

CHAN 3033(2)



MASSENET

WERTHER

CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH

MASSENET WERTHER

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



AKG

Jules Massenet, c. 1885

Jules Massenet (1842–1912)

Werther

Lyric drama in four acts and five scenes after Goethe

Libretto by Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet and Georges Hartmann

English translation by Norman Tucker

Recorded live by the BBC at the London Coliseum on 13 December 1977

Werther, a young poet	John Brecknock <i>tenor</i>
Albert, a young man	Patrick Wheatley <i>baritone</i>
The Magistrate.....	Harold Blackburn <i>bass</i>
Charlotte, the Magistrate's daughter.....	Dame Janet Baker <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Sophie, her sister.....	Joy Roberts <i>soprano</i>
Johann, friend of the Magistrate	John Tomlinson <i>bass</i>
Schmidt, friend of the Magistrate	Terry Jenkins <i>tenor</i>
Brühlmann, a young man	Nigel Waugh <i>baritone</i>
Käthchen, a young woman.....	Janice Andrew <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
The Magistrate's other children:	
Hans	Fergus Reid
Karl	David King-Lassman
Max	Sam Monck
Gretel.....	Jessica Morris
Clara	Susan Busby
Fritz.....	Andrew Sheldon

Extras: A young countryman, a servant, townspeople of Wetzlar, guests, village musicians

English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Peter Kay children's adviser

Sir Charles Mackerras

COMPACT DISC ONE

	Time	Page
[1] Prelude	4:27	74
Act I		
[2] 'Enough! Enough!' <i>The Magistrate, the Children</i>	1:49	74
[3] 'Bravo, to all the choir!' <i>Johann, Schmidt, the Children, the Magistrate, Sophie</i>	5:23	75
[4] 'And so, is this the house where the Magistrate lives?' <i>Werther</i>	2:17	77
[5] 'O fair Nature, great is your bounty' <i>Werther, the Children</i>	3:27	77
[6] 'Charlotte! Charlotte!' <i>Hans, Karl, Max, Gretel, Clara, Fritz, Charlotte, the Magistrate</i>	2:56	78
[7] 'Brühlmann, do come along!' <i>The Magistrate, Brühlmann, Käthchen, Charlotte, Werther, Sophie</i>	1:57	79
[8] 'O sweet vision, ideal of love and of devotion' <i>Werther, the Magistrate, Charlotte</i>	1:41	80
[9] 'Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!' <i>The Magistrate, Sophie</i>	1:29	80
[10] 'Sophie! 'Albert! So you've returned?' <i>Albert, Sophie</i>	2:35	81
[11] 'Feelings of deepest thankfulness and love' <i>Albert</i>	1:35	82

	Time	Page
[12] [Moonlight]	0:40	82
[13] 'And so we two must part' <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	3:58	82
[14] 'But, you know nothing of me' <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	0:43	83
[15] 'Alas, yes, they are mine' <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	3:08	83
[16] 'Visions of rapture and joy!' <i>Werther, Charlotte</i>	1:45	83
[17] 'Charlotte! Charlotte! Albert has returned!' <i>The Magistrate, Charlotte, Werther</i>	2:06	84
Act II		
[18] [Prelude:] The Lindens	1:20	84
[19] 'Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat! This is Sunday!' <i>Johann, Schmidt</i>	1:59	84
[20] 'Come on, let's sing the office' <i>Schmidt, Johann</i>	2:41	85
[21] 'Three months!' <i>Albert, Charlotte</i>	2:31	85
[22] 'Another! Another's wife!' <i>Werther</i>	1:15	86

	Time	Page
[23] 'These arms would now be holding' <i>Werther</i>	1:41	86
[24] 'Yes, Käthchen will come back, I am sure' <i>Schmidt, Johann, Albert, Werther</i>	1:45	86
[25] 'But she to whom I now am married' <i>Albert, Werther</i>	2:49	87
[26] 'Brother, look here' <i>Sophie, Werther, Albert</i>	3:14	87
[27] 'Was I not right?' <i>Werther, Charlotte</i>	1:58	88
[28] 'Ah, how far off that day' <i>Werther, Charlotte</i>	1:38	88
[29] 'Is there no other young girl in this place...?' <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	3:36	89
[30] 'Yes, all that she commands me' <i>Werther</i>	1:51	89
[31] 'When any son returns to his home' <i>Werther</i>	1:51	90
[32] 'Do come along. The procession is starting' <i>Sophie, Werther, Charlotte, Albert</i>	1:45	90

TT 73:56

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

	Time	Page
[1] [Prelude:] <i>Charlotte and Werther</i>	2:59	91
[2] 'Werther!... Ah, Werther!' <i>Charlotte</i>	1:57	91
[3] "Here in my room I'm writing you this letter" <i>Charlotte</i>	1:37	92
[4] "The children's happy cries" <i>Charlotte</i>	3:36	92
[5] 'Charlotte, good-day' <i>Sophie, Charlotte</i>	1:32	92
[6] 'Ah! Yes, laughter's a gift' <i>Sophie, Charlotte</i>	1:57	93
[7] 'Ah! Now let my tears flow freely' <i>Charlotte</i>	2:19	93
[8] 'Now, Charlotte, I'm sure, you should not be alone' <i>Sophie, Charlotte</i>	2:09	93
[9] 'Ah! I am losing all my courage!' <i>Charlotte</i>	1:52	94
[10] 'Werther! Ah!' <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	5:36	94

		Time	Page
[11]	“Why rouse me from my sleep...?” <i>Werther</i>	2:04	96
[12]	‘Do not go on!’ <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	2:47	96
[13]	‘Ah! I! I! In his arm!’ <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	2:42	97
[14]	‘So Werther has returned...’ <i>Albert, Charlotte</i>	3:15	98

Act IV

[15]	Scene 1: Christmas Eve	4:12	99
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Scene 2: The Death of Werther

[16]	‘Werther! Ah, Werther!’ <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	4:33	99
[17]	‘In this last hour of life I am truly bless’d’ <i>Werther, Charlotte</i>	4:40	101
[18]	‘Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!’ <i>The Children, Charlotte, Werther, Sophie</i>	1:40	101
[19]	‘Ah! His eyes are closing’ <i>Charlotte, Werther</i>	0:59	102
[20]	‘...yes, but hear what I ask’ <i>Werther, Charlotte, the Children</i>	3:38	103

TT 56:04



Sir Charles Mackerras

Clive Barda

Jules Massenet: Werther

Massenet is still frowned on by 'superior' persons: for instance, he has still not been accorded a volume in the 'Master Musicians' series, successive editors having failed to take him seriously as a composer worthy of considered comment. Whereas among French composers Berlioz, who for all his revolutionary notions had little idea how to shape an opera, is lauded to the skies, his near-contemporary, who was a genius of stagecraft and musical timing, is often treated as second-rate. In fact Massenet was not only a theatre person to his fingertips, he also knew about the human heart and understood as well as any opera composer the psyche of women. Throughout his long career writing for the theatre, and nowhere more so than with Charlotte in *Werther*, he created heroines with whom his audiences instinctively empathise: Manon, Thaïs, Hérodiade, Cendrillon, Sapho, Esclarmonde...

