



THE SCORE

February 14, 2001

Blacksburg Community Band Newsletter

Meet the Band

Mmeet Ingrid Burbey. She started playing the French horn in the band Christmas of 1999. She has 3 kids and is self-employed. She programs the big green machines in the grocery stores that sell lotto tickets. She is a consultant to several lotteries. So if you have a winning lottery strategy you might check it out with her!



Ingrid Burbey and Miriam Piilonen

Meet Miriam Piilonen. She began playing the bass clarinet in the band in the Fall of 2000. She has 3 cats! She is a seventh grade student at Blacksburg Middle School. She is on the swim team.

Announcements

Music Sorting Party! I've arranged the usual room at the Rec Center for February 25, Sunday, from 1-5. The food theme is Italian. Now let's show some imagination on those hot dishes---don't everybody stop at Hardee's! *Steve*

Upcoming Events

Blacksburg Community Strings (Åke-Eric Renqvist, conductor) will perform music of Sibelius, Grieg, Vivaldi, Bartók and Mendelssohn with guest flute soloist Carolyn Smith on Monday February 19th at 7:30 at the VT Squires Recital Salon. The *Early Music Ensemble* will perform on Sunday February 25th at the VT Squires Recital Salon at 3:00. They will perform *Il Commodo*, a Comedy written to celebrate the wedding of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, to Eleanora de Toledo, in 1539.

Who's this guy Rienzi, and why should I care?

John R. Howell

Rienzi was the last Tribune of Rome, one of six who alternated commanding a Roman Legion of 4-6 thousand men. At least that's who he was in the book by Edward Bulwer Lytton that Richard Wagner was reading in the summer of 1837. Whether he was an historical figure and whether the story had a basis in fact, I leave to the historians. But it hardly matters because when Wagner wrote an historical opera he took as many liberties with the story as Cecil B. DeMille in his 20th century film epics.

Wagner was born in 1813 and at the age of 8 began his lifelong devotion to opera, appearing on stage in *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber. He grew up in Dresden and Leipzig, studied composition, and by 1837 had assisted in the production of many operas—as music director beginning in 1834. His first attempt at composing an opera was so unsatisfactory that

his elder sister convinced him to destroy it, except for an introduction, chorus, and septet that were well received. He decided at that time that only he himself could write the poetry for any opera he wanted to compose, and he did so for the rest of his life. His next three operas were in the German Romantic tradition of von Weber, and the last of these was *Rienzi*.

Rienzi was conceived as a large scale Grand Opera in five acts in the Parisian style that Rossini had established with *William Tell* in 1829. In fact, Wagner hoped for a premier in Paris, but did not get one. Instead, it was premiered at the court theater in Dresden in 1842. It was a triumphant success, and his next opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, was produced the following year, leading to Wagner's appointment as conductor of the Dresden Opera.

Historians looking at Wagner's life see three distinct periods, somewhat obscured because he was almost always working on more than one opera at the same time, and took from a year to as many as 20 years to complete one. The first turning point in his musical concepts was between *Rienzi*, composed between 1837 and 1840 in the German Romantic style, and *The Flying Dutchman*, composed in 1841 but being planned as he was working on *Rienzi*. *Dutchman* is also a German Romantic opera, but in expanded form and with two new musical

concepts that would come to dominate his late operas. Instead of composing individual musical numbers within a scene, he composed entire scenes as continuous musical wholes. And he attached specific musical motives—like the French horn call that opens the opera—to specific people or situations, a concept that would eventually lead to operas constructed almost entirely of the interweaving of these musical "theme songs" or *Leitmotifs*.

Historians knew that the Roman legions used at least three types of brass instruments for ceremonies and military signaling, so it is no surprise that Wagner's score is heavy with important brass themes and motives. Since he always composed the overture last, it's also no surprise that those themes and motives are prominent in the overture, making this work especially well suited to transcription for concert band. From the opening trumpet signals through the battle scenes one can imagine the story unfolding, while the beautiful love theme with its distinctive melodic turns, played by woodwinds and euphoniums and returning in combination with the ceremonial and battle themes, provides both dramatic and musical contrast. For the band musician, in spite of some challenging technical passages, performing this music is a wonderful opportunity to luxuriate in the rich textures of 19th century musical story telling.

SCHEDULE

During the spring, the band meets from 7:30-9:30 in the Blacksburg High School Band Hall. Sometimes particular instruments will meet from 7:00-7:30. The band is currently practicing for the spring concert.

Music Sorting Party: Sunday February 25, 1:00-5:00, at the Rec. Center – Italian Food Pot Luck

Upcoming Concerts:

Spring Concert, April 21

XYZ, Blacksburg Methodist, May 24, 7:00

Peninsula Community Band, Yorktown, July 1

Fourth of July - Radford, July 3

Fourth of July - Blacksburg, July 4

Oak Grove Pavillion - Floyd, July 7

BLACKSBURG COMMUNITY BAND

The Blacksburg Community Band is an all-volunteer community organization formed in 1989 under the auspices of the Town of Blacksburg, Department of Parks and Recreation.

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