

REDLANDS: Opera from the movies takes center stage at Bowl

The last time you heard "Nessun Dorma," the well-known tenor aria from the opera "Turandot" might have been at the movies—"The Witches of Eastwick," to be exact. The Redlands Bowl Summer Music Festival will celebrate the influence of opera music in cinema on Friday, July 31, with "The Singing Cinema" program.

"It's really interesting that opera, which is not written for film, is frequently part of the music score in the most unlikely movies," said Frank Fetta, music director and conductor for the program. "I wanted to bring that to the attention of the audience."

Fetta will conduct the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra and eight professional opera singers in the program that will match famous arias to sometimes infamous movies.

"Certain directors and music directors love to throw opera into their films at certain times, especially when there's an ironic reason for the song or style being there," said Fetta. "Opera lends a very high level of energy to whatever is going on, a real sense of urgency."

Fetta said that opera music was used extensively in the movies of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, but didn't become popular again until the late 1970s. Now, he said, it's pretty much commonplace. "It adds a huge dramatic effect."

To determine what pieces to include in the program, Fetta consulted with the singers. "We needed to start with what they already knew, or could learn quickly, and what was relevant," he said.

The evening's soloists include Venezuelan soprano Begoña Bilbao, Matteo Bitetti, lyric soprano Candace Bogan, baritone Ralph Cato, Brooke deRosa, tenor Haqumai Sharpe; Nandani Maria Sinha and Erin Wood.

"It's a great group of singers, and they will bring so much to the program," said Fetta.

With help from the singers, Fetta selected music from Wagner's "Lohengren," which was used in the movie "Finding Venus." From the movie "I'll Take Romance," the singers will perform the "Flower Song" from "Madame Butterfly," and from "Going My Way," they will perform "Habanera" from "Carmen."

"After the 'Habanera,' we'll sing 'Sull'aria' from Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro,'" said Fetta. "I'll bet few people know that was used in the movie 'Shawshank Redemption.'"

"The famous flower duet from Delibes' opera 'Lakmé' was used in the movie 'The Hunger,'" said Fetta. "So we're going to include that for our sopranos. And from 'Godfather III' we'll sing a piece from 'Cavalleria rusticana' by Mascagni. One of my favorites we're going to sing is 'Toreador March,' which was used in the movie 'The Coconuts.' Now, whoever heard of that movie?"

On Saturday, August 1 at 10 a.m., Fetta and all eight singers will present the Redlands Bowl Children's Workshop at the Community Center, 111 Lugonia Ave. in Redlands. The workshop will be about what it takes to be able to sing opera; and it is free and open to children ages 4-10.

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