

PROGRAM NOTES

by RICHARD FREED

Overture, *Rienzi* RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)

Cola Rienzi, der letzte der Tribunen ("Cola Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes"), composed between 1838 and 1840, was the third of Wagner's completed operas, the second to be produced, and the first to earn him success. Though Weber's influence is still discernible, and Meyerbeer's too, it was in this work that Wagner's own voice began to be heard. The opera remained popular in Germany for several decades, but is rarely staged anywhere now. Except for an occasional rendering of "Rienzi's Prayer" by a tenor appearing in an orchestral concert, and Birgit Nilsson's recording of one of Adriano's arias (Wagner still wrote arias in *Rienzi*), the work is remembered solely by its Overture.

The opera is based on Bulwer-Lytton's novel of revolution in 14th-century Rome. In this story, Cola Rienzi is a popular hero, a young notary who is named Tribune after he has overthrown the oppressive nobles. He frustrates their first two attempts to restore themselves to power, but in their third try they succeed in deluding the people, and Rienzi is betrayed by his friend Adriano, despite Adriano's love for Rienzi's sister Irene. The fickle mob then turns on its former hero, stoning Rienzi, pursuing him to the Capitol and finally setting the building afire. At the end of the opera Adriano makes his redemptive gesture, dashing into the flaming Capitol to die with Rienzi and Irene.

The Overture is built on motifs from the opera. The swelling trumpet at the beginning is the herald's summons to the people; the Weberesque theme in the strings is from Rienzi's Prayer; the rumbustious, percussion-filled episode reflects the near-intoxication with which the crowd regards Rienzi as hero; punctuating the development of these materials is a fanfare (whose tune resembles the old round *Row, row, row your boat*) representing Rienzi's battle hymn. At the end the bacchanalian hero's music sweeps everything before it.

Suite Flamenca CARLOS MONTOYA (b. 1903)

Carlos Montoya tells us that the *Suite Flamenca* evolved in his mind for more than 25 years. In 1942, while appearing with La Argentiniña in concerts of the Rochester Philharmonic, he was heard during a pre-concert warm-up by José Iturbi (then conductor of that orchestra), who expressed the wish that they might work together to create "a real Flamenco suite." Some two decades later Montoya tried writing such a suite in collaboration with various composers, but none of those attempts proved successful. "My idea was not to learn a piece with a Flamenco flavor by a composer," he said, "but rather to transport pure Flamenco guitar into the midst of an orchestra and have [the musicians] join me in unadulterated Flamenco." He finally did find an effective collaborator, in the person of Julio Esteban, whom he had met in the 1930s and who subsequently became a member of the piano faculty of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore.

"Julio and I started from scratch," Montoya recalls, "and wrote the full suite in a relatively short time — and this was a *real* Flamenco piece. In the Suite, the orchestral parts always remain as written, but are never out of character with the impulsive spirit of Flamenco. There are passages in which I play along with the orchestra, and many in which I am free to improvise my own cadenzas and then bring the orchestra back in by means of cues to be found in pre-arranged chord phrases. For this reason, no two performances of the Suite will ever be exactly alike. This is Flamenco.

"The *Suite Flamenca* is based on four traditional Flamenco forms. The first movement, MINERA, is a lyrical *taranta*, one of the oldest songs of the Spanish Gypsies. AIRES DEL PUENTE, the second movement, is a *garrotín*, a gay and rhythmic Andalusian dance. This is followed by GENERALIFE, a *granaina*. As the name indicates, this is from Granada, the Generalife being part of the Alhambra; this is not a dance rhythm, but is much freer in form and is often sung. JALEO, the closing section of the Suite, is the *bulería por soleá*, a syncopated and rapid Gypsy dance. Until now, it was thought to be playable only by Spanish Gypsies."

Carmina Burana CARL ORFF (1895-1982)

In 1925, when he was 30, Carl Orff helped to found a school in Munich with the purpose of promoting "rhythmical education." Rhythm was his central concern in teaching children, and it has been the focal element of his own music. Orff's first major work did not come along until his 42nd year; it was *Carmina Burana*, unquestionably the making of him as a composer.

The title *Carmina Burana* means simply "Songs of Beuren," *carmina* being the plural of the Latin *carmen* — song, or chant — and the second word identifying the geographical source of the material, a manuscript discovered in 1803 at the old monastery of Benediktbeuren in Upper Bavaria, where it had been preserved since the 13th century. It comprised dozens of songs notated over a period of a hundred years or more, originally sung by students passing through from various parts of Europe; some of the texts were in Latin, some in Middle-High German, some in Old French. The verses are earthy and unpretentious, some ribald, some erotic, some sardonic, the nearest phenomenon in English literature — in spirit, if not in form — might be the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer.

The *Carmina Burana* were published in 1847, and Orff came across the collection in 1935. He was enchanted, and set about at once to spread the enchantment in a style both uniquely his and curiously apposite to the spirit of the antique texts. With the help of the writer Michael Hofmann, Orff selected some two dozen of the most intriguing songs for treatment, then organized them into three large sections with a prologue and epilogue, styling the whole a "scenic cantata." The première, staged in Frankfurt on June 8, 1937, was a great success. Orff's imaginative use of voices and instruments, his simple and forceful melodic designs and, most of all, his extraordinary rhythms exerted a visceral impact that was as unprecedented in its sheer excitement as that of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* had been 24 years earlier, and yet was not controversial, as that work had been when new, but downright irresistible.

Since Orff was especially intrigued by the representation of the Wheel of Fortune on the cover of the published texts, this was the image he chose for his prologue, a two-part apostrophe to *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* ("Fortune, Empress of the World"), sung by the full chorus with orchestra.

