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Channel Islands Choral Association

present

Chorus Spectacular 2019!
Opera Choruses

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KuanFen Liu

Artistic Director and Conductor

Friday, April 26, 2019 at 7:30pm
Sunday, April 28, 2019 at 3pm

Program

Dianna Burdick and Hana Chelberg – Sopranos
Kathleen McVicker – Mezzo Soprano
Marcus Klotz, Tenor
CSU Channel Islands University Chorus
Singers of the Pleasant Valley School District Chorus
Nancy Sieh – Narrator
Linda Ottsen – Vocal Consultant

<i>Lohengrin</i>		Richard Wagner (1813-1833)
	Prelude to Act III "Bridal Chorus"	
<i>Norma</i>		Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)
	"Casta Diva"	
	Hana Chelberg, Norma	
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>		Giacomo Puccini (1859-1924)
	"Un bel dì vedremo" "Humming Chorus"	
	Dianna Burdick, Cio-Cio San	
<i>Turandot</i>		Giacomo Puccini
	"Nessun dorma"	
	Marcus Klotz, Calaf	
<i>Il Trovatore</i>		Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
	"Anvil Chorus"	

Intermission

<i>Carmen</i>		George Bizet (1838-1875)
	"Avec la garde montante" "Les voici! Voici la quadrille!"	
<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>		Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)
	Intermezzo "Innegiamo, il Signor non è morto" "Voi lo sapete"	
	Kathleen McVicker, Santuzza	
<i>Nabucco</i>		Giuseppe Verdi
	"Gli arredi festivi giù cadano infranti" "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves"	
<i>Aida</i>		Giuseppe Verdi
	"Triumphal March"	

Program Notes

Program Notes by Nancy Sieh

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Wagner was born in Leipzig, Germany. At a young age, he became interested in theater arts and upon seeing an opera featuring a dramatic soprano, he developed the concept of opera as a dramatic, rather than musical form. At one point in his career, he insisted that his works be called "music dramas" and not operas.

Wagner was a mercurial and narcissistic genius. In 1849 he was exiled from Germany for revolutionary left-wing activities. In a complete 180 degree shift, he later became the inspiration of national socialism and anti-Semitism in Germany, a shameful and destructive part of his legacy. He spent much of his life tangled in sordid love affairs, fleeing from creditors and alienating his colleagues and sometime friends.

He found a patron in King Ludwig of Bavaria (later called Mad King Ludwig), and thus found some financial stability from which to produce operas and built the opera house of his dreams.

His works are distinguished by "leitmotifs" which are musical passages that represent characters, places, objects or even ideas within the story. These are repeated often during the work and become the signatures of those characters or concepts.

Wagner departed from the operatic convention of using solos, duets and ensembles. These "set pieces" are often followed by recitative and applause. Wagner wanted no interruptions. He wanted the music to build and flow continuously, creating dramatic power throughout the performance.

Wagner's impact on opera, indeed on the entire world, has been immense. His music and writings are voluminous and will be the subject of debate and examination for all generations.

Favorite *Lohengrin* Joke - The knight Lohengrin makes his first appearance on stage in a boat being drawn by a swan. The great tenor Leo Slezak once missed his cue, and the swan boat departed across the stage without him. Slezak is said to have addressed the audience from the side curtain with the inquiry: What time is the next swan?

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

Bellini was a foremost composer of Italian "bel canto" opera. It is characterized by long, flowing, soaring melodic lines and colorful flourishes of vocal brilliance and agility. He was admired by Verdi, Liszt and Chopin. Even Wagner, who rarely praised anyone but himself, appreciated Bellini's work.

Bellini was the eldest of seven children and born into a musical family in Catania, Sicily. He is remembered for numerous operas still in the standard repertoire today, although *Norma* is the most celebrated, recorded and produced.

The hit tune from *Norma* is the "Casta Diva" being performed today. The aria is a real challenge for the singer. It was almost cut from the opera at the premiere performance when the soprano Guidetta Pasta initially refused to attempt singing it. After personal coaching from Bellini, she became more comfortable with "Casta Diva" and performed it beautifully. Bellini composed with sensitivity to the relationship between poetry and music. His works are graceful, melodic and powerful. He died suddenly at age 33 and his beautiful tomb rests in the Cathedral of his birthplace in Catania.

