Va, pensiero</i> , Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from <i>Nabucco</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Capriccio Italien</i>
Respighi	<i>Pines of Rome</i>



Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
Music in the Key of A²

Semiramide Overture

by *Giaochino Rossini*

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

This piece was written to be the *Overture* – or the opening instrumental movement – of an opera. The start of an overture would signal to the audience that it was time to quiet down and find their seats as the performance was about to begin. It would preview some of the important musical themes that would be sung in later parts of the opera.

When was it written?

Rossini published his final Italian opera, *Semiramide*, in 1823. After this work premiered in Venice, Rossini packed his bags and left Italy to compose for the French opera.

What is it about?

Though Rossini is known for his comic operas, *Semiramide* is a more serious work. The opera depicts the struggle for power among the royal family of Babylon. It is a story similar to *Hamlet* or *The Lion King*.

About the Composer

Giaochino Rossini | Born February 29, 1792 in Pesaro, Italy | Died November 13, 1868 in Paris, France

Family & Career

Rossini was born to a musical family: his father was a horn player and his mother was a singer. By the age of six, Rossini was playing triangle in his father's musical group. He began to study cello when he was 14 and had his first opera performed when he was only 18. When he was 30 years old, Rossini met Beethoven. The old, deaf composer told him to never write anything but comic opera because he was so good at it.

Music

Rossini wrote 39 operas as well as various other kinds of concert music. His best-known works are the operas *The Barber of Seville* and *William Tell* (and its famous overture). The beautiful, operatic melodies that he wrote caused some people to nickname him “The Italian Mozart.”



Giaochino Rossini or “Maestro Crescendo,” as his friends would call him.

Fun Facts

Rossini was an excellent chef, and when he retired he devoted himself to cooking. Many French dishes are named after him (“alla Rossini”). If you’re ever in France look for *Tournedos Rossini* on restaurant menus. It is a steak, fried in butter, served on top of a crouton, topped with foie gras, garnished with slices of black truffle, and finished with a Madeira demi-glace sauce



An anvil is a heavy steel or iron block on which metal can be hammered and shaped.

Verdi: Opera Choruses

by *Giuseppe Verdi*

About the Composer

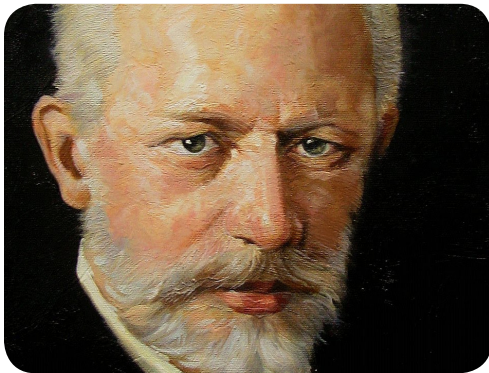
Giuseppe Verdi | Born October 10, 1813 in Busseto, Italy | Died January 27, 1901 in Milan, Italy

Family and Career

Verdi was born to working class Italian parents. Though the composer showed a musical talent at a young age, he did not receive any music education until he was 19. Soon after, Verdi began his career as a conductor and organist for his local orchestra. After getting married and moving to Milan, he premiered his first opera at age 25. Today, Verdi's works are performed more than any other composer's, worldwide.

About the Music

The chorus is called...	It's from the opera...	Which is set in....	And it is about...
Triumphal March	<i>Aida</i>	Ancient Egypt	Like many other operas, Verdi's great opera is about a love triangle. In the "Triumphal March," Egyptian armies rejoice over victory in Ethiopia.
Gypsy and Matador Choruses	<i>La Traviata</i>	19 th -century Paris	This opera depicts the forbidden love and tragic death of a woman named Violetta. In the "Gypsy Chorus," gypsies boast of their psychic powers. Then the Matadors sing of their feats in the bullring and tell the story of a bullfighter named Piquillo.
Anvil Chorus	<i>Il Trovatore</i>	15 th -century Spain	This opera is about a troubador named Manrico, who was raised by gypsies. He has fallen in love with a woman named Leonore, who is also loved by a powerful count. In the "Anvil Chorus," Spanish gypsies sing about hard work and good wine while striking their anvils in the early morning.
Chorus of Hebrew Slaves	<i>Nabucco</i>	Biblical times in Babylon	<i>Nabucco</i> presents the story of the Israelites' struggle against the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. In the "Chorus of Hebrew Slaves," the Israelites sing of wanting to be free in Jerusalem.



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Capriccio Italien

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

About the Music

When was it written?

Tchaikovsky wrote this piece in 1880 while traveling in Italy. He even used melodies that were popular in Italy at the time.

What kind of piece is this?

A *capriccio*, or *caprice*, is a piece of music that is short and very fast. Capriccios are also sometimes called *fantasies* since they often portray things that are both real and imaginary.

About the Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky | Born May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia
Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Listen for...

Tchaikovsky's piece opens with a trumpet fanfare. This is the bugle call the composer heard every morning while he was vacationing in Rome. His hotel was very close to a military base and the bugle calls would alert the soldiers that the day was beginning.

Fun Facts

The music from Tchaikovsky's ballet *Sleeping Beauty* was used in the Disney movie of the same name.

During the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, Tchaikovsky's music featured prominently in the opening and closing ceremonies.

Family & Career

Tchaikovsky grew up with four brothers, two sisters, and a French nanny. When he was 10, he was sent to a boarding school 800 miles away from his family home. While there, he entertained himself by going to the opera with his friends – hearing the works of Rossini, Verdi, and Mozart – and by improvising variations on the piano. When a School of Music opened in St. Petersburg in 1862, Tchaikovsky became one of its first students. Thanks to his wealthy patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, who supported him financially for many years, Tchaikovsky became Russia's first full-time professional musician.

Music

Tchaikovsky was the first Russian composer to gain international respect. During his lifetime, his works were frequently played in concerts in both Russia and Western Europe. Today he is best known for his three ballets (*Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*), six symphonies, and the *1812 Overture*.

Pines of Rome

by Ottorino Respighi

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

Pines of Rome is a *Symphonic Poem*: a single-movement work that is inspired by a poem, painting, landscape or other source. In a symphonic poem, composers and musicians use sound instead of words to describe something. In *Pines of Rome*, Respighi paints four scenes of Rome. In one, children play. In the second, we are near a catacomb (an underground cemetery), where a solemn hymn is sung. In the third, we are near a tall hill during a full moon and hear a nightengale singing. And in the fourth and final scene, Respighi imagines soldiers on the Appian Way (an early Roman road). Respighi must have really liked Rome, because he wrote two other “poems” about Rome: *Fountains of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*.

About the Composer

Ottorino Respighi | Born July 9, 1879 in Bologna, Italy | Died April 18, 1936 in Rome, Italy

Family & Career

Ottorino Respighi was taught to play violin and piano at a young age by his father, a piano teacher. The composer continued with the violin through his time at university and into the early 1900s when he joined the Russian Imperial Theatre. While he was in Russia, Respighi studied with the famous composer, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. When he moved back to Italy, Respighi continued to be influenced by Russian music. He is famous for bringing the Russian sound to Italy and to Italian music.