Where his music is concerned, the works he composed for the Opéra-Comique evince a scrupulously conversational style so that, in spite of their inspired musical content, they can be considered plays set to music. His realisation that every nuance in a singer's part was of

importance led him to litter his scores with expressive marks that are of the essence in projecting the character and meaning of the vocal line. His interpreters ignore them at their peril. Closely allied as these vocal parts are to the French language, it is essential to understand all the verbal and vocal detail if performing the piece for a British audience in the vernacular is to serve its intended purpose. When the translation is as natural as the one heard in this performance, that purpose is served beautifully. Given that the work is sung in English, how vital it then is that the words should be heard: as I recall in the theatre, a memory confirmed on hearing this recording, the present cast – unlike some of its successors at the London Coliseum – enunciate the text with clarity and gratifying awareness of its inflections.

That text is derived from Goethe's autobiographical novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) written in the form of letters. It was most skilfully adapted for the stage by Massenet's librettists. By the time of its composition in 1886–7 Massenet was reaching the height of

his powers. The improvement in his technique over *Manon* (1884), at one time more popular than *Werther* but – rightly – now no longer so, is self-evident. The two works may have a superficial similarity in that both are concerned with loves that are doomed, but *Werther* deals with the subject on a much deeper level, both musically and psychologically. From the opening bars alone, for example, we know that the hero's obsessive infatuation with Charlotte will come to an unhappy end. Massenet had also learnt to deal in a much more sophisticated manner with leading motives, which recur in different forms throughout a score seamlessly woven from beginning to end and, incidentally, full of subtly orchestrated detail.

Massenet provides an arresting contrast between the apparent contentment of bourgeois life at the Magistrate's house, its domestic surroundings and moral certainties expressed basically in diatonic and jaunty terms, and the ecstasy and agony of Werther's love and Charlotte's emotional turmoil, harmonically more complex. All Werther's music is couched in passionate terms, always expressive of his poetic sensibility and the wild emotions tormenting him within. Massenet describes these in a series of impassioned and/or

reflective outbursts. The romantic hero often 'speaks' in metaphor, as in his impassioned paean to nature in Act I and his meditation on suicide in Act II, or – as in the Ossian Song of Act III – allows his feelings to be shown through the reading of another's words.

Charlotte is even more interesting as a character. She is a complex woman torn between duty and inner passion: indeed it is surely Werther who arouses those inner, erotic feelings that so differ from the ones inspired by the dry conformity of her husband Albert. Unlike Werther, she develops hugely through the course of the opera. The surface calm of the first two acts, where she is more mother than young woman (having to look after her widowed father's younger children), is replaced in Act III, the opera's most cogent, by the turmoil and anxiety caused by her feelings towards Werther. These are further highlighted by the reading of his letters, in which he touches on his longing and loneliness.

Massenet perfectly adumbrates that scene in vocal and instrumental terms, then follows it with the unleashing of all Charlotte's conflicting emotions in the succeeding 'Air des larmes' (which one might translate as 'The Tears') and her Prayer. These are themselves succeeded by Werther's return on the dot of

Christmas Eve, as predicated by Charlotte when she banished him in Act II. After the Ossian Song he forces her, not exactly against her will, to confess her love. In the final scene, after Werther has shot himself with one of the pistols given him by Charlotte's husband, the lovers recall the past, Charlotte now wholly part of his psyche, while the ordinary world outside is depicted through the sound of happy Christmas songs.

Albert's is a short part but a significant one. The simple, stodgy figure of Act I becomes the worried husband of Act II and the embittered man of Act III who orders his wife to hand over the weapons that will become the vehicle of her lover's suicide. Even the comparatively uncomplicated Sophie moves from the carefree young girl of the first two acts to the worried teenager of Act III. The old Magistrate (Le Bailli in the original French) serves his purpose as the cosy, wordly-wise father-figure in Act I who epitomises bourgeois values. The cameo roles of Johann and Schmidt, friends of the Magistrate, add a further element of contrast to the lovers.

The work did not have an easy start in life. The Opéra-Comique turned it down in 1887 as being too lugubrious. For four years it remained in the composer's drawer. When the

composer scored a success at Vienna's Hofoper in 1890 with *Manon*, the management asked for another piece. *Werther* was then resuscitated and given its highly successful premiere on 16 February 1892. The Belgian heroic tenor van Dyck took the title part and Massenet added the Act II 'Désolation' ('Another! Another's wife!'), a forceful solo to suit him. Subsequently the opera made steady progress in German-speaking countries: somewhat surprisingly, for Gounod's *Faust*, which there was always named *Margarethe* as if to indicate that it wasn't really worthy of Goethe's masterpiece, had been treated rather cautiously. Not so *Werther*: it was considered reasonably faithful to the original, which had been regarded as romanticism incarnate when it was published in 1774. The novel focuses almost exclusively on the hero of the title, with Charlotte the remote object of his obsession. Massenet and his librettists realised that they must bring her to the fore in order that there be two almost equal principals. These could then be given the extensive duets that lie at the heart of the music drama. Charlotte's common sense is an appreciable foil to Werther's poetic fancies and posturings; at least until eventually she has become a part of his life and – too late – gives herself to him. The ensuing tragedy is

therefore as much hers as it is his and one wonders afterwards what her remaining existence as a dutiful wife to Albert must have been like.

Werther finally reached the Opéra-Comique in 1893, but it was a revival ten years later that established its popularity in France. For the next half century it was sung by all the noted French artists of the era. The title part has been taken by both lyric tenors such as Charles Friant, a great singing actor, and Tito Schipa and by heavier tenors like Georges Thill, who can be heard on the first recording of the work. In the last half of the twentieth century notable tenors such as Alfredo Kraus, a lyric interpreter, and Plácido Domingo, José Carreras and Roberto Alagna have assumed the role. Similarly Charlotte has been attempted by lyric sopranos such as Ninon Vallin (also on that first recording) and Victoria de los Angeles and by dramatic mezzos such as Dame Janet Baker here. Massenet apparently wanted a soprano, Rose Caron, as his first French Charlotte. However, the role was eventually given to Marie Delna, a mezzo, so from the beginning it has been shared by two types of singers. Much more important than type of singer is the need for each interpreter of the leading roles to identify

with their parts, something the performance under consideration makes manifest.

