



Fall season: Emphasis on opera ... and more

By Keith Powers / Contributing writer

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Classical music presentations this fall on the Cape are highlighted by two entirely different operatic presentations: Ralph Vaughan Williams' "The Pilgrim's Progress," staged by the orchestra and chorus of Gloriam Dei Cantores along with Elements Theatre Company, and the Cape Symphony, which opens its season with selections from some of the most well-known operas ever written.

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Vaughan Williams put everything he had into his "Pilgrim's Progress." Bits of music he had composed over the course of the previous four decades figured into the score; he wrote the libretto, with the help of his wife, Ursula Wood, and oversaw the premiere performances. Operatic in scope, Vaughan Williams himself called the piece a "Morality" – a nod to the allegorical nature of John Bunyan's original.

The work remained close to the heart of the British composer, and its rare stagings are a glimpse into his genius. The combined forces of GDC and Elements Theatre will mount the production Oct. 27 and 28, and Nov. 3 and 4 at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans.

Danielle Dwyer directs, James Jordan conducts, and GDC artistic director Richard K. Pugsley steps off his usual place on the podium to sing the lead role of the Pilgrim (www.gdcchoir.org; 508 240-2400).

The Cape Symphony Orchestra brings a blend of operatic highlights, pops pleasers and classical exotica to the Barnstable Performing Arts Center stage this fall. The 2017-18 season opens Saturday and Sept. 17 with opera highlights from Puccini, Verdi, Mozart and more – a collaboration between the CSO and the singers from the Boston Lyric Opera.

Soprano Chelsea Basler and mezzo Heather Gallagher headline the soloists, who will sing selected arias from “Tosca,” “The Magic Flute,” “Rigoletto” and others. The orchestra will do its part, serving up overtures by Wagner, Beethoven and Mozart.

The opera program kicks off the CSO’s Masterworks subscription series. The second program in the Masterworks series takes a much different turn – toward Scandinavia. Music of Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius – his anthemic “Finlandia” – fill the Nov. 4 and 5 concerts with Nordic atmospheres. Cellist Bo Ericsson and pianist Knut Erik Jensen join the CSO as soloists.

The CapePops series – always fantastically popular with audiences – opens with three shows on Oct. 14 and 15. The concerts feature the smooth guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli, channeling the musical spirit of Nat King Cole. “Unforgettable”? You know it, with songs like “Mona Lisa,” “Ramblin’ Rose,” and “Paper Moon” (www.capesymphony.org; 508 362-1111).

Falmouth’s Highfield Hall quietly presents stellar young performers each season, and this fall is no different. Ukrainian pianist Anastasia Seifetdinova begins the season Sept. 24, followed by Italian pianist Sandro Russo on Oct. 8. The violin/piano duo Michi Wiancko and Michael Mizrahi perform on Nov. 5 (www.highfieldhallandgardens.org; 508 495-1878).

Both of the Cape’s stellar choral societies sing this fall. Music director John Yankee’s Falmouth Chorale sings baroque music on Oct. 21 and 22 at the United Methodist Church in Falmouth (www.falmouthchorale.org; 774 392-2383). Joseph Marchio’s Chatham Chorale will present “Baroque Fireworks,” featuring the music of Handel and Bach, with a chamber orchestra and soloists, Oct. 28 and 29 at Monomoy Regional High School in Harwich (www.chathamchorale.org; 774 212-9333).

The Falmouth Chamber Players give their fall concerts Nov. 11 and 12 with programs that feature Haydn’s E-flat trumpet concerto, with Kyle Spraker as soloist. Music of Schubert, Bach and Franz von Suppé fills out the program at the United Methodist Church (www.falmouthchamberplayers.org).

The Cape Symphony Orchestra’s adventurous Nth Degree chamber series has scaled back its performances this fall. The CSO is only able to confirm one performance in October this fall, with details to follow. Visit www.capesymphony.org for updates.

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