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Verdi was the preeminent Italian opera composer of the 19th Century and his popular op-

eras remain constants in performance houses all over the world.

Nabucco was the first opera to establish his dominance. At the time, he had been reluctant to compose it. He was suffering from great personal tragedies, having lost both his young children and then his beloved wife Margherita in rapid succession.

Legend has it that when the libretto was forced on him, the composer tossed it across the room and it fell open to the words "Va, pensiero, sull' ali dorate". The line, meaning "go, thoughts, on golden wings" so moved him that he began work on the opera and made those the first words to the "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves". This chorus became a touchstone in Verdi's life. The Italian public embraced the chorus as they were then engaged in freeing themselves from Austrian domination and the words and music so beautifully echoed their struggles.

After *Nabucco*, Verdi was much in demand and later lamented: "Since *Nabucco*, I have never had one hour of peace. Sixteen years in the galleys".

Verdi was nearly 60 years old when he composed *Aida*. It is based on a story unearthed by Egyptologist Mariette Bey during his archeological excavations at Memphis. Verdi became fascinated by it and co-wrote the libretto. The opera was commissioned by Egypt to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal, but was not ready on time, so *Rigoletto* was performed instead. *Aida* was premiered in Cairo in 1871, on Christmas Eve.

Aida is considered a milestone in the composer's musical development, marked by new richness in orchestral scoring and surprising modulations. He was accused of copying Wagner, but Verdi's operas always remained true to Italian sensibilities, with the voices never being submerged by the orchestrations.

Verdi was an Italian national hero, both for his transcending music and for his support of political reforms which became associated with his name and with the betterment of his homeland.

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Puccini was born in the beautiful coastal town of Lucca, Italy, a walled city of old. Still beautiful today, it is distinguished by a circular stone town square and is home to a Puccini museum and fine local seafood.

Puccini was inspired at an early age by a performance of Verdi's *Aida* produced in the neighboring town of Pisa. Puccini, from a poor family, had to walk over four hours to attend the opera. He wrote that there he received his calling, as if God touched him on the shoulder. Puccini's operas are the most performed in the world. They are beloved for their deeply personal emotional content, the sweep of the melodic composition and the truthfulness of the characters.

Puccini was impressed by the American playwright David Belasco. In 1900, Puccini was in London to oversee a production of *Tosca*. There he saw Belasco's stage play *Madame Butterfly*. Puccini was so moved that he embraced the author and instantly resolved to compose an opera based on the story.

He started work on it immediately, but was halted in his tracks when he was seriously injured in an automobile accident. During his recovery, he worked at a piano which was modified for use from a wheelchair.

Madama Butterfly premiered in 1904 at the greatest opera house in Europe, La Scala of Milan. It was an unmitigated disaster. Milan audiences were known for being harsh critics, but this was so extreme that an organized plot by Puccini's rivals was suspected by many. During the "vigil" music, in which the sounds of birdsong are introduced, the crowd responded with rooster crows and even cow moos.

Puccini, however distressed by the reception, still believed this was his best work. It was revised and presented several months later in Brescia. It was enthusiastically received and went on to Paris. Puccini declared it the only one of his operas that he never tired of hear-

ing. The world agrees.

And then there is *Turandot* (TOO-rah-n-doat). Puccini's final opera is anything but verismo. It is Grand Opera. The characters are mythic, the orchestrations huge, the choruses massive, the spectacle as imposing as the Olympic opening ceremonies in Beijing. Puccini did not live to finish it.

It premièred in 1926, two years after Puccini's death. It was completed by composer Franco Alfano, from notes and sketches Puccini left. Toscanini conducted the first performance only to the last note of Puccini's own hand. The conductor then lay down his baton and announced that this is where the maestro had laid down his pen. Future performances included the completion composed so ably by Alfano.

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Bizet was born in Paris to modest but musically talented parents. His father was a voice instructor and his mother taught piano. He absorbed music quickly and was considered a prodigy at the piano. He gained admission to the Paris Conservatoire at age 9. There he was instructed by Charles Gounod and became fast friends with the 13 year old Camille Saint-Saens.