This live recording derives from the first revival of an exceedingly successful production at English National Opera in 1977. John Copley's imaginative and evocative staging (so superior to the one that, unhappily, replaced it a decade or so later) was lavishly praised. That visual experience cannot be recalled in a recording, but Charles Mackerras's gloriously idiomatic conducting is there to be enjoyed throughout, as is the convincing contribution of the English National Opera Orchestra of the time. The shaping and timing of the score is faultless from beginning to end.

With Janet Baker available for Charlotte, one of her most successful roles, the performance could hardly go wrong. In pristine voice she conveys every aspect of the complex character. Contained and sympathetic as the seemingly conventional Charlotte of Acts I and II she turns in a reading of tragic force in Act III where the Letters, Tears and Prayers are made part of a convincing whole, and she catches all the despair of Act IV when Charlotte attempts to comfort the dying Werther. Throughout, as one would expect of her, she conveys the English text with an unerring sense of its inner meaning,

underlining words and lightening and darkening her keen tone as the situation demands. A fair example of her mastery comes just after Werther returns on Christmas Eve in Act III. The two of them contemplate the room in which they had conversed months ago and recall their happy times together. In a phrase which each repeats, Charlotte points out that 'Ev'rything is still here in the place where you knew it'. Janet Baker sings the phrase with a gentle intimacy, a poised line that goes to the heart of the matter. A few minutes later Werther succeeds in breaking down Charlotte's reserve: Baker's outpouring of passion is spontaneous and emphatic, immediately followed by her horror at the realisation of what she has just done. That is only the climax of an interpretation of rare distinction, now happily preserved for posterity.

John Brecknock is just as adept as his partner in projecting his words so you hardly need the libretto before you. Without ever disturbing his keen line and secure phrasing he lets us hear all the desperation of Werther. He rises to the challenge of the more impassioned moments but sings sweetly in the more reflective ones. Patrick Wheatley's firm, rounded tone and line are just what the role of Albert calls for. Joy Roberts makes a

delightfully fresh Sophie, singing both her charming airs with right insouciance. Harold Blackburn was an English National Opera (formerly Sadler's Wells) favourite for more than twenty years. His Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier* was much admired around the time he presented this delightful cameo of the contented Magistrate. The young John Tomlinson makes his mark as Johann. Altogether this is as satisfying a souvenir as one could wish for of the Harewood/Mackerras era at the English National Opera.

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Synopsis

The action takes place in Wetzlar, near Frankfurt, towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Act I

A July evening. The garden of the Magistrate's house

The Magistrate, a widower, is teaching his children to sing a Christmas carol, and their progress is watched with amusement by two neighbours, Schmidt and Johann. They ask after Charlotte, the eldest daughter, and hear that she, like the other young people of

Wetzlar, is preparing for a local dance that evening. Werther, a serious youth of whom the Magistrate approves but whom the neighbours find uncongenial, will escort her. The conversation turns to Albert who is due to return soon to claim Charlotte as his bride as she promised her mother to marry him. Then the two friends invite the Magistrate to supper at the Inn and depart to build up an appetite.

Werther arrives rhapsodising about the beauty of the evening and watches, unseen, as Charlotte cuts bread and butter for the children's supper. He is welcomed by the Magistrate who explains that, since his wife died, Charlotte has been a second mother to her young brothers and sisters. When the party for the ball has left, Sophie tells her father to join his friends at the Inn. Thus neither Charlotte nor her father is at home when Albert unexpectedly returns. He tells Sophie how he hoped to surprise them and about his love for Charlotte. He leaves promising to return in the morning.

The dancers return. Werther has fallen in love with Charlotte but his declaration is cut short by the Magistrate's voice announcing Albert's return. Charlotte assures Werther that she had until that moment forgotten she was

promised to Albert, and Werther, heartbroken, urges her not to break her word.

Act II

A Sunday afternoon the following September.

Outside the church

Johann and Schmidt are drinking outside the Inn, while the Pastor celebrates his Golden Wedding anniversary in the church. Albert, now married to Charlotte, sings of his happiness: Werther, seeing them together, despairs because she can never be his. Albert tells him how sad he is that Werther's affection for his wife was aroused before he knew she was betrothed but Werther assures him that he now feels only friendship for them both; were it otherwise, he would leave Wetzlar forever. Sophie gaily attempts to divert the pensive men and Albert suggests that Werther should turn his attention to her. Werther confesses to himself that his suffering is not over. He begs Charlotte to remember the evening of the dance but she refuses to admit her feelings for him and, when he persists, orders him to leave the town and return only on Christmas Eve. Werther contemplates death as the solution to his misery and tells Sophie that he is going away forever. Albert realises that Werther is still in love with Charlotte.

Act III

Christmas Eve: five o'clock. Albert's house

In Albert's absence, Charlotte re-reads Werther's letters. Sophie arrives with an invitation to visit her father and family, and she redoubles her entreaties when Charlotte begins to weep at the mention of Werther's name. Charlotte promises to come and then, alone once more, prays for strength to withstand her love for a man who is not her husband. Werther appears at the door. Charlotte pretends to be merely glad at his return and asks him to read his translation of Ossian as he used to do. Werther chooses the passage where the poet foresees his own death and Charlotte begs him to stop. He realises that she loves him and embraces her. Horrified, she cries that they must never meet again and Werther resolves to kill himself. Albert enters, surprised to find Charlotte distraught. Werther's servant brings a message requesting the loan of Albert's pistols for he is 'leaving on a far-off journey'. From her reactions, Albert realises that Charlotte returns Werther's love: he makes her hand over the pistols herself. Charlotte hurries after the servant, filled with anxiety and remorse.

Act IV

Later that night. Werther's study

Charlotte discovers Werther mortally wounded. She declares her love and he begs her forgiveness. He dies as the sound of children's voices singing the Christmas carol is heard in the distance.

