



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU Concert Orchestra

Operatic Favorites

Katherine Kilburn, director
Daniel Jaggars, guest conductor
Zongheng Zhang, guest conductor

Thursday, December 5, 2024
Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center, 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Overture to *The Italian Girl in Algiers* Gioachino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Selections from *Carmen Suites No. 1 and 2* Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)
Les Toréadors
Prélude arr. Ernest Guiraud
Aragonaise
Intermezzo
Habanera
Chanson du Toréador
Danse Bohème

Daniel Jaggars, conductor

Overture to *The Queen of Spades* Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Triumphal March from *Aida* Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

Overture to *Orpheus in the Underworld* Jacques Offenbach
(1819-1880)
Carl Binder
(1816-1860)

Zongheng Zhang, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to The Italian Girl in Algiers (1813)

Before he reached the age of forty, the Italian composer Gioachino Rossini had written very nearly as many operas as he had accumulated earthly years. Having started this operatic marathon when he was eighteen, and having attained spectacular fame throughout Europe with the products of his prodigious facility, Rossini was apparently ready for early retirement, at least from the lyric theater. In the thirty-nine years that remained to him after he put down his operatic pen, he turned out a large number of pieces, most of them small and unpretentious, and one - the *Stabat Mater* - a major work.

The Italian Girl in Algiers was composed in typical Rossini fashion: quickly, in less than a month. The composer conducted the premiere of the work that he called a *melodramma giocoso* in Venice in May 1813. In February 1817, it became the first Rossini opera to be given performance in Paris, where the composer was eventually to reside.

The Overture begins with a slow introduction that features an ornamental (quasi-exotic) solo for oboe, and is followed by an allegro with a main theme in the winds. A contrasting idea that is a perky yet sinuous tune sung by an oboe, then flute. And, very much present and accounted for is a pulse-quickening episode that takes off like a locomotive picking up steam, that is, it gets faster and louder as it goes - a Rossini trademark for which the composer was both praised as well as damned.

- Orrin Howard, LA Phil

Carmen Suite No. 1 and No. 2 (1875-1889)

The music of Georges Bizet's 1875 opera *Carmen* is among the most widely recognized in the operatic repertoire, celebrated for its memorable melodies, bold dramatic character, and masterful orchestration. The *Carmen Suites*, arranged posthumously by Bizet's close friend Ernest Guiraud, are compilations of some of the opera's most iconic moments, showcasing Bizet's remarkable aptitude for thematic writing and motivic structure.

The opera, an adaptation of the novel by Prosper Mérimée, is unusually dark given the sprightly and vibrant nature of the music in the suites. It tells the story of Don José, a Spanish soldier who becomes dangerously obsessed with Carmen, a gypsy woman he is

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

ordered to guard after her involvement in a nightclub brawl. When Carmen loses interest in José and turns her attention to Escamillo, a charismatic bullfighter, José spirals into a fit of jealous rage and murders Carmen by stabbing her.

At its premiere, *Carmen* blindsided audiences with its unsettling realism. Its cynically ordinary characters and believable plot suggested that real-world events could be as intense as the epic dramas of Wagner, like *Götterdämmerung*, with their mythological elements and fantastical settings. The opera's initial performance in France was nearly scandalous, with critics decrying its realism and perceived lack of moral rectitude. After Bizet's unexpected death later in 1875, Ernest Guiraud oversaw a production by the Vienna Court Opera, which catapulted the work to fame. *Carmen* soon reached the United States, where it became a dominant force in musical theater. Today, its music remains a cornerstone of classical repertoire, with performances of the suites continuing to fill concert halls worldwide.

- Zach Bickell

Overture to The Queen of Spades (1834)

Tchaikovsky's ninth opera, *The Queen of Spades*, represents the composer at the height of his artistry, blending rich musical variety with deeply human storytelling. Based loosely on Alexander Pushkin's 1833 novella, the opera transforms the tale into a psychological drama of love, obsession, and fate.

The central character, Hermann, is a conflicted army officer whose compulsive desire for wealth and love drives the story. Believing that winning at cards will secure the love of Lisa, a member of the Russian aristocracy, Hermann becomes consumed by gambling. His obsession leads to tragic consequences: he causes the death of Lisa's grandmother, betrays Lisa, and ultimately drives both himself and her to suicide.

