

Fantasies on Verdi's Operas at Carnegie Hall

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Cameristi della Scala performed Fantasies on Verdi's Operas, "Fantasie" composed in the 19th century by Italian important composers, some of which were Verdi's friends and coworkers, to celebrate the bicentennial of Giuseppe Verdi's birth. It was their debut at Carnegie Hall and a night to remember.

On October 10th, all across America there have been 36 concerts honoring the bicentennial of Giuseppe Verdi's birth. The grandest was at Carnegie Hall where the Cameristi della Scala, the Chamber Orchestra that was started in 1982 and is formed by musicians from the Orchestra of La Scala and the La Scala Philharmonic Orchestra, performed Fantasies on Verdi's Operas, "Fantasie" composed in the 19th century by Italian important composers, some of which were Verdi's friends and coworkers. These "Fantasie" from Verdi's operas, represented a very important way to spread Verdi's music, in a time where there was no possibility of reproducing music except in a live concert. These re-elaborated versions, that we could easily call covers, are versions of Verdi's most famous melodies and a sign of how incredibly popular the original themes they are inspired from were.

Oftentimes, the authors of these transcriptions, fantasies or paraphrases, were well-known virtuosos, who were using famous opera themes to show their talent as composers and players. These pieces,

gifts and celebrations to the greatness of the composer from Busseto, were left to oblivion scattered around in different world libraries. The Cameristi della Scala found them, transcribed and revisited them, and now they play them for the first time in our modern times.

The program featured Giovanni Avolio's Falstaff, for violin, cello and orchestra; Luigi Mancinelli's

Don Carlo, for cello and orchestra and Aida, for cello and orchestra; Camillo Sivori's Il Trovatore, for violin and orchestra and Antonio Bazzini's La Traviata, for violin and orchestra. Giovanni Avolio is today a forgotten artist although he wrote many fantasies for operas and violin and cello. Luigi Mancinelli became a well known director and he traveled extensively in Europe and America where he was known for his talent in performing German music. Camillo Sivori, the only student who Paganini considered as his own, was one of the best violinists of his time and held concerts in Europe and America. Antonio Bazzini, an international musician, was an admired violinist and composer since his youth.

"I did a lot of research," Gianluca Scandola, violin player and president of the cameristi, said, "I found about 50 unknown pieces and after a long process of transcription and revision we ended up with the pieces we have performed during our debut at Carnegie Hall." All of the players, 12 total, were really familiar with Verdi's work but mostly with his most renowned operas. Through the years they have worked with conductors whose work is focused on Verdi and his repertoire. "They can play Verdi with extreme ease and great rigor, thus embracing the virtuosity and the lyricism of these fantasies," Scandola added.

The audience was so taken by the music that could not have enough and asked for an encore after the other. The players seemed to be taken by the same enthusiasm. The whole performance was a long embrace, an embrace that is so good that you can't let go of. "We were all incredibly touched to find out that we would play Verdi's music on his birthday at Carnegie Hall, a real temple for us musicians," Scandola continued, "It was our first time and it couldn't have been better."

The event is sponsored by ENI in its quality as Corporate Ambassador of Year of Italian Culture in the US.

Before the beginning of the concert, the audience wished the composer from Busseto a Happy Birthday with the help of Consul General Natalia Quintavalle, Steven Acunto, president of the Italian Academy Foundation and Francesco Fadda of Vento & Associati, a strategic and corporate communications company.

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