Part I celebrates the glories of spring, and is divided into two subsections. The first, *Primo vere* ("In Springtime"), comprises three songs welcoming the season; the second, *Um dem Anger* ("On the Green"), begins with a rumbustious Dance, the only piece without voices in the entire work, and continues with four increasingly lusty choral songs.

Part II, *In Taberna*, is a sequence of drinking songs for the two male soloists and male chorus. Most striking here are the plaint of a roasting swan (tenor, falsetto) and the song of the Abbot of Cucany, a parody of Gregorian chant for the baritone and chorus.

Part III, *Cour d'amours* ("The Court of Love"), is an intoxicating glorification of youth and pleasure, rewarding the solo soprano for her patience through the preceding sections with some stunning (and challenging) opportunities for display. If the rollicking and insinuating *Tempus est jocundum* (in which the baritone and the boys have the most fun) is the single most ingratiating portion of the score, the soprano's *Dulcissime*, which follows to conclude Part III, is surely the most brilliant.

Blanziflor et Helena follows Part III as a brief intermezzo, leading to a reprise of the opening *O Fortuna* as epilogue.

About the Artists

Theo Alcantara, whom many remember from his years as Conductor of U-M Orchestras (1968-1975), stands acclaimed as one of today's most dynamic and sought-after conductors. He has led major orchestras in the United States and Europe and conducted opera performances of the San Diego, Washington, Miami, Pittsburgh, New York City, New York Metropolitan, and Buenos Aires opera companies. He is currently Music Director of the Phoenix Symphony and Artistic Director of the Music Academy of the West Summer Festival.

Carlos Montoya's "gypsy blood" and unique improvisational gifts (he doesn't read a note of formal music) are the distinguishing elements of his Flamenco guitar music. After four solo recitals in Ann Arbor (1973, '74, '78, and '82), Señor Montoya now appears as both composer and performer in this, his first May Festival performance.

Mary Burgess divides her talents equally between the operatic stage and the concert platform, on both sides of the Atlantic. She has sung with the opera companies of New Orleans, Nevada, Spoleto (Italy), Netherlands, Festival Ottawa, and Belgium; with the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Cleveland, Minnesota, and Phoenix; and last year was soloist in *Carmina Burana* in the Cincinnati May Festival and with the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Music Festival. This is her second Ann Arbor May Festival appearance.

Rockwell Blake was winner of the first Richard Tucker Award in 1978 and since then has become one of the brightest young tenors on the musical scene. His quality, agility, and fluency have brought accolades, especially in the *bel canto* repertoire, and more particularly as a Rossini interpreter. He has sung leading roles with the Metropolitan, New York City, Houston, Dallas, Hamburg and Vienna opera companies, and performed with the symphony orchestras of Philadelphia, Chicago, and Baltimore. He makes his Ann Arbor debut this evening.

J. Patrick Raftery, recipient of the 1981 Richard Tucker Award, has emerged as one of America's outstanding baritones. He has played leading roles with the San Diego, Chicago Lyric, New York City, Houston, Washington, and Hamburg State opera companies, and appeared as concert soloist with the Boston and Honolulu Symphony Orchestras. He sang his first "Elijah" at the Kennedy Center a year ago this month. He now adds Ann Arbor to his widening list of debut appearances.

Our special 90th May Festival Souvenir Book is available for only two dollars in the main floor and first balcony lobbies. Its more than 60 pages contain complete program annotations and extensive artist biographies for all four concerts, plus a pictorial section devoted to the May Festival from its inception in 1894. . . on sale during intermission and before and after each concert.

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Susan Campbell	Rachelle Warren	<i>Second Altos</i>	Jay Klein
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Karin Evans	Kathleen Young	Eleanor Beam	Carl Smith
Julie Grinstead		Carol Carpenter	Christopher White
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Kathryn Hubbs	Yvonne Allen	Andrea Foote	
Sylvia Jenkins	Martha Ause	Ria Geurts	<i>First Basses</i>
Carolyn Leyh	Kathlyn Boyer	Mary Haab	Thomas Berry
Doris Luecke	Ella Brown	Dana Hull	John Brueger
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Teta Moehs	Lael Cappaert	Elsie Lovelace	John Dunkelberger
Suzanne Schluederberg	Jari Carver	Cheryl Melby	William Hale
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Deborah Woo	Carolyn Ehrlich	Carol Spencer	Bradley Pritts
Marilee Woodworth	Marilyn Finkbeiner	Kathryn Stebbins	James Schneider
	Wilma Gillis	Marian Vassar	Thomas Wang
	Nancy Houk	Alice Warsinski	Steven White
<i>Second Sopranos</i>	Gretchen Jackson		Donald Williams
Christine Arnison	Marta Johnson	<i>First Tenors</i>	
Kathryn Berry	Olga Johnston	William Bronson	<i>Second Basses</i>
Jessica Briefer	Nancy Karp	Hugh Brown	Marion Beam
Barbara Carron	Geraldine Koupal	Charles Cowley	Douglas Bond
Ellen Ferguson	Judith Levey	Timothy Dombrowski	Howard Bond
Ann Kuelbs	Frances Lyman	Joseph Kubis	Harry Bowen
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Kim Mackenzie	Lois Nelson	Robert MacGregor	Bruce Dicey
Linda Mickelson	Erica Perl	Bernard Patterson	Alec Ferguson
Cheryl Murphy	Jo Ann Poske	Stephen Vann	Paul Kaczmarek
Robina Quale	Debora Slee	Helen Welford	Charles Lehmann
Virginia Reese	Laura Smith		William Liefert
Carolyn Richards	Helen Thornton	<i>Second Tenors</i>	Robert Strozier
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UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

Burton Memorial Tower, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

Phones: (313) 665-3717/764-2538