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Born near Nottingham, the tenor **John Brecknock** studied at the Birmingham School of Music and with Denis Dowling. He joined Sadler's Wells (later English National) Opera where his many roles have included Don Ottavio, Belmonte, Ferrando, Count Ory, Almaviva (*The Barber of Seville*), Alfredo, des Grieux (*Manon*), Tamino, the Duke (Johann Strauss II's *A Night in Venice*) and Werther in addition to appearances in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Merry Widow* and *The Thieving Magpie*. His roles for The Royal Opera, Covent Garden have included Fenton (*Falstaff*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Iopas (*Les Troyens*) and Gennaro (*Lucrezia Borgia*). He has also sung with Welsh National Opera. Abroad his engagements have included *Don Giovanni* in New York (The Metropolitan Opera), Ottawa and Buenos Aires; *Die Zauberflöte* in New York

(The Metropolitan Opera), New Orleans and Ottawa; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in San Francisco, Miami and Vienna; *La Cenerentola* in Paris (the Opéra), Buenos Aires and Cape Town; *Werther* in Rouen, Buenos Aires and San Diego; *La traviata* in Cape Town and Ottawa; *Les Pêcheurs de perles* in Rouen and Paris; as well as *Le Comte Ory* in Ottawa, *Rigoletto* in Houston and *Falstaff* in Miami. His recordings include Offenbach's *Robinson Crusoe* for Opera Rara and *La traviata* for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

The baritone **Patrick Wheatley** took lessons with a local singing teacher in Leicestershire before winning a Peter Stuyvesant Scholarship to the London Opera Centre. He joined English National Opera in 1974 where he has sung a variety of roles including Haly (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), Count des Grieux and de Brétigny (*Manon*), Schaunard (*La bohème*), Sharpless and Yamadori (*Madam Butterfly*), Germont (*La traviata*), Albert (*Werther*), Donner (*The Rhinegold*), Vladislav (Smetana's *Dalibor*), Goryanshikov (Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*), Fabrizio (*The Thieving Magpie*) and John Sorel (Menotti's *The Consul*). He has also performed with Opera North (Manz in Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet*)

and New Opera Company (Beggar in Martinů's *Julietta*).

Born in Hamilton, Scotland, **Harold Blackburn** studied privately in Glasgow and in 1948, after a season with the Carl Rosa Opera, became a member of the chorus of Sadler's Wells (later English National) Opera where he soon made his mark in small parts and later rose to the rank of principal bass. Equally adept at serious and comic roles, he was noted for his freshly conceived interpretations and keen concentration on the text. His numerous successes included Don Pasquale, Mustafa (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), the mayor Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*), the Tutor (*Le Comte Ory*), Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Colline (*La bohème*), Count des Grieux (*Manon*) and the Magistrate (*Werther*) as well as Osmin, Sarastro, Plunkett (Flotow's *Martha*), Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*), Daland (*The Flying Dutchman*), Fasolt (*The Rhinegold*), Hunding (*The Valkyrie*) and Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). He tackled many contemporary roles, among them Father Barré in *The Devils of Loudun* (Penderecki), William Humpage in *A Penny for a Song* and Sherrin in *The Mines of Sulphur* (both by Sir Richard Rodney Bennett). He made several guest appearances with

Scottish Opera, Welsh Opera and the English Opera Group with which he toured Canada, Japan and Australia and where he is specially remembered for his Mr Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera*. Harold Blackburn died in 1981.

Dame Janet Baker has appeared with the world's most distinguished conductors and orchestras and has recorded for all the major record companies. She was born in Yorkshire and began studying with Helene Isepp and later Meriel St Clair. In 1956 she won second prize in the Kathleen Ferrier Award and since then she has achieved worldwide recognition as an artist of equal distinction in Lieder, opera and on the concert platform. Notable appearances included Purcell's Dido at Aldeburgh with the English Opera Group in 1962, the title role in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1964 and 1970) and the role of Kate in *Owen Wingrave* (1971).

For The Royal Opera, Covent Garden she sang Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*) and Gluck's Alceste, for Glyndebourne Diana/Jupiter (Cavalli's *La Calisto*) and Penelope (Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), and for Scottish Opera Dido (Berlioz's *Les Troyens*). For English National Opera she sang a repertory ranging from Monteverdi to Massenet's *Werther*, including Handel's *Julius*

Caesar and Marguerite in Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. Her last appearances with the company were in its production of Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*. Numerous honours have been awarded her, including the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize (1971) and honorary degrees from the Universities of London, Birmingham and Oxford. Janet Baker was made a CBE in 1970 and a DBE in 1976. She was created a Companion of Honour in 1994. Her many recordings include Handel's *Ariodante*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, numerous recital discs and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Julius Caesar* and *Mary Stuart*.

Joy Roberts, soprano, was born in Huddersfield and after studies at the Royal Academy of Music became a member of the BBC Northern Singers and then toured with Welsh National Opera for All. She made many appearances with the Handel Opera Society and sang Cherubino at Glyndebourne Festival Opera. She joined English National Opera in 1976 where her roles included Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Annina (Johann Strauss II's *A Night in Venice*), Sophie (*Werther*), Papagena (*The Magic Flute*), Cupid (Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*)

and the title role in Martinů's *Julietta*. At Opera North she sang Thérèse (Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*), Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Joy Roberts broadcast on radio (Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*) and her recordings include *Christopher Columbus* for Opera Rara.

John Tomlinson studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music. He has sung regularly with English National Opera, with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and has appeared at the Bayreuth Festival every year since 1988. His many Wagnerian roles include Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Wotan/Wanderer, Hagen, King Marke, Hans Sachs, Titurel and Gurnemanz. In Great Britain he has also appeared with Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas and Kent Opera. He has performed on major opera stages across Europe and North America in roles such as Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Rocco (*Fidelio*), Philip II (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Lindorf, Coppelius, Dr Miracle and Dapertutto in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) and the title roles in *Boris Godunov* and Verdi's *Oberto* and *Attila*. John Tomlinson appears in

numerous sound and video recordings. His discography includes, for Opera Rara, Donizetti's *Gabriella di Vergy* and, for Chandos, besides his Claggart in Britten's *Billy Budd* under Richard Hickox, roles in *Mary Stuart* and *Julius Caesar* as well as highlights from *Boris Godunov* and *Der Rosenkavalier* and a solo recital of operatic arias (to be released in autumn 2000), all recorded in association with the Peter Moores Foundation. John Tomlinson was awarded a CBE in the 1997 New Year's Honours List.

Tenor **Terry Jenkins** studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and at the London Opera Centre before joining the Glyndebourne Festival Chorus and also singing several principal roles both in Festivals and on tour. He has sung with numerous Irish and British companies, including Dublin Grand Opera, D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and Garsington Opera. With English National Opera, as a member from 1973 to 1994 and as a regular guest since then, he has sung over sixty roles, including Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Vanja (*Kat'a Kabanová*), Orpheus (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), Pedrillo, Don Basilio (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Spalanzani (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Jack (*A Midsummer Marriage*),

Snout (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Count Hauk Šendorf (*The Makropulos Affair*). He made his debut at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden in Henze's *We Come to the River* and returned for *Salome*. Abroad he has sung, among other roles, Loge (*Das Rheingold*) at Seattle Opera; Snout at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Opéra-Comique, Paris, and in Lyon, Caen, Montpellier, Nîmes, Bordeaux and Rome; and the Schoolteacher (*The Greek Passion* by Martinů) at the Bregenz Festival. On Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation he appears as Borsa in the recording of English National Opera's production of *Rigoletto* directed by Jonathan Miller.