Tchaikovsky's reinterpretation departs significantly from Pushkin's ironic detachment. Unlike Pushkin's scheming Hermann, Tchaikovsky's hero is a deeply emotional figure, reflecting the composer's romantic ideals. Tchaikovsky even admitted a profound identification with Hermann, once writing that he wept uncontrollably while composing the character's death scene. This personal connection imbues the music with sincerity and depth.

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Musically, *The Queen of Spades* is a masterpiece of dramatic expression. Tchaikovsky employs a wide palette, from tender lyricism in Hermann and Lisa's love duet to eerie orchestral sonorities in the Countess' ghostly scene. Folk-like melodies and courtly dances evoke St. Petersburg society, while Hermann's obsession is underscored by the recurring "fate motif", echoing Tchaikovsky's earlier symphonic explorations of destiny.

The opera's tragic arc unfolds through powerful moments: Hermann's coercion of Lisa for access to the Countess, his confrontation with the spectral Countess whispering the fateful cards ("three, seven, ace"), and his ultimate downfall when he gambles away his life.

Tchaikovsky's empathetic portrayal of flawed characters and his stunning music make *The Queen of Spades* a compelling exploration of human ambition and despair, cementing its place as one of the great achievements in opera.

- Susanne Stähr, Berlin Phil

Aida: Triumphal March (1871)

Verdi's *Aida* premiered in 1871 at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo, commissioned to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. Set in ancient Egypt, the opera blends grand spectacle with intimate human drama, epitomized in the iconic Triumphal March. This scene, part of Act II, captures the pinnacle of Egyptian grandeur while foreshadowing the personal tragedies of the protagonists.

The march celebrates the victory of Egyptian forces over Ethiopia. Radamès, the opera's hero, returns triumphant, expecting both honor and the hand of the enslaved Ethiopian princess, Aida, whom he secretly loves. However, his success intensifies the opera's central conflict: Aida's loyalties are torn between love for Radamès and allegiance to her father, Ethiopian King Amonasro, captured during the battle. This scene underscores the tension between personal desires and duty, a recurring theme in Verdi's works.

Musically, the Triumphal March showcases Verdi's mastery of orchestral color and dramatic pacing. Its ceremonial opening is dominated by a majestic brass fanfare, often performed with

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

onstage trumpets, lending an authentic and imposing splendor. The processional rhythms, set against lush strings and percussion, evoke the grandeur of ancient Egypt while embodying the pride and unity of the Egyptian people.

Choruses play a central role in amplifying the spectacle. Priests, soldiers, and citizens sing praises to the gods and the victorious army, creating a powerful communal energy. Dancers and symbolic displays on stage further heighten the scene's visual impact, often making this moment a showstopper in opera houses. Despite its celebratory tone, the scene's pageantry contrasts starkly with Aida's inner turmoil as she grapples with her love for Radamès and the fate of her people.

The Triumphal March remains one of opera's most enduring orchestral moments, celebrated for its dramatic intensity and grandeur. It encapsulates Aida's duality as both a monumental historical epic and an intimate exploration of human emotions.

- Zongheng Zhang

Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld (1858)

Although German by birth, Offenbach adopted France as his home, and his music is considered quintessentially French in character. Accepted as a student at the Paris Conservatoire at age fourteen, he found academic work boring, and left after a year, establishing an international career as a cellist. His real interest, however, was in musical theater, and it is for his work in this field that he is remembered - and beloved - today.

To satisfy this ambition, Offenbach leased a small theater in Paris (the *Opera Comique* was uninterested) in 1858 and began presenting his small-scale productions with a small orchestra and a few singers. The enterprise eventually floundered and at the point of bankruptcy, the company presented *Orpheus in the Underworld*, which is generally considered to be the first actual operetta, and which influenced the later works of Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar, and Gilbert and Sullivan.

Orpheus met with little success until critic Jules Janin reviewed a performance and declared it "a profanation of holy and glorious antiquity in a spirit of irreverence that bordered on blasphemy." Naturally, Parisians flocked to the theatre to see what Offenbach had done. Whether Janin was really the bluestocking he appeared

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

to be, or simply felt that the work defamed Gluck, whose grand opera *Orpheus et Eurydice* was obviously parodied in Offenbach's work, we do not know. What we do know is that Offenbach subsequently had a hit on his hands, and the piece has remained popular ever since.

