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Guest Artist Series:Carl Ratner, Baritone

Carl Ratner Baritone
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Illinois State University

School of Music

Guest Artist Series

Carl Ratner, *Baritone*

Susan Brandon, *Piano*

"Hebrew Heroes"

Center for the Performing Arts

September 9, 2004

Thursday Evening

8:00 p.m.

This is the third program of the 2004-2005 season.

Program

from <i>Judas Maccabaeus</i> Arm, Arm Ye Brave	Georg Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
from <i>Samson</i> How Willing My Paternal Love	Georg Frideric Handel
from <i>Elijah</i> Lord God of Abraham It Is Enough	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
from <i>Nabucco</i> Dio di Giuda	Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
~ Intermission ~	
Entreat Me Not to Leave Thee	Charles Gounod (1818-1893)
from <i>Chants populaires</i> (1910) Chanson hébraïque	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
from <i>Deux mélodies hébraïques</i> (1914) Kaddish	Maurice Ravel
Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel	Three Spirituals arranged by H.T. Burleigh (1866-1949)
Go Down Moses	
Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho	arranged by Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)
from <i>Porgy and Bess</i> (1934) It Ain't Necessarily So	George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Program Notes and Personal Reflections

I decided to undertake this program of great music inspired by Hebrew and "Old Testament" themes for a number of reasons, but not least because of the extraordinary quality of the music inspired by these texts, as well as the great variety of genres represented: oratorio, opera, concert repertoire, solo songs, spirituals, and Broadway numbers.

Georg Frideric Handel created numerous oratorios on Old Testament subjects among them *Jephtha*, *Solomon*, *Saul*, and *Israel in Egypt*, and the two represented here, *Samson* [1743] and *Judas Maccabaeus* [1746]. (Even the famous *Messiah*, though obviously narrating a New Testament story, contains related texts drawn from the Old Testament.) The majesty and grandeur of Handel's music suit these heroic stories well.

Franz Joseph Haydn and Felix Mendelssohn, both inspired by Handel's example, created major oratorios on Biblical subjects. Interestingly, although Haydn's *Creation* [1798] made its appearance closer in time to its Handelian antecedents, it is Mendelssohn who more directly appropriated the tone and style of Handel's works in his last great masterpiece *Elijah* [1846]. *Elijah* was composed with the expectation that it would be performed in English for an English-speaking audience.

Though most of Verdi's operas were based on literary sources, his only Biblically inspired work was *Nabucco*. The story of the Babylonian king (Nebuchadnezzar) who prays to the Jewish God and saves the subjugated Hebrews was inspiring to the Italian public of 1842, who were involved in their own struggle for independence from foreign domination. This work, Verdi's third, sealed his success and made his name a household word in Italy, partly because it served as an acronym for Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia, who became the first King of the unified Italy in 1861.

During his stays in London, the composer Charles Gounod set a number of English texts, including "Entreat Me Not To Leave Thee" from the book of Ruth. (The famous baritone aria from his opera *Faust*, "Avant de quitter ces lieux" was composed for the London premiere of the opera, and originally appeared in English as "Even Bravest Heart May Swell.")

Ravel's Hebrew songs are not Biblical, nor are they actually written in Hebrew. The "Kaddish" is in Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. The other two he set are in Yiddish, essentially a fusion of Hebrew, Aramaic and medieval German with influences from other European languages. The first of the songs presented here derives from Ravel's set of *Chants Populaires* [1910], a sort of musical travelogue of folk songs in different ethnic styles. The Kaddish is a traditional prayer said in memory of the dead, though there is no mention of death in the text.

Another group who saw in the long-suffering Hebrew people of the Bible a model of their own travails were the African slaves in the 19th-century American South. All three spirituals on this program express the yearning for victory over oppression and the faith that God would once again restore the disenfranchised to peace and freedom. "Go Down, Moses" in particular became a favorite hymn for the civil rights movement of the 1960's. In many American households, including my family, "Go Down, Moses" is sung at Passover along with the more traditional Jewish songs for the holiday.

Translations

Verdi: *Nabucco*

Dio di Giuda

Ah, I am imprisoned! God of the Hebrews, forgive me!

God of Judah, your sacred altar and temple will rise again. Please, take this great affliction from me, and I will destroy my old idols. You are hearing me; already the clouded mind of the heathen is cleared. Ah, true and omnipotent God, I will praise you forever.

Fatal door, I will open you! I want to save Fenena.

Oh, loyal men, follow me. In my mind, the day is dawning. I burn with an unaccustomed flame. I return as king of the Assyrians. To the thunder of this sword the wicked will fall to the earth. We will see everything gleaming in the sun of my crown.

Ravel: *Chants populaires*

Mejerke, main zuhn

--Meyerke, my son, do you know before whom you stand?

--'Before the King of Kings,' father.

--Meyerke, my son, what will you ask Him for?

--Children, long life, and food, father.

--Meyerke, my son, why should you have children?

--Children study the Torah, father.

--Meyerke, my son, why should you have long life?

--'All that lives sings God's praises,' father.

--Meyerke, my son, why should you have food?

--'You shall eat, you shall be satisfied, you shall bless God,' father.