The Chorus of English National Opera is one of the Company's finest assets. In countless English National Opera productions they have thrilled audiences with the power of their singing and the intensity of their acting. There are sixty-eight choristers and the wide range of skills and experience they bring to performances distinguish any production in which they appear. Particular triumphs for the Chorus have been Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Britten's *Billy Budd* and *Peter Grimes*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *Otello*. Their

recording of the last, in Jonathan Miller's production conducted by Mark Elder, is soon to appear on Chandos under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation, as is their recording of the celebrated 'Ring Cycle' conducted by Sir Reginald Goodall. Other Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation recordings are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production) and *La traviata*.

Critically and publicly acclaimed, **The Orchestra of English National Opera**, Leader Barry Griffiths, has in recent years received several prestigious awards, including the *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* and an *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. The Orchestra is at the heart of the Company's artistic life and as well as opera performances in the London Coliseum has also been seen on the concert platform. In addition many of the players participate in the work of the Baylis Programme of the Company's education and outreach department and with the English National Opera Studio in the development of new operas, in particular Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* which had its world premiere in February 2000. The Orchestra appears in many recordings, including the celebrated 'Ring Cycle' conducted

by Sir Reginald Goodall, which is soon to appear on Chandos under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation, as is its recording of Verdi's *Otello* under Mark Elder. Other recordings for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production) and *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras was born in 1925 of Australian parents in the United States and studied in Sydney and Prague. He made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells Opera, where he was instrumental in producing the sensational first British performance of Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová*, which led to Janáček's becoming standard repertory in the UK. He was First Conductor of the Hamburg Opera (1966–9) and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National Opera) (1970–7), and of Welsh National Opera (1987–91), where his notable Janáček productions and many others won great acclaim. The production and recording of *Osud* were sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation. He is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Conductor

Emeritus of Welsh National Opera, Principal Guest Conductor of the San Francisco Opera, and from the 1998/99 season he is Music Director of the Orchestra of St Luke's, New York. He has for many years been associated with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and conducts regularly at The Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras has undertaken much research into performance practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which has profoundly affected today's interpretations. His vast discography includes an award-winning cycle of Janáček operas with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten's *Gloriana* and Dvořák's *Rusalka* (both of which won *Gramophone* awards), Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler Symphonies, and with English National Opera Handel's *Julius Caesar* and Donizetti's *Mary Stuart* (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sir Charles Mackerras received a CBE in 1974 and was knighted for his services to music in 1979. He has also received The Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic, the Chopin Prize and has been made a Companion of the Order of Australia.



The Magistrate, Sophie and the Children, Act I



Charlotte with the Children, Act I

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire, the son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read modern languages – he was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera, however, which was his great love. He had worked at Glyndebourne Festival Opera before going up to university, and after Oxford he became a production student at the Vienna State Opera, combining this with a three-year course at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year at the Academy Moores had produced the Vienna premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty being paramount, he returned to Liverpool.

By 1977, he was Chairman of Littlewoods. Three years later he stepped down from the post, although still remaining on the Board. He was a director of a merchant bank from 1978 to 1992. From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985; from 1988 to 1992 he was a director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In May 1992 he became Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and in the New Year's Honours List for 1991, he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.



Peter Moores, CBE, DL

Christina Burton/PMF

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started giving financial support to various young artists, several of whom – Joan Sutherland, Colin Davis and the late Geraint Evans amongst them – were to become world-famous. In 1964 he set aside a substantial part of his inheritance to establish the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young and to improve race relations.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

- the recording of operas from the core repertory sung in English translation; the recording or staging of rare Italian opera from the *bel canto* era of the early nineteenth century (repertoire which would otherwise only be accessible to scholars); the nurturing of promising young opera singers; new operatic work.

The Foundation awards scholarships annually to students and post-graduates for furthering their vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition, project awards may be given to facilitate language tuition in the appropriate country, attendance at masterclasses or summer courses, specialised repertoire study with an acknowledged expert in the field, or post-graduate performance training.

The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

Since 1964 the Foundation has supported the recording of more than forty operas, many of these sung in English, in translation. It has always been Peter Moores's belief that to enjoy opera to the full, there must be no language barrier, particularly for newcomers and particularly in the popular repertoire – hence the *Opera in English* series launched with Chandos in 1995. This includes many of the English language recordings funded by the Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s and is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English.

Jules Massenet: Werther

Über Massenet rümpfen manche Menschen immer noch die Nase: So vermisst man ihn in der Serie "Master Musicians", weil ein Herausgeber nach dem anderen ihn eines gelehrten Kommentars nicht für würdig befunden hat. Während sein Landsmann Berlioz, der trotz all seiner revolutionären Ideen kaum Ahnung vom Aufbau einer Oper hatte, himmelhoch gelobt wird, behandelt man Massenet oft als zweitrangig, obwohl er ein Meister der Bühnenkunst und des musikalischen Timings war. Nicht nur lag ihm das Theater im Blut – er wusste auch viel über das menschliche Herz und stand mit seinem Einblick in die weibliche Psyche anderen Opernkomponisten um nichts nach. Gerade die Charlotte im *Werther* beweist, dass Massenet während seiner langen Musiktheaterkarriere immer wieder Heroinen schuf, mit denen sein Publikum ganz instinktiv sympathisiert: Manon, Thaïs, Hérodiade, Cendrillon, Sapho, Esclarmonde...

Was seine Werke für die Opéra-Comique betrifft, so weisen sie alle einen gewissenhaften Konversationsstil auf, kraft dessen sie trotz

ihres wundervollen musikalischen Gehalts als vertonte Theaterstücke betrachtet werden können. Massenets Erkenntnis, dass jede Nuance einer Gesangspartie von Wichtigkeit war, veranlasste ihn dazu, seine Partituren mit einer Fülle von Vortragszeichen zu versehen, die für die Darstellung des Charakters und die Bedeutung der Gesangslinie wesentlich waren. Wer sich als Interpret darüber hinwegsetzt, tut dies auf eigene Gefahr. So eng diese Gesangspartien auch auf die französische Sprache abgestimmt sind, ist doch das eingehende Verständnis aller verbalen und vokalen Details unerlässlich, wenn das Werk vor einem britischen Publikum in dessen Sprache seine beabsichtigte Wirkung erfüllen soll. Ist die Übersetzung so natürlich gelungen wie in der vorliegenden Aufnahme, dann ist dieser Zweck auf schönste Weise erreicht. Da die Oper in englischer Sprache gesungen wird, ist es ungemein wichtig, dass alle Worte zu verstehen sind: In meiner Erinnerung an die Bühnenaufführung, bestätigt durch diese Aufnahme, artikuliert das Ensemble hier – im Gegensatz zu manchen seiner Nachfolger im Londoner Coliseum – den Text mit Klarheit

und in erfreulichem Bewusstsein all seiner Nuancen.

