



## **Symphony conjures up magic of opera**

**By Keith Powers / Contributing writer**

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HYANNIS – When you sit with a real opera lover, the mere mention of “Là ci darem,” or a few hummed bars from “La Rondine,” brings a flood of emotions pouring out.

There’s good reason: Any simple reminder recalls hours of deeply felt romance, intrigue or drama.

Most of these memories are encapsulated in the great arias, and the Cape Symphony’s opening concerts this weekend gave opera devotees – and opera newbies – an uninterrupted rush of the vocal magic of Mozart, Verdi, Handel and others.

Joined by four soloists from the Boston Lyric Opera, maestro Jung-Ho Pak and the orchestra went straight for the top. Culling a dozen or so great vocal highlights, and interspersing some memorable overtures, the ensemble tugged on the heartstrings, ventured romantic passions and thoroughly toasted the great singing tradition.

The soloists – Chelsea Basler (soprano), Heather Gallagher (mezzo), Jon Jurgens (tenor) and David McFerrin (baritone) – each got their moment alone in this well-constructed variety program. They all sang terrifically in turn, and teamed up for a smattering of duets and quartets.

Three great overtures put instrumental brackets on the aria selections: Mozart’s, from “The Marriage of Figaro”; Beethoven’s “Fidelio”; and Wagner’s “Die Meistersinger.” These moments lifted the orchestra out of its accompaniment role, and in “Meistersinger” – its central fugue a bracing display of Wagner’s acumen – the CSO sounded in mid-season form.

Each of the arias brought not only a rush of feeling, but offered the soloists a chance to show their stuff. They all grabbed it.

Gallagher showed her versatility right away, moving from Handel’s tragic “Lascia ch’io pianga” – weeping over her cruel fate – to Rossini’s determined cavatina “Una voce poco fa” from “Barber of Seville.” Her emotions were polar opposites; her range and vocal ease impressive.

Basler took her highlight from Puccini's "La Rondine," enveloping Doretta's love song with warmth, coloring it with streaks from the highest register. McFerrin sang what might be called the only rarity on the program, Pierrot's Tanzlied from Erich Korngold's opera "Die tote Stadt." The harrowing recall of his lost wife, brought on by seeing her double at a party, the aria dwells in memory, and McFerrin made it all seem present.

If Jurgens never becomes an opera star, something is truly amiss in the singing world. A lyric tenor with power, he sang multiple selections with finesse and style.

He gave an offstage hint of his instrument, echoing as Alfredo when Basler sang Violetta's "Ah fors è lui" from "Traviata" (with principal harp Sandra Bittermann interjecting delicately between the two singers). His "La donna è mobile" resonated with everyone for its sheer familiarity. But it was his "E lucevan le stelle" from "Tosca" – full of contempt, love and resignation – that showed best his prodigious range and skills.

The Cape Symphony Orchestra next offers a pops program, a tribute to Nat King Cole with singer/guitarist John Pizzarelli, Oct. 14 and 15. Information: [www.capesymphony.org](http://www.capesymphony.org) or 508-362-1111.

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