NISO Season Kicks Off with Opera Selections  
By Amber Vis  

The Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra will kick off the 2013-2014 concert series with a night to celebrate two of the most important opera composers—Guiseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. These two composers made a huge impression on opera in the 19th century. The fall concert will celebrate the 200th anniversary of these composers.

Both composers were born in 1813. Verdi was an Italian who served as a Senator for some years, and his name became an acronym for a political slogan. He spoke fervently to the people of Italy, and his music was equally passionate.

Wagner was German, and he celebrated the German heritage. He, too, was political, but was a controversial figure. His music is sometimes met with reservation because of its connection with the historical political scene in Germany.

Principal Conductor, Christopher Stanichar is excited about the first concert of the NISO season and the opportunity to hear from two different opera composers.

“It will be an evening full of wonderful music. Most opera music takes hours to listen to. Obviously, we can't go on for hours, so I chose sections of the best and most popular parts of the opera to celebrate these two composers,” Stanichar said.

This concert will feature two soloists. Shannon Salyards is a soprano, and Russell Svenningsen is a tenor. Both soloists will perform some of Verdi’s and Wagner’s most famous opera arias. Salyards is singing one of Stanichar’s favorite pieces, “Isolde’s Love Death” from Tristan and Isolde. Svenningsen is “back by demand” from the concert in April. He is one of Stanichar’s colleagues and a “fantastic tenor.”

In this concert, the audience will get to hear a number of shorter excerpts. The longest will be about fifteen minutes, and the others will be around five to ten minutes.

“This is different than most concerts, where we play full symphonies. This variation is a good way to hear the best that these two composers have written,” Stanichar said.

The Fall Concert will be held in the B.J. Haan Auditorium at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa at 7:30 p.m. on November 12.

Looking Ahead: A Year of Famous Composers  
By Karen DeMol, General Manager  

The NISO 2013-2014 season is titled “The Year of the Composer,” and a wonderful year it will be! But isn’t every year a year of the composer? After all, every year we are indebted to composers for the repertoire we play. This year, however, the entire repertoire is by composers who are the giants of their own time period and style.

The fall concert presents music by Verdi and Wagner, both Romantic period opera greats. 2013 is the 200th anniversary. The spring concert focuses on music by the three famous B’s—Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms—and they deserve their fame. Bach is considered the pinnacle of the Baroque, Beethoven both culminated the Classical era and led into the Romantic period, and Brahms was a master of the rich harmony of Romantic times while harking back to Classic forms. In between these concerts, there will be a guest concert featuring American music with its own unique recognition of composers.

The fall concert, featuring the music of two Romantic period opera giants, is titled “Verdi vs. Wagner.” What's the contest? Christopher Stanichar has chosen pairs of pieces by the two
A Closer Look at Our Musicians
By Amber Vis

The Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra is made up of a variety of members from many different backgrounds and areas. Along with professional musicians, community musicians, and high school students, college students also play an important role in the orchestra. NISO has college students from three area colleges—Northwestern, Dordt, and Augustana. These students all have different majors and interests. Let’s get to know three of these students: Rebekah Stofer, Emily Wehde, and Leanna Bentz.

Rebekah Stofer

Rebekah Stofer is a senior majoring in music performance at Northwestern College. She is from Dewitt, Iowa, and this is her second year in NISO. She participates in NISO by playing the French horn, which she has been playing for eight or nine years. Her favorite part of NISO is “the challenging music” and the people in her section.

Emily Wehde has been playing the trombone for ten years. She is from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and attends Augustana College where she is a junior majoring in biology and Spanish. This is her second year with NISO. Emily said that she loves “the opportunity to be able to build upon my talents as a trombonist by playing alongside so many other gifted musicians.”

Leanna Bentz is from Platte, South Dakota. She has been playing the harp since the fifth grade, and this is her third year in NISO. She also plays the euphonium outside of the orchestra. Leanna is a junior at Dordt College majoring in K-12 musical education (choral and instrumental). “My favorite part of NISO is the opportunity to experience orchestral literature, since I have spent much more time playing in a band than an orchestra. The chance to be a part of music like that is really priceless, I think,” Leanna said.

Part of NISO’s success is the involvement of diverse members. We appreciate the talents and contributions that these three musicians and their college peers bring to NISO.