Dieser Text beruht auf Goethes autobiographischem Roman *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, der in Briefform geschrieben ist. Das Werk wurde auf höchst gekonnte Weise von Massenets Librettisten für die Bühne bearbeitet. Zum Zeitpunkt der Komposition (1886/87) stand Massenet auf der Höhe seiner Schaffenskraft. Seine technischen Fortschritte gegenüber *Manon* (1884) – einer zeitweilig erfolgreicheren, aber heute zu Recht nicht mehr bevorzugten Oper – ist unverkennbar. Die Werke mögen sich insofern oberflächlich ähneln, als sie beide mit unglücklichen Liebesaffären befasst sind, doch wird dieses Thema im *Werther* sowohl in musikalischer als auch psychologischer Hinsicht ungleich tiefschürfender behandelt. Schon in den ersten Takten können wir beispielsweise erkennen, dass die besessene Leidenschaft Werthers für Charlotte ein böses Ende nehmen wird. Massenet hatte auch gelernt, auf viel komplexere Weise mit seinen Leitmotiven umzugehen, und lässt sie in verschiedenen Formen durch eine von Anfang bis Ende nahtlos gewobene Partitur ziehen, die überdies eine Fülle subtiler Orchesterdetails enthält.

Massenet bietet uns einen faszinierenden Kontrast: auf der einen Seite die anscheinende Zufriedenheit des bürgerlichen Lebens im Hause des Amtmanns, dessen häusliche Atmosphäre und sicheren Moralbegriffe grundsätzlich in diatonischen, unbeschwerten Fortschreitungen ausgedrückt werden – auf der anderen Seite die Ekstase und Agonie von Werthers Liebe und Charlottes gestörtem Gefühlsleben, harmonisch komplexer dargestellt. Werthers Musik ist durchweg leidenschaftlich und drückt stets seine dichterische Empfindsamkeit und die wilden Gefühle aus, von denen er gequält wird. Massenet schildert dies durch eine Reihe feuriger und/oder besinnlicher Ausbrüche. Der romantische Held dieser Oper drückt sich zumeist in Metaphern aus, wie etwa in seinem schwärmerischen Loblied an die Natur im I. oder seinen Selbstmordgedanken im II. Akt; manchmal – wie im Ossian-Lied des III. Akts – gibt er seinen Gefühlen durch die Worte anderer Ausdruck.

Der Charakter von Charlotte ist noch interessanter. Sie ist eine höchst komplexe Frau, zerrissen vom Konflikt zwischen Pflicht und innerer Leidenschaft. Es muss schon Werther sein, der in ihr diese tiefsten erotischen Gefühle erweckt, denn dass ihr

Gatte Albert mit seinem trockenen Konformismus diesen Effekt haben sollte, kann man sich nicht recht vorstellen. Im Gegensatz zu Werther durchläuft Charlotte im Verlauf der Oper eine starke Charakterentwicklung. Die oberflächliche Ruhe der beiden ersten Akte, in denen sie mehr Mutter als junge Frau ist (sie sorgt für ihre jüngeren Geschwister, die anderen Kinder des verwitweten Vaters), wird im III., dem überzeugendsten Akt durch den inneren Aufruhr und den Kummer abgelöst, den die Gefühle für Werther in ihr bewirken. All dies wird noch verstärkt durch das Lesen seiner Briefe, in denen er sein Sehnen und seine Einsamkeit schildert.

Massenet entwirft ein perfektes vokales und instrumentales Bild dieser Szene, bevor er in dem anschließenden "Air des larmes" (wohl am besten schlicht mit "Die Tränen" zu übersetzen) sowie in ihrem Gebet die widerstreitenden Gefühle Charlottes zum Ausbruch kommen lässt. Nun kehrt Werther genau am Weihnachtsabend zurück – so lange hatte Charlotte ihn im II. Akt ja fortgeschickt. Nach dem Ossian-Lied zwingt er Charlotte – nicht gerade gegen ihren Willen – ihre Liebe zu ihm zu gestehen. Nachdem Werther zu einer von Alberts Pistolen gegriffen hat und

Charlotte ihn in der letzten Szene tödlich verwundet auffindet, schwelgen beide in ihren Erinnerungen, und Charlotte geht ganz in Werthers Seele auf, während draussen der Alltag mit seinen fröhlichen Weihnachtsliedern vergeht.

Die Partie von Albert ist kurz, aber bedeutungsvoll. Die schlichte, hausbackene Gestalt aus dem I. Akt wird zu dem besorgten Ehegatten des II. und zu dem verbitterten Mann des III. Akts, der die von Werther erbetenen Pistolen durch seine Frau aushändigen lässt – so dass sie ungewollt in seinen Selbstmord verstrickt wird. Sogar die vergleichsweise unkomplizierte Sophie verwandelt sich von dem sorglosen Mädchen der beiden ersten Akte in die beunruhigte junge Frau des III. Akts. Der alte Amtmann (Le Bailli in der Originalfassung) hat seine Daseinsberechtigung als gemütliche, weltkluge Vaterfigur im I. Akt – der Inbegriff gutbürgerlicher Werte. Auch die hübschen Nebenrollen der Kumpane Johann und Schmidt, Freunde des Amtmanns, fügen dem unglücklichen Liebespaar ein Kontrastelement hinzu.

Das Werk nahm keinen guten Anfang. Die Opéra-Comique lehnte es 1887 als zu trist ab, und der *Werther* blieb vier Jahre lang in

