

Program notes:

Overture to *Nabucco*

Verdi's early opera, *Nabucco*, follows the plight of the Jews as they are mistreated and eventually exiled by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. The opera, the third in Verdi's career, and the one that established his reputation as a composer, will be performed at the 2012 Eutin Festival in Germany, in which KU students will take part.

Aria "Largo al factotum" from *The Barber of Seville*

Entering from offstage, Figaro boasts of being the city's top barber and man to call when you have a problem. His skills will be tested later when Count Almaviva hires him to help woo the beautiful Rosina and free her from the clutches of her custodian, Dr. Bartolo.

Quintet from *Carmen*

The smugglers discuss plans for their upcoming job and how women are indispensable to its success. Carmen stubbornly states she has other plans--namely, a romantic tryst that takes priority over business. The others protest, but she will not give up her rendezvous with Don Jose.

Duet from *The Elixir of Love*

The hapless peasant Nemorino is in love with a wealthy landowner, Adina. In order to deflect Nemorino's attentions, Adina has promised to marry the pompous sergeant Belcore. Out of desperation to win Adina's affection, Nemorino has drunk a love potion that turns out to be nothing but red wine. Adina is perplexed by the drunken Nemorino, but Nemorino believes the potion is working and gains confidence. Belcore, misreading the situation, is annoyed with his rival.

Aria "Adieu notre petite table" from *Manon*

The flirtatious Manon was to be sent to the convent by her father, but she has escaped to Paris and moved in with the student Des Grieux. Manon has become restless, lured by the promise of fame and fortune to abandon the quiet marital bliss hoped for by Des Grieux. Before she flees, Manon bids a misty farewell to their humble Parisian apartment and the small table where they sweetly shared domestic life together.

Aria "Loges Lohn" from *Das Rheingold*

In this excerpt from Wagner's four-opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*, the giants have built the gods a new castle, and the payment is to be the goddess Freia. Chief-god Wotan has sent the cunning fire-god Loge in search of alternative payment. He reports that he has traveled around the world, but has found that woman's love is valued above all else. There is one exception—the dwarf Alberich has renounced love and stolen the Rhine gold and forged a powerful ring out of it. The giants overhear this and decide to take the gold if Wotan can procure it. Thus will begin the slow downfall of the gods.

Act I Quintet from *Die Zauberflöte*

In Mozart's Masonic allegory, prince Tamino is about to set off to rescue Pamina, the beautiful daughter of the Queen of the Night, from the supposedly evil Sarastro. The bird-man Papageno has lied and has had his mouth shackled in punishment by the Queen's assistants, the three Ladies. Tamino begs the ladies to take pity on Papageno, and they remove the lock. Papageno will assist Tamino on his quest. To aid them, they give

Papageno magic bells and Tamino a magic flute. Before bidding them goodbye, the ladies announce that three spirits will accompany them as guides.

Aria "Un bel dì" from *Madama Butterfly*

The geisha, Cho-cho San (Madame Butterfly), has married the naval officer, Pinkerton, and now patiently awaits his return from America. Her servant Suzuki boldly suggests that Pinkerton may never come back, and is sharply rebuked by Butterfly. In this aria, Butterfly asserts that one fine day, her love will return to her.

Quartet from *Rigoletto*

The rakish Duke of Mantua has wooed and dishonored Gilda, the innocent daughter of his court jester, Rigoletto. In revenge, Rigoletto has hired a man to murder the Duke, with whom Gilda is now stubbornly in love. Rigoletto, in an attempt to cure his daughter of her love, shows her the Duke in the act of cavorting with the prostitute Maddalena.

Meditation from *Thaïs*

This well-known piece occurs between scenes in the second act of Massenet's opera about an Alexandrian courtesan and the monk who loves her.

Trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*

The Field Marshal's wife has decided to give her young lover, Octavian, away to the young Sophie. Sophie senses that she has been given a gift, and Octavian looks forward to his life with Sophie, but is sad to bid farewell to the Marschallin. The tone is wistful and transfigured.

Prelude to Act 3 and bridal chorus from *Lohengrin*

The mysterious knight Lohengrin has come from afar to testify to Elsa's honor and offer his hand in marriage. He has one stipulation: Elsa must never ask who is or from where he comes. This music precedes their wedding. Later on their wedding night, driven by the jealous Ortrud, Elsa poses the forbidden questions and loses all.

Act 1 Finale from *The Italian Girl in Algiers*

The Italian Isabella has travelled to Algiers in search of her missing fiancé, Lindoro. She and her travelling companion, Taddeo, are taken as prisoners to the palace of the Bey, Mustaffà, where she is astonished to find Lindoro indentured as a slave and promised to the Bey's ex-wife, Isabella. Mustaffà, bored with the submissive women of his harem, has designs on the fiery Italian girl. Everyone is dumbfounded in the general confusion of the moment.

Easter Prayer from *Rustic Chivalry*

In a modern Sicilian village, Turiddu has returned to find his fiancé, Lola, married to the teamster Alfio. Out of spite, Turiddu has seduced Santuzza, but has also been having a secret affair with Lola. It is Easter, and as the *Regina Coeli* is heard from the church, the villagers join in an Easter prayer. Santuzza has been banned from the church because of her involvement with Turiddu. Santuzza has just told Turiddu's mother, Lucia, of the affair between Lola and her son. Ultimately, the Alfio will kill Turiddu in an old-fashioned duel.

Va, pensiero from *Nabucco*

The imprisoned Israelites sing "Fly, thought, on wings of gold." This powerful chorus, inspired by Psalm 137, served as an anthem for Italian patriots seeking to unify their

country in the mid-19th century. Their cry, *Viva Verdi!*, was both a testament to the composer and code for “Vittorio Emanuele, Re d’Italia,” a call for support of the Italian king.

Quintet from *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*

Each spring, members of the various trade guilds in 16th-century Nuremberg hold an singing contest where each participant must compose and perform a song that both moves and conforms to a strict set of compositional and poetic rules. This year, the top prize in the contest is to be the hand of young Eva Pogner. Eva and the handsome outsider, Walter von Stolzing are in love, but Walter must quickly learn the musical rules of the guild in order to have a chance to win her. Assisted by the middle-aged cobbler Hans Sachs, he has written a song that shows some promise. It is the evening before the big contest. A meeting has been arranged at his shop between Eva and Walter that includes her chaperone, Magdalena, and Sachs apprentice, David. Everyone is nervous yet hopeful.

Aragonaise from *Carmen*

This prelude to the final act of Bizet’s opera set in Spain is in the Jota style of folk dance.

Make our Garden Grow from *Candide*

Based on the satire by Voltaire, Bernstein’s opera-musical *Candide* follows the travels of the naive Candide who encounters life’s absurdities to gain whatever simple wisdom life can offer. At the end, Candide states that “we must take care of our garden,” to which his optimistic teacher Dr. Pangloss answers “for when man was put into the garden of Eden, it was with an intent to dress it; and this proves that man was not born to be idle.” In a message of hope, everyone sets about building a thriving community, each contributing in her/his own way.

Final fugue from Falstaff

Based on Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Verdi’s final opera and only second comedy, *Falstaff*, was composed when the master was in his nineties. Falstaff, after being tricked twice in front of the whole community by the merry wives he has unwisely pursued, good-naturedly proclaims a fugue in which he and the entire company proclaim that “everything in the world is a jest and everyone is worth mocking”--a light-hearted close to the long and illustrious career that was Verdi’s.