Ravel: *Deux mélodies hébraïques*

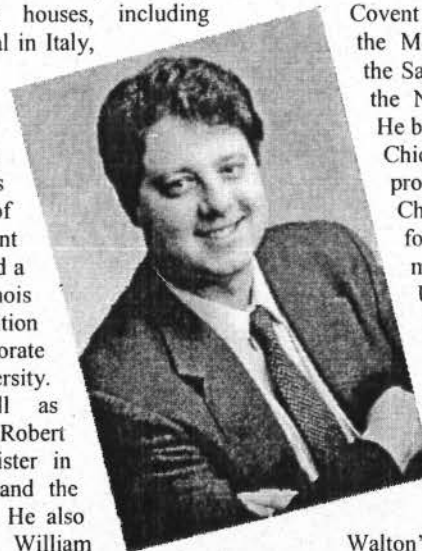
Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified be the great Name as He wills, and may his Kingdom come in your lives and in your days and in the lives of the whole house of Israel swiftly and soon; and let us say: Amen.

Blessed and praised and glorified and raised and exalted and honored and uplifted and lauded be the Name of the Holy One—blessed be He—above all blessings and hymns and praises and consolations that are uttered in the world; and let us say: Amen

About the Artist...

Carl Ratner's first career was as a stage director for opera productions. He learned his craft assisting many noted opera directors, including Gian Carlo Menotti and John Copley, at the world's premiere opera houses, including Covent Garden, the Munich Opera, the Spoleto Festival in Italy, the Metropolitan Opera, the the San Francisco Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the New York City Opera and the Santa Fe Opera. He became Artistic Director of Chamber Opera Chicago in 1985, directing most of that company's productions, and was named Artistic Director of Chicago Opera Theater in 1994. There he has sung for singing began to emerge. In 1999, he earned a master's degree in voice from Northeastern Illinois University and subsequently left his position at Chicago Opera Theater to pursue a doctorate in Vocal Performance at Northwestern University. There he has sung three recitals, as well as performing the opera Ward's version of The Crucible, Mister Mister in Marc Blitzstein's title role in The Cradle Will Rock, and the performed as baritone soloist in William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* with full orchestra and chorus. In the greater Chicago area he has also performed the roles of Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Papageno in *The Magic Flute* and the title role of Gianni Schicchi. His concert work includes the baritone solos in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* as well as the Sacred Service by Ernest Bloch. He recently performed Old American Songs of Aaron Copland and *Dona Nobis Pacem* of Ralph Vaughan Williams with the Cedar Rapids Concert Chorale. Professor Ratner currently holds the position of Director of Opera at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan while finishing his doctorate at Northwestern University. The name of the recital is "Hebrew Heroes" and consists of selections across many genres of great music that have some relationship with the Old Testament. The recital will include, oratorio, opera, song, spirituals and Broadway, composers from Handel to Gershwin. He frequently serves as a guest cantorial soloist for religious services and concerts at Reform Jewish temples in the Chicago area and elsewhere. Dr. Ratner will be accompanied by Susan Brandon.



Pianist Susan Brandon earned her undergraduate degree from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and a Master of Arts and Master of Fine Arts degree in piano performance from the University of Iowa. Professor Brandon joined the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University in 1967 and has performed extensively in faculty recitals on campus, participated in Illinois Wesleyan's Contemporary Music Symposium, performed with the IWU Camerata and presented programs for professional organizations within the community. During sabbatical leaves from the university, Professor Brandon studied piano with the distinguished pianist and teacher, the late Professor Hans Graf, in Vienna, Austria. She and Dr. R. Dwight Drexler recorded a new CD called "The Battle of Prague and Other Parlor Delights." This recording features music by late 18th century Czech composers who were contemporaries of Haydn and Mozart. It is the first ever recording of these works.

Upcoming Events

September

14	Faculty Showcase	CPA Concert Hall	8:00 p.m.
19	Choral Showcase	CPA Concert Hall	3:00 p.m.
19	ISU Symphony Orchestra & Choirs	CPA Concert Hall	7:00 p.m.
26	Wind Symphony	CPA Concert Hall	3:00 p.m.
28	Convocation Concert	CPA Concert Hall	11:00 a.m.
28	Faculty Brass	CPA Concert Hall	8:00 p.m.

October

01	Jazz Ensembles I & II	CPA Concert Hall	8:00 p.m.
03	Chamber Winds	Kemp Recital Hall	3:00 p.m.
04	Guest Artist Series: Mary Tollefson, <i>piano</i>	CPA Concert Hall	8:00 p.m.
05	Linden Duo: Kim Risinger, <i>flute</i> & Angelo Favis, <i>guitar</i>	Kemp Recital Hall	7:30 p.m.
06	Chamber Music for Piano and Strings	Kemp Recital Hall	8:00 p.m.
08	Guest Artist Series: Marcia Spence, <i>horn</i> ; Dan Willett, <i>oboe</i> & Simon Sargon, <i>piano</i>	Kemp Recital Hall	6:00 p.m.
09	Bandarama!	Braden Auditorium	7:30 p.m.
10	Symphonic Winds & Symphonic Band	CPA Concert Hall	3:00 p.m.
12	Faculty Jazz Ensemble	CPA Concert Hall	8:00 p.m.
13	Guest Artist Series: Stephen Aron, <i>guitar</i>	Kemp Recital Hall	7:30 p.m.
16	ISU Invitational Marching Band Championship	Hancock Stadium	Varies
17	ISU Symphony Orchestra & Choirs	CPA Concert Hall	3:00 p.m.

Concert events, locations and times are subject to change.
Some events may charge admission.