

# Symphony Family Celebrates 66th Season Opening

**F**AMILY STYLE ITALIANO, an exquisite meal in the Miller McCune Founders Room was the warm and friendly beginning for the Santa Barbara Symphony's 66th season titled *Festa Italiana*, with Anne Smith Towbes, Honorary Board Member, the host at the pre-concert gathering. "We wanted to introduce this new concept about symphony supporters being a family and Nir suggested we have a meal focused on Italian Music... Everyone said, 'That's perfect,' then Anne said, 'Let's make it family style.' And here we are sitting down together," stated Kevin Marvin, President and CEO of the Symphony, as he welcomed guests to the event.

Individual service and passing platters of Italian food around the table, created a memorable family atmosphere, with Chef Renato of Via Maestra 42 personally serving guests.

Joined by Maestro Nir Kabaretti, Marvin celebrated and honored three board members into a new group called Board member Emeritus: Patricia Gregory, Gillian Launie, and Arthur Swalley. Several Honorary Board Members were also honored for their service and named including: David Chernof, Jim Franzen, Natalie Myerson, Marilyn Sullivan, and Anne Smith Towbes. For information about the symphony visit [www.thesymphony.org](http://www.thesymphony.org) or 805-899-2222.



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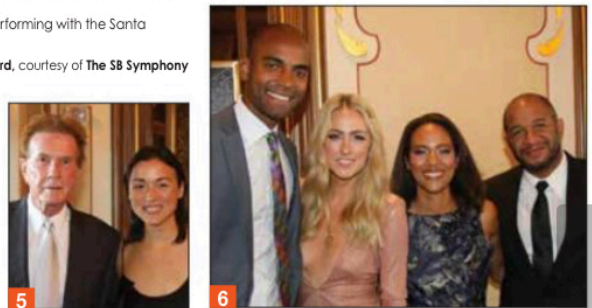


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1 Maestro Nir Kabaretti and Honorary Board Member Anne Smith Towbes  
2 Honorary Board Members: Anne Smith Towbes, Natalie Myerson, CEO Kevin Marvin, Jim Franzen, and Marilyn Sullivan.  
3 Mandy Hochman and Symphony Board Member Daniel Hochman

4 Emeritus Board Member Gillian Launie with Symphony Board Member Dan Burnham and Meg Burnham  
5 Chris Lancashire and Catherine Gee  
6 Board Member Alan Mask and Carly Mask, with guests Sydney Batch and Patrick Williams  
7 The Symphony Team: Percy Sales, Warren Giles,

Kim Kebler, Kevin Marvin, Mike Mariano, Loribeth Gregory-Peck, Anais Pellegrini, Margaret Williams, and Christina Davis  
8 Francesca DeGo performing with the Santa Barbara Symphony  
Photos by Barron Spafford, courtesy of The SB Symphony



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## Santa Barbara Symphony - Review

# Festa Italiana – molto bello!

By Daniel Kepl / VOICE

**P**RE-CURTAIN CHAMPAGNE flowed generously, the opening night crowd buzzed in happy fraternity, even the orchestra looked younger at last Saturday night's launch of the first pair of weekend concerts at the Granada Theatre to open the Santa Barbara Symphony's 2019-2020 season, it's 66th. The ensemble's affable maestro, Nir Kabaretti had assembled a program – *Festa Italiana!* – which erred cheerfully on the side of pure entertainment. Verdi's *Overture to La Forza del Destino*; Nicolo Paganini's insanely fun and hugely difficult *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 6* with Italian virtuosa Francesca DeGo, and after intermission, Mendelssohn's puckish take on the Italians, his *Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90 (Italian)* and Tchaikovsky's magnificently Italo-czarist *Capriccio Italien, Op. 45*.

Conducting entirely from memory with the exception of the Paganini concerto – a field of landmines for soloist and conductor alike requiring a good road map – Kabaretti opened the program with a complicated comfort piece, the *Overture to Giuseppe Verdi's 1862 opera La Forza del Destino*. Audience members not aware previously of Kabaretti's extensive and continuing conducting career at the opera houses of Rome, Milan, Florence, and elsewhere around the world, were set straight immediately as the maestro wasted no time and spared not the rod in leading a taught, authoritative, stylish, moody, fast, and furious performance. The orchestra, God bless them one and all, followed Kabaretti's gutsy tempi, navigating the composer's sometimes nightmarish avalanches of notes with an aplomb bred of their own extensive professional experience; the cherished war horse snorted fire and popped with energy. Nice, very nice.

In 2008 London-based violinist Francesca DeGo became the first Italian female prize-winner at the Genoa Paganini Competition. She hasn't looked back since. Her violin, a Francesco Ruggeri (Cremona 1697) produces an intoxicatingly rich tone and because of its extraordinary sonority, also enables a wide range of colors that facilitate the encyclopedic cornucopia of fiddle effects and affectations that were Nicolo Paganini's (1782-1840) calling card and earned him the adoration of audiences throughout Europe as the most celebrated violin virtuoso

of his time. The three movements of his *Violin Concerto No. 1* are among the most difficult solo challenges in the repertoire. Essentially one gigantic cadenza, the concerto is chock-o-block with episodes and asides, a baker's dozen at least of finger-twisting double stops, harmonics, spiccati, pizzicati, and other visually dazzling bow and fingering effects meant to blow the minds of listeners and warn lesser talents to stay away. DeGo played the concerto with consistently perfect intonation and spectacular technical wizardry. Kabaretti and the orchestra accompanied adroitly. For encore DeGo offered nothing less than the *B-flat Major Capriccio No. 13 (Devil's Laughter)*.

Santa Barbara Symphony Principal Cello Trevor Handy opened the second half of the program with a lovely tribute to cellist Geoffrey Rutkowski, Principal Cello of the orchestra from 1968 to 2011, who passed in July. An elegantly simple performance by Handy of the *Sarabande* from Bach's *Cello Suite No. 1* gave those many in the audience who knew Geoff an opportunity to reflect before a high-octane performance of Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 4 in A Major (Italian)*. The orchestra has a fresh, younger look this season after a summer of auditions and placements. An important aspect of maestro Kabaretti's job description is to continually elevate the standard of the orchestra's personnel and the new hires for 2019-2020 did not disappoint, making their presence and virtuosity known immediately, with a sublimely effortless and fleet-footed performance of Mendelssohn's sunny masterpiece.

Topping off the evening was Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien, Op. 45* in a razzle-dazzle reading that found all sections of the orchestra – strings, winds, brass and percussion – in excellent voice. Without compromise, Kabaretti pushed tempi, shaped imagery, and forged narratives of sound that quickened the pulse and pumped up expectations for the season ahead. Sending everyone home with an Italian standard that says it all, was a magnificent arrangement of *Funiculi Funicula*.



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

For more reviews by Daniel Kepl visit: [www.performingartsreview.net](http://www.performingartsreview.net)