Massenets Schreibtisch liegen. Als dann der Komponist 1890 einen großen Erfolg mit *Manon* an der Wiener Hofoper feiern konnte, ersuchte ihn deren Leitung um ein weiteres Werk. So wurde also der *Werther* wieder aus der Versenkung geholt und erlebte am 16. Februar 1892 in deutscher Sprache seine höchst erfolgreiche Uraufführung. Der belgische Heldentenor van Dyck übernahm die Titelrolle, und Massenet fügte für ihn im II. Akt die Werther-Arie "Désolation" (Another! Another's wife!/Ein andrer Mann ihr Gatte!) hinzu, eine starke Solonummer für diesen Sänger. Nun verbreitete sich die Oper rasch im deutschsprachigen Raum – zur Verwunderung mancher, hatte doch dort Gounods *Faust* (allgemein als *Margarethe* aufgeführt, wie um anzudeuten, dass dieses Werk nicht wirklich würdig war, den Titel von Goethes Meisterwerk zu tragen) eine recht zögernde Aufnahme gefunden. *Werther* erging es anders. Man konzidierte dem Werk eine annehmbare Treue zum Original, das bei seiner eigenen Veröffentlichung 1774 als Inbegriff der Romantik gegolten hatte. Der Roman konzentriert sich bekanntlich fast ausschließlich auf den Titelhelden, mit "Lotte" als fernem Objekt seiner Leidenschaft. Massenet und seine Librettisten hatten

erkannt, dass sie Charlotte mehr in den Vordergrund rücken mussten, um zwei nahezu gleichwertige Hauptrollen zu schaffen; für diese konnten dann die ausgedehnten Duette geschrieben werden, die das Herz dieses Musikdramas bilden. Charlottes gesunder Menschenverstand ist ein bemerkenswertes Gegenstück zu Werthers poetischen Phantasien und Posen – zumindest so lange, bis sie schließlich Teil seines Lebens wird und sich ihm schenkt – zu spät. Was dann folgt, ist also ebenso ihre wie seine Tragödie, und man fragt sich danach, wie ihre weitere Existenz als Alberts gehorsame Gattin wohl verlaufen mag.

An die Opéra-Comique kam der *Werther* dann schließlich 1893, aber erst zehn Jahre später begründete eine Neuinszenierung die Popularität der Oper in Frankreich. Das nächste halbe Jahrhundert hindurch wurde das Werk von allen namhaften französischen Künstlern jener Zeit gesungen. Die Titelpartie übernahmen sowohl lyrische Tenöre wie der große Sänger/Schauspieler Charles Friant und Tito Schipa, als auch dramatischere Sänger wie Georges Thill, der in der allerersten Aufnahme der Oper zu hören ist. In der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts haben große Sänger wie der lyrische Tenor Alfredo Kraus, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras und Roberto Alagna

den Werther gesungen. Die Partie der Charlotte hat ebenfalls große Interpretinnen gefunden: lyrische Soprane wie Ninon Vallin (in der erwähnten ersten Aufnahme) und Victoria de los Angeles, aber auch dramatische Mezzos wie Dame Janet Baker in der vorliegenden Aufnahme. Massenet selbst hatte sich anscheinend mit Rose Caron einen Sopran für seine erste französische Charlotte gewünscht, doch wurde die Rolle schließlich der Mezzosopranistin Marie Delna übergeben – von Anfang an zog man für diese Partie also unterschiedliche Stimmlagen in Betracht. Viel wichtiger als dies ist aber die Grundforderung, dass sich alle Hauptinterpreten mit ihren Rollen identifizieren müssen – was in der vorliegenden Aufnahme exemplarisch verwirklicht ist.

Diese Live-Darbietung geht auf die erste Wiederaufnahme einer außergewöhnlich erfolgreichen Inszenierung von *Werther* an der English National Opera im Jahre 1977 zurück. John Copleys einfallsreiche und aufrüttelnde Inszenierung (so ungleich besser als jene, durch die sie leider ein Jahrzehnt später ersetzt wurde) erntete uneingeschränktes Lob. Das rein visuelle Erlebnis der Aufführung kann in einer Tonaufnahme nicht nachvollzogen werden, aber die herrlich idiomatische

Stabführung von Charles Mackerras lässt sich voll genießen, ebenso wie die überzeugende Leistung des damaligen English-National-Opera-Orchesters. Gestaltung und Timing der Partitur sind vollendet von Anfang bis Ende.

Mit Janet Baker als Charlotte in einer ihrer erfolgreichsten Rollen standen die Vorzeichen denkbar gut, und in makelloser Form vermittelt sie alle Aspekte dieses komplexen Charakters. Gemessen und sympathisch als die scheinbar konventionelle Charlotte im I. und II. Akt, gibt sie uns eine Interpretation von tragischer Kraft im III. Akt, wenn sie Briefe, Tränen und Gebete zu einer überzeugenden Einheit verbindet und dann die ganze Verzweiflung des IV. Akts glaubhaft macht, als Charlotte versucht, dem sterbenden Werther Trost zuzusprechen. Die ganze Oper hindurch vermittelt Janet Baker – wie man es von ihr stets erwartet – den englischen Text mit einem unfehlbaren Gefühl für seine innere Bedeutung, betont bestimmte Worte und macht ihre Stimme der jeweiligen Situation entsprechend heller und dunkler. Ein gutes Beispiel für ihre Meisterschaft ist der Augenblick, wenn Werther im III. Akt am Weihnachtsabend zurückkehrt. Die Liebenden sinnieren gemeinsam über den Raum, in dem sie vor Monaten miteinander gesprochen haben,

und sie gedenken der zusammen verbrachten schönen Stunden. In einem Satz, den beide wiederholen, sagt Charlotte: “Ev’rything is still here in the place where you knew it” (Es ist noch alles so hier, wie Sie es verließen). Janet Baker singt diesen Gedanken mit einer sanften Intimität, mit einer schwebenden Linie, die gleich den Kern der Sache trifft. Wenige Minuten darauf gelingt es Werther, ihre Zurückhaltung zu überwinden: Janet Bakers leidenschaftlicher Ausbruch ist spontan und eindringlich, sofort gefolgt von der entsetzten Erkenntnis dessen, was sie eben getan hat – und das ist nur ein Höhepunkt in einer Interpretation von seltener Größe, jetzt glücklicherweise für die Nachwelt erhalten.

John Brecknock vermag es ebenso gut wie seine Partnerin, den Text so klar zu projizieren, dass man kaum im Libretto mitlesen muss. Ohne jemals von seiner guten Linie und seiner sicheren Phrasierung abzuweichen, lässt er uns Werthers ganze Verzweiflung hören. Er bewältigt sicher die leidenschaftlicheren Ausbrüche, singt aber wirklich lyrisch in den beschaulicheren Augenblicken. Der feste, abgerundete Klang der Stimme von Patrick Wheatley ist genau das, was die Rolle des Albert verlangt. Joy Roberts ist eine bezaubernd frische Sophie und singt ihre beiden *Airs* mit gerade

der richtigen Unbekümmertheit. Harold Blackburn gehörte damals schon seit über 20 Jahren zu den beliebtesten Künstlern der English National Opera (ehemals Sadler’s Wells), und sein Ochs im *Rosenkavalier* hatte gerade große Bewunderung gefunden, als er hier die köstliche kleine Partie des selbstzufriedenen Amtmanns lieferte. Ein junger John Tomlinson erregte Aufmerksamkeit als Johann. Alles in allem ist diese Aufnahme ein Andenken an die Harewood/Mackerras-Ära der English National Opera, wie man es sich nicht schöner wünschen könnte.

