

March 3, 2022 – Antonio Vivaldi's *Catone in Utica*

On **Bob Chapman's** final broadcast as host of the *Thursday Night Opera House*, he's pleased to present Vivaldi's *Catone in Utica* (*Cato in Utica*), the culmination of the composer's long and tumultuous operatic career. Set to one of Pietro Metastasio's earliest libretti, which he originally wrote for Leonardo Vinci, it premiered at Verona's Teatro Filarmonico in May of 1737. Tonight we welcome **Jay Pierson** as only the fourth host of the Opera House, which was hosted by **Al Ruocchio** for 27 years, followed for a year by **Robert Galbraith**. For the past 13 years, Mr. Chapman has been the host.

The three-act opera unfolds during the culmination of the civil wars that ended the Roman Republic, as Julius Caesar (male soprano **Jacek Laszczkowski**) moves toward Utica in northern Africa and confrontation with Cato (tenor **Simon Edwards**), the last holdout against Rome's new dictator. Caesar has killed his rival Pompey and taken over Rome. Pompey's widow Emilia (soprano **Verónica Cangemi**)'s hatred for Caesar keeps everyone's feelings toward him inflamed and she tries to manipulate his death. Cato's daughter Marzia (soprano **Liliana Faraon**) loves Caesar, but he wants her to marry his ally Arbace (male alto **Philippe Jaroussky**). After Cato's army is defeated, Caesar spares Cato's life in order to gain Marzia's love. Emilia leaves in disgrace after swearing revenge, Arbace is unhappy but realizes that the outcome is good for the Roman Empire, and peace returns.

Jean-Claude Malgoire conducts La Grande Ecurie and the Chambre du Roy in this 2001 Dynamic recording, CD number 403.

As a bonus, we'll hear mezzo-soprano **Cecilia Bartoli** sing arias from three other Vivaldi operas: *Dorilla in Tempe*, *Griselda*, and *Farnace*. **Giovanni Antonini** conducts Il Gardina Armonico and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir in this 1999 Decca Classics recording.