The young Bizet was awarded the 1857 Prix de Rome competition prize which supported him for five years as he studied, composed and travelled in Rome, Germany and Paris.

Although a skilled pianist, Bizet virtually concealed that talent as if ashamed of it. When he met Franz Liszt at a dinner party, he amazed everyone by flawlessly sight reading one of Liszt's most difficult pieces.

After his five year sponsorship was over, Bizet found himself accepting piano and composition students as well as arranging the works of other composers in order to make a living. He wrote numerous works not much performed today, but he is known for his *L'Arlesienne Suite* which remains popular around the world. His opera *The Pearlfishers* was long neglected, but is enjoying a resurgence.

By far his greatest composition is the opera *Carmen*, which gained popularity almost immediately and remains a staple of opera houses everywhere. Bizet himself was convinced of its failure. Sadly, he died three month after the premiere, at age 36, and never knew what a gift to the world he had created with this masterwork.

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

Mascagni was born in Livorno, Italy, the son of a baker. Although the family was poor they managed to send their gifted son to the Milan Conservatory where he studied for three years.

However, Mascagni found neither steady employment nor wealthy patronage and finally concluded that his music would fail to provide him the necessities of life. He claimed to be subsisting on only plates of macaroni.

Mascagni began taking on conducting jobs and music students, while continuing to compose. He was inspired by a short story of Giovanni Verga, an Italian realist-verismo writer. Mascagni himself related how he determined to awake at dawn to begin writing the day break chorus of *Cavalleria Rusticana* as the sun actually rose.

The legend surrounding the success of the opera begins with Mascagni's loss of faith in his finished opera. His wife however, probably tired of eating macaroni, sent the score into the Sonzogno publishing house competition for one act operas. The prize was 2,000 francs. He won. *Cavalleria Rusticana* premiered in Rome in May of 1890.

Mascagni's hard times were over. The opera created a furor and was an instant success. Verismo opera was born.

Much like Bizet with his *Carmen*, Mascagni produced no later works that have remained as performed and beloved. In each case, one glowing success has been enough.

Biographies

A founding member and performer with Ventura's Opera by the Glass, **Dianna Burdick** is devoted to expanding operatic and choral music in Ventura County. As a frequent soloist with CICA and CHICO, she has sung in John Rutter's Requiem, Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors, and R. Vaughan Williams' Dona Nobis Pacem, to name a few. She is a proud member of the Ventura's FUMC's Chancel Choir, illustrious Tyler Carlyle, Director. She would like to dedicate this performance to her (very understanding) family, and to Linda Ottsen, her amazing coach and voice teacher

Czech-born coloratura soprano **Hana Chelberg** is lauded for her sparkling agile top and warm timbre. She grew up in Prague performing solos with the renowned Czech Philharmonic Children's Choir, which sparked her passion for singing. Ms. Chelberg initiated her musical training with years of piano lessons, transitioning into classical voice with the acclaimed Jirina Markova at the Prague Conservatory.

A frequent performer in Southern California, Ms. Chelberg is a founding member of Ventura's own Opera by the Glass where she has sung the title roles of Amina in Bellini's La Sonnambula in the fall of 2016, and recently Anna in Donizetti's Anna Bolena, generously sponsored by Museum of Ventura County. This winter she made her European debut as Mozart's Queen of the Night at the North Bohemian Theater of Opera and Ballet in the Czech Republic. She will return there this fall to resume the role of Queen of the Night, and will also debut the Queen at the J.K. Tyl Theater Opera in Pilsen, in addition to the role of Anna in Verdi's Nabucco.

Ms. Chelberg is an accomplished concert and oratorio singer. She has appeared with the Channel Islands Chamber Orchestra (CHICO) in 2015 as Eve in Haydn's Creation, and performed the soprano solo in Schubert's Shepherd on the Rock, at CHICO's gala fundraiser in April 2017. Together with her OBTG colleagues she was invited to sing at the Ventura Motor Sports Gathering in September 2017. Ms. Chelberg has sung in a number of solo summer concerts in Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul in Prague.