The Overture features a rousing introduction followed by several featured instrumental solos (clarinet, oboe, cello, and violin) before closing with the famous *Infernal Galop*, more commonly known as the "can-can".

- Thalia Symphony Orchestra

ARTIST-FACULTY BIO

Award-winning conductor Katherine Kilburn has conducted in music halls all over the U.S. and in Europe. She has served as Assistant Conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra, the El Paso Opera, the Hot Springs Music Festival, the Bowling Green State University Philharmonia, and the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. She was Conductor of the Interlochen Arts Academy Wind Ensemble, Music Director and Conductor of the Greater New Haven Youth and Chamber Orchestras, and Conductor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Youth Repertory Orchestra. She has guest conducted the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, the Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra and Opera Theater, the Green Bay Symphony, Ensemble X, Cleveland Opera Theater, and the Baldwin Wallace Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Kilburn assisted Sir Simon Rattle for performances of *Peter Grimes* at the Salzburg Easter Festival and toured with world-renowned clarinetists David Shifrin and Alexander Fiterstein. She has conducted numerous world and U.S.A. premieres and has conducted in the Cabrillo Music Festival, the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music Festival, the Philadelphia International Music Festival, and the Sewanee Summer Music Festival. Ms. Kilburn has been on the faculty of Cornell University, Kent State University, and Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, and is now Assistant Director of Orchestras at Michigan State University.

STUDENT BIOS

Zongheng Zhang is a first-year Doctoral student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University, studying under Professors Octavio Más-Arocas and Kathrine Kilburn. He holds a Master degree in Orchestral Conducting from UT Austin, where he served as Assistant Conductor for the UT Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the UT University Orchestra. Zhang has worked with Austin Opera, Butler Opera Center, and Berlin Opera Academy. He has conducted operas such as *La bohème* and *Carmen*, and premiered *Le faucon* by Dmitry Bortniansky in 2024. From 2016 to 2021, Zhang was Concertmaster for The Orchestra Now and Bard Conservatory, collaborating with renowned conductors.

Daniel Jaggars is a Master's student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University. A student of Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Katherine Kilburn, Daniel serves as Assistant Conductor for the MSU Symphony Orchestra and MSU Concert Orchestra. He holds a Bachelor's degree in music from the University of Nebraska, Omaha, where he studied conducting with Miguel Harth-Bedoya. Additionally, Daniel studied clarinet at Ithaca College with Dr. Richard Faria. He has attended several workshops with renowned conductors and performers, studying symphonic, operatic, and chamber repertoire. He is immensely grateful for the numerous people who have made his journey in music possible.

PERSONNEL

Violin I

*Ethan Davidson, Microbiology
Leah Tantengco, Business
Renee Crachiola, Humanities Pre Law
Gwendolyn Kohl, Political Science
Sophie Rees, Marketing
Sarah Pecis, Integrative biology
Samantha Lang, Human Biology
Jennifer Choe, Business Mgmt.
Emily Telgenhoff, Computer Science
Grace Khamis, Psychology
Esther Toy, Political Theory/German
Sarah Saado, Computer Science
Michael Salem, Psychology
Emily Swieringa, Horticulture
Hyoungkoo Jeong, Mechanical
Engineering
Jessica Hopson Marketing Research
& Analytics
Jolie Kretzschmar, Psychology

Violin II

**Colin Davidson, Computer Science
Sofia Rowell, Criminal Justice
Will DeRuyter, Neuroscience &
Psychology
Nick Majestic, Astrophysics
Alisia Coipel, Psychology
Hannah Podsiadlik, Psychology
Michael Barger, Computer
Engineering
Maya Stackable
Sofia Lamerato, Integrative Biology
Ana Ivanov, Biochemistry &
Molecular Biology
Bre Vermeulen, Biomedical
Laboratory Science
Paulson Justin, Zoology
Carolyn Cheyne, Fisheries and
Wildlife & Communications)
Srishti Gowda, Psychology
Allysha Potts, Linguistics
Josie Fillman, Chemistry
Lara Rassam, Biochemistry
Julia Mejza, Interior Design
Chasen Liu

