

Santa Barbara Symphony World Premiere

## Christian Carrara's *Machpelah: Dialog for Violin, Cello & Orchestra*

**A** **WORLD PREMIERE** is always an occasion for celebration and on Saturday, January 16th at 8pm and Sunday, January 17th at 3pm the Santa Barbara Symphony will present Italian composer Christian Carrara's homage to historic Jewish couples, the world premiere of *Machpelah: Dialog for Violin, Cello and Orchestra*, featuring soloists Francesca Dego, violin and Robert deMaine, cello. "The recurrent theme throughout this rich program is dialog, musical and otherwise," explained Maestro Nir Kabaretti, who will conduct the premiere,

### DANIEL KEPL MUSIC INTERVIEW

together with works by Handel (*Water Music*), Gabrieli (*Symphoniae sacrae*), and Bartok (*Concerto for Orchestra*). "We have the privilege of premiering a work by one of Italy's leading composers that is in essence a dialog between cultures through two soloists."

Carrara agreed to answer a few questions leading up to the premiere.

**CASA:** Who inspired you to make music, and especially composition, a lifelong career?

**Christian Carrara:** I started writing music at age 12 or so. I come from a simple family, not rich. We had an old piano at home, and playing it became my favorite game. I soon began improvising, then I learned to write music. Music literally saved my life.

**CASA:** How did the Conservatory of music Jacopo Tomadini in Udine, Italy, influence you?

**Carrara:** I learned musical composition and orchestration techniques in Udine. There I studied the scores of the great composers, which is the best way to learn the art of composing. The scores of Bach, Brahms, Strauss, and others

contain a great many musical mysteries. Discovering these mysteries is slow and patient work.

**CASA:** Where and how did you meet Maestro Nir Kabaretti?

**Carrara:** I met Maestro Kabaretti in Rome. At the time he was conducting *The Nutcracker* at the Rome Opera House. I proposed to him my idea of writing a double concerto dedicated to couples and love. He liked the idea very much. It's the first time I've worked with him and I'm very excited. He is a fantastic musician.

**CASA:** Have you worked previously with the soloists for this world premiere, violinist Francesca Dego and cellist Robert deMaine?

**Carrara:** It's my first time working with Robert deMaine, and I'm honored to work with him. Francesca Dego is one of the best Italian violinists, and I've had the opportunity to collaborate with her on several occasions. When I finished writing *Machpelah*, I sent the score to Francesca and Robert and asked if they had suggestions to improve the score. I'm not a violinist or cellist, so such input is very important to me.

**CASA:** This joint presentation of your new piece is between the SB Symphony and Toscanini Philharmonic. How did the opportunity develop? Will your piece be recorded?

**Carrara:** The Toscanini Philharmonic will debut *Machpelah* during the 2015/16 season. It's one of the best Italian symphony orchestras, and I'm really happy to collaborate with such fantastic musicians. When I proposed to the artistic board the concept of *Machpelah* and the idea of a joint presentation with the Santa Barbara Symphony, they were very interested in the project. I'm not sure if it will be recorded.

**CASA:** What are some of the reference points for your new work, *Machpelah*?

**Carrara:** *Machpelah* is the Hebrew name for the

Cave of the Patriarchs, the place in the heart of the old city of Hebron in Israel's West Bank where there are the double tombs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah, considered to be the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Jewish people. Inspired by this place, my double concerto is a hymn about love between men and women. In this work, the solo violin and cello in effect discuss love. I wanted to celebrate the eternity of love, but also highlight the possibility of peace, of dialogue, between cultures and religions, especially in this time of conflict. Love can defeat fear.

**CASA:** If the cello and violin soloists, who are in *dialog* with each other throughout the piece, represent Abraham and Sarah, what are the discussions/dialogues between them about?

**Carrara:** The titles of the concerto's four movements well explain my intentions: I. The cave; II. I dance with my wife; III. The secrets of eternity; and IV. Men. Women. I believe that love is a cave to be illuminated, a dance, and a secret to be guarded. In my double concerto I hope you can find the elements of life: joy, sadness, the search for quiet.

**CASA:** Do you consider this work a double concerto in the manner of Brahms?

**Carrara:** Dialog is the musical form of this concerto. The whole structure of this piece is dialogic. I have not used a classic musical form. A dialog is more flexible. The violin listens to the cello and answers his questions. In a dialog there is total freedom of expression. So *Machpelah* is not in the manner of Brahms, but in the manner of two people talking, listening, and telling.

**CASA:** How does inspiration come to you?

**Carrara:** I start to think about a new piece when an idea strikes me. It then slowly becomes a musical idea, which develops only with much technique and patience.

Music is born in silence, often when one is



Courtesy Photo

**Christian Carrara**

grappling with a question of some significance. The history of music teaches us that the greatest musical masterpieces are usually born when a composer is trying to answer the deepest questions about the meaning of life.

Tickets (\$28-\$133) are available at 899-2222 or by visiting [www.granadasb.org](http://www.granadasb.org).

The Concert Sponsor for this performance is Robert Weber. Selection Sponsors are Richard Willie and Catherine Clark. This project is funded in part by the Organizational Development Grant Program using funds provided by the City of Santa Barbara in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission.

**Daniel Kepl** has been writing music, theatre, and dance reviews for Santa Barbara publications since he was a teenager. His professional expertise is as an orchestra conductor.

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