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Die Handlung

Schauplatz des Geschehens ist Wetzlar bei Frankfurt, gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts

I. Akt

An einem Juli-Abend im Garten des Amtmanns
Der verwitwete Amtmann probt mit seinen Kindern ein Weihnachtslied, amüsiert beobachtet von Schmidt und Johann. Die beiden benachbarten Freunde der Familie erkundigen sich nach der ältesten Tochter Charlotte und hören, dass sie sich, ebenso wie die anderen jungen Leute von Wetzlar, auf

einen Ball vorbereitet. Ihr Begleiter an diesem Abend ist Werther, ein ernsthafter junger Dichter, von dem wohl der Amtmann eingenommen ist, nicht aber die Nachbarn, denen er unsympathisch ist. Der abwesende Albert, den Charlotte eigentlich heiraten soll, wird in Kürze von einer Reise zurück erwartet. Nun laden die beiden Freunde den Amtmann zum Essen in der Schenke ein und gehen, um sich vorher Appetit zu machen.

Mit einem schwärmerischen Monolog über die Schönheit der Natur tritt Werther auf. Von Charlotte unbemerkt beobachtet er sie bei der Zubereitung des Abendmahls für die jüngeren Geschwister. Der Amtmann heißt ihn willkommen und erklärt, dass Charlotte seit dem Tod seiner Frau die Mutterrolle für ihre Brüder und Schwestern erfüllt. Nachdem die beiden jungen Leute zum Ball gegangen sind, erinnert Sophie ihren Vater an die Einladung in die Schenke. So sind weder Charlotte noch ihr Vater im Haus, als Albert früher als erwartet zurückkehrt. Er hatte gehofft, sie freudig zu überraschen, und gesteht Sophie seine Liebe für Charlotte. Er geht mit dem Versprechen, sich am Morgen wieder einzustellen.

Werther und Charlotte kommen vom Ball zurück. Er hat sich in sie verliebt, doch wird sein Geständnis jäh von der Stimme des

Amtmanns unterbrochen, der die Heimkehr Alberts verkündet. Charlotte kehrt in die Wirklichkeit zurück und ernüchert Werther mit der Erklärung, dass sie ihrer Mutter auf dem Sterbebett versprochen hat, Albert zu heiraten; der unglückliche Verehrer mahnt sie, ihr Wort nicht zu brechen.

II. Akt

An einem Sonntagnachmittag im September darauf, vor der Kirche

Johann und Schmidt bechern vor der Schenke, während in der Kirche die goldene Hochzeit des Pastors gefeiert wird. Albert, der inzwischen mit Charlotte verheiratet ist, singt von seinem Glück. Werther wird beim Anblick dieser Vertrautheit niederschmetternd klar, dass Charlotte für ihn verloren ist. Albert drückt ihm sein Bedauern daüber aus, dass Werther seine Gefühle entfalten konnte, bevor er von der Verlobung wusste, doch versichert ihm dieser, dass er für beide nur noch freundschaftliche Gefühle empfindet. Wenn dem nicht so wäre, würde er Wetzlar für immer verlassen. Sophie versucht, die schwermütigen Männer aufzuheitern, und Albert legt Werther nahe, sich doch der jüngeren Schwester Charlottes zuzuwenden. Werther weiß, dass sein Leid noch kein Ende

gefunden hat. Er bedrängt Charlotte, an den Ballabend zurückzudenken, doch mag sie ihre Gefühle nicht offenbaren und fordert ihn schließlich auf, die Stadt bis zum Weihnachtsfest zu verlassen. Mit Selbstmordgedanken im Sinn teilt Werther Sophie mit, dass er für immer gehen wird. Albert wird klar, dass Werther Charlotte immer noch liebt.

III. Akt

Am Heiligen Abend, um fünf Uhr in Alberts Haus

In Abwesenheit Alberts liest Charlotte wieder Werthers Briefe. Sophie kommt mit einer Einladung zum Besuch der Familie im Elternhaus und erlebt, wie Charlotte schon bei der Erwähnung von Werthers Namen in Tränen ausbricht. Charlotte verspricht, der Einladung zu folgen, und betet - wieder allein - um die innere Kraft zur Verleugnung ihrer Liebe für einen Mann, der nicht ihr Gatte ist. Da steht Werther in der Tür. Charlotte gibt vor, lediglich froh über seine Rückkehr zu sein, und bittet ihn, ihr so wie früher aus den Dichtungen Ossians zu übersetzen. Werther wählt die Passage, in der Ossian seinen eigenen Tod voraussieht, doch das ist Charlotte zu viel. Er erkennt, dass sie ihn liebt,

und nimmt sie in die Arme. Entsetzt erklärt sie ihm, dass sie sich nie wieder begegnen dürfen, und Werther beschließt, sich das Leben zu nehmen. Bei seiner Heimkehr findet Albert seine Frau völlig aufgelöst vor. Ein Bote bringt einen Brief Werthers mit der Bitte an Albert, ihm Pistolen für eine weite Reise auszuleihen. Der Reaktion Charlottes entnimmt Albert, dass sie Werthers Liebe erwidert, und weist sie an, selbst die Pistolen an den Boten zu übergeben. Von später Angst und Reue getrieben, eilt Charlotte schließlich dem Boten nach.

IV. Akt

Später am selben Abend, in Werthers Arbeitszimmer

Charlotte findet Werther tödlich verwundet vor. Sie gesteht ihre Liebe und er bittet sie um Vergebung. Während von fern der Weihnachtsgesang der Kinder erklingt, stirbt Werther in ihren Armen.

© English National Opera
Übersetzung: Andreas Klatt

In der Nähe von Nottingham in England geboren, studierte **John Brecknock** an der Birmingham School of Music und bei Denis

Dowling. Er trat der Sadler's Wells Opera (später: English National Opera) bei, wo er unter anderem Don Ottavio, Belmonte, Ferrando, den Grafen Ory, Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Alfredo, Des Grieux (*Manon*), Tamino, den Herzog (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* von Johann Strauß (Sohn)) und Werther gegeben hat und in *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Die lustige Witwe* und *La gazza ladra* aufgetreten ist. An der Royal Opera, Covent Garden war er als Fenton (*Falstaff*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Iopas (*Les Troyens*) und Gennaro (*Lucrezia Borgia*) zu sehen. Darüber hinaus hat er an der Welsh National Opera gesungen. Zu seinen Engagements außerhalb Großbritanniens zählen *Don Giovanni* in New York (Metropolitan Opera), Ottawa und Buenos Aires, *Die Zauberflöte* in New York (Metropolitan Opera), New Orleans und Ottawa, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in San Francisco, Miami und Wien, *La