Viola

*Mio Hogan, Environmental Biology
& Microbiology
Mark Remington, Intl. Relations
Joshua Hamilton
Ryan Peoples, Chemical Engineering
Drake Howard, Linguistics & French
Mihir Naik, Math & Physics
Andrew Harms, Astrophysics
Hailey Macenas, Human Biology
Allicea Sommerville, Human
Biology
Brandon Grabowski, Mechanical Engr.
Michael Nardi
Gerik Wolak, Actuarial Science

Cello

*Allison Voneida, Horticulture
Griffin Siersma, Physics
Alex Logan
Isabell Ku, English & French
Madeline Benson, Chemical
Engineering
Alex Cross, Physics
Zach Bickell, Biochemistry &
Molecular Biology
Kael Ligon, International Relations/
French
Tristen Olsson, Physics
Abby Majestic, Psychology/Spanish
Sam Colby, Digital Storytelling
Caleb Patrick
Jaiyu Bai, Cello Performance

Bass

*Justin Bennett, Advanced
Mathematics
Adam Albanese, Biochemistry
Colette Walraven, Veterinary
Nursing Alumni
Faith Thomson, Computer
Engineering
Lily Dixon, Arts and Humanities &
Public Policy
Theo Durrett, Alumni

Flute

Tiffany Rennells, Neuroscience bf
data science
Sophie Aguas, Supply Chain Mgmt.
Adam Gulley, Music Composition

PERSONNEL (cont.)

Oboe

Jackie Russell, Political Theory &
Constitutional Democracy
Theising Davis, Mechanical Engr.

Clarinet

Ciel Riskus, Music Education
Chris Dhespollari, Accounting
Solomon Makonnen, Neuroscience
Rylan McCurdy, Biochemistry &
Molecular Biology

Bassoon

Eric Hall, community member
Evan Dietrich

Horn

Jonah Weber, Music Composition
Marco Abat, Data Science
Alton Fox, Game and Interactive
Media
Billur Haskara, Computer
Engineering
Alex Osborn, Pre-Med/ Biosystem
Engineering

Trumpet

Ian Freeman Computational
Mathematics, Science, Engr.
Taylor Robison, Psychology & Law,
Justice, and Public Policy
Patrick Mulligan, Music Performance
Nathan Emeott, Computer Science
Sohum Kapoor, Computer Science
Edward Kolodziej, Animal Science

Trombone

Adam Duffy, Music
Brody Keeley, Urban Planning
Patrick Mulligan, Music Performance
Nicholas Simonelli, Comparative
Cultures and Politics

Tuba

Josh Pope, Game & Interactive
Media

Percussion

Alex Walters, Social Relations/Policy
Matthew Gagea, Biochemistry. and
Genetics
Tristan Gras
Nathan Chou, Exploratory
Sydney Fairman, Exploratory
Alex Osborn, Pre-Med/Biosystems
Engineering
Catherine Lee, Coach

Harp

Ryan Johnston

Piano

Jingting Huang, Music Performance

Concert Orchestra Student Association (COSA)

Librarians

Aaron Longuski
Cole Sheffer

Assistant Conductor

Daniel Jaggars
Zongheng Zhang

** Denotes Concert Master

* Denotes Principal

Concert Orchestra Student Association (COSA)

Matthew Gagea, President
Tiffany Rennels, Vice-President
Marco Abat, Treasurer
Sophie Rees, Event Coordinator
Solomon Makonnen, Social Media and
Webmaster Chairs
Samantha Lang, Outreach Officer
Jolie Kretzschmar, Volunteer Chair
Zach Bickell, Program Notes Chair

PRIVATE GIFTS play a vital role in our ability to maintain and enhance the quality of the programs we offer. Donations support student scholarships, fellowships, student travel and performance opportunities, instrument acquisitions, guest artists, outreach activities, operations, and other crucial areas that make the College of Music an exemplary place of learning.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024-2025 SPONSORS