As a native of Southern California, **Kathleen McVicker** began her studies in voice as a young teenager in her home county of Ventura under the tutelage of sopranos Susan Colla and Linda Ottsen, respectively. Already an irrepressible performer, Miss McVicker would be involved in several shows through the local community colleges and community theaters.

She then attended the University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music, where she received her Bachelor's of Music, under the instruction of soprano Janice McVeigh. At USC, Kathleen maintained an excellent grade point average, placing her on the Dean's List repeatedly, and received an invaluable education in various operas, including Mozart's Don Giovanni and Hoiby's Summer and Smoke, under the direction of Ken Cazan, as well as several opera scenes. Also, while at USC, Miss McVicker met vocal coach Dr. Lisa Silvester, with whom she would study for a number of years. After graduating cum laude, Kathleen spent two invaluable years developing her repertory and technique as a mezzo-soprano with her teacher, soprano Dr. Kathleen Roland-Silverstein. Shortly thereafter, Miss McVicker pursued her Master of Music degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, with the help of her instructor, baritone Dr. Tod Fitzpatrick. At

UNLV, Kathleen honed her craft in such roles as the title role of Bizet's Carmen, in a fully staged production under the direction of Dr. Linda Lister, and the role of Florence Pike in Britten's Albert Herring, in a concertized performance with the Las Vegas Master Singers, as well as many opera scenes while in the La Voce Totale summer program. In Las Vegas, Miss McVicker also performed in several other functions while she was involved in the Opera Las Vegas Young Artist Program, under the general direction of Luana DeVol and the musical direction of James Sohre.

Upon graduation, Kathleen McVicker returned to Southern California and pursued her vocal studies with her present instructor, bass Reid Bruton. In Ventura County, Miss McVicker has performed with the Channel Islands Chamber Orchestra, with the Pacific Shores Philharmonic Foundation and El Coro Maestro, as well as for local religious and secular organizations. Kathleen is very excited to be performing with the Channel Islands Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Dr. KuanFen Liu again! Kathleen is currently preparing for the upcoming competition season.

Marcus Klotz is a lyric tenor who is pursuing a career as a classical vocalist as well as a conductor. He completed both his B.A. in Choral Music Education and B.A. in Vocal Performance at Pepperdine University (2016), where he studied voice with both Louise Lofquist and Henry Price. Since completing his undergraduate degree in the spring of 2016, his talents have brought him to perform on a variety of stages. He was featured as a baritone soloist during the Prague Proms performance of Carmina Burana with the Czech National Symphony in Smetana Hall during the summer of 2016. Previously singing as a baritone, Marcus made the switch to tenor in February 2017 and made his debut in April at the Palm Springs Opera Guild's Opera in the Park. Since then, he has sung the role of Rodolfo in Puccini's La Bohème with Pasadena Opera Guild and has been featured in the Opera Buffs Showcase in the fall of 2017. In 2018, Marcus completed his M.M. in Choral Conducting at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University Long Beach. Among his teaching & conducting responsibilities as a master's student and professor, he was featured as the tenor soloist for Beethoven's 9th Symphony in May 2018. Marcus currently studies with Vladimir Chernov and has had the honor of learning from great artists such as Stephanie Blythe, Vittorio Grigolo, and Timothy Mussard. He holds a position as a choral conductor at Pepperdine University as well as the choir director of Calvary Community Church in Westlake Village.

Nancy Sieh, narrator & dramaturge

Nancy Sieh joined the CHICO board of directors in 2014, after retiring from the practice of law. She served as Deputy District Attorney in Ventura, then in Santa Barbara County as Assistant District Attorney. She specialized in crimes against vulnerable victims, including spousal abuse, sexual assault and child abuse.

Upon retiring, Nancy chose to return to her roots. From a musical Italian family, she was introduced to opera and classical music in the home early in life and saw the joy it can bring. Tales from the great operas were her bedtime stories. Nancy heartily recommends that others join the CHICO family and enjoy a role in producing more concerts of all kinds.

Nancy is grateful to her husband and family for their unflagging support.

*CHICO would like to thank longtime sponsor
John Hammer for his unwavering support.*

*~ Have a great summer ~
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www.chicovc.org

*for announcements and
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