- Anonymous Donor Family (Holiday Glory)
- Sam and Mary Austin (Musique 21 concerts)
- Sam and Mary Austin Fund for New Music (Wind Symphony, Oct. 25; Symphony Orchestra, Oct. 27; Musique 21, Oct. 28; Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
- Ken and Sandy Beall (Cello Plus Chamber Music Festival Series; Jazz Spectacular)
- James and Susan Bonfiglio (Symphony Orchestra, Apr. 26; Fall Opera)
- Jenny Chung and Family for Human Rights Fund (Jazz Nonets concerts)
- Joanne and Bill Church (West Circle Series)
- April Clobes and Glen Brough (Celebrating the Spectrum; Whirlwinds)
- Trustee Emerita Dee Cook in memory of her husband Byron Cook (Baroque Fest)
- Susan Davis (Fall Opera)
- Dean Transportation (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Alena Fabian, M.D. (Votapek, Sept. 25; Piano Monster)
- John and Gretchen Forsyth (Sinder, Feb. 16; Oboe, Trumpet and Organ, Feb. 11)
- Stanley and Selma Hollander Endowment for Chamber Music (Happy Birthday Mozart!)
- Thea Glicksman (From Vienna with Love, Jan. 17)
- Howard and Pam Gourwitz (Lulloff, Nov. 25)
- Anne Hiller (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Lauren Harris (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Taylor Johnston Early Music Series Endowment established by Taylor Johnston (Taylor Johnston Early Music Series)
- Hari Kern and the late Ralph R. Edminster, M.D. (Votapek, Mar. 27)
- Michael and Paula Koppisch (Zuber, Feb. 17)
- Robert Last and Jill Canny (MSU Federal Credit Union Jazz Artist in Residence, J. Clayton, Dec. 8; Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer and Protest Concert)
- Eleanor H. and Harold E. Leichenko Opera Endowment established by Lauren Julius Harris (Fall and Spring Opera)
- Ann, John and Abby Lindley (Holiday Glory; Wind Symphony, Nov. 24)
- Merritt Lutz (Celebrating the Spectrum; Wind Symphony, Apr. 24)
- Clare Mackey (Pass a Good Time, Oct. 6; Oboe, Trumpet and Organ, Feb. 11)
- Joseph and Jeanne Maguire (A Jazzy Little Christmas)

- Patrick and Victoria McPharlin Guest Artist Endowment for Jazz Studies in the College of Music (Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer and Protest Concert)
- Pat & Mary McPharlin (Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
- Dr. Roy and Christine Meland (Vive La France)
- Gordon E. Miracle (Votapek, Sept. 25; Helton, Oct. 31)
- MSU Federal Credit Union (Showcase Series; Spartan Spectacular; Celebrating the Spectrum)
- MSU Federal Credit Union Entrepreneurial Musical Artist-in-Residence Endowed Fund (Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
- George Orban and Rae Ramsdell (Red Cedar Organ, Sept. 15)
- Milton Powell, in memory of Sue Powell, accomplished pianist and organist (Red Cedar Organ, Sept. 15)
- Liz and Tony Raduazo in honor of Andrew Raduazo (Sensory Friendly Spartan Concert, Nov. 9 and April 8)
- Nancy and Charlie Seebeck (MSU-Stanford Piano Quartet)
- Michael and Elaine Serling (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- Leonard and Sharon Tabaka (Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)
- TechSmith (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Dr. Robert W. Uphaus and Dr. Lois M. Rosen (Symphony Orchestra, Sept. 27; Woodward String Quartet, Mar. 13; Bagratuni, Mar. 31)
- Linn Van Dyne and Mike Knox (Symphony Orchestra, Feb. 7)
- Barbara E. Wagner (Wagner Chamber Music Competition)
- Dr. Charles and Philippa Webb (Beacon Hill Music Series)
- Richard Witter (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- WKAR (Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series)
- **Teresa K. Woodruff, Ph.D. and Thomas V. O'Halloran, Ph.D.** (Holiday Glory)
- Worthington Family Foundation (Opera Season)
- Andrea L. Wulf (Piano Monster)

SPONSORSHIPS AND RECOGNITION

Sponsorships are available at \$1,000, \$2,500, and \$5,000. Sponsors will receive recognition in the form of event publicity, promotions, programs, and through online recognition. For information about event sponsorships and giving to the college, please call (517) 353-9872 or e-mail music.giving@msu.edu.

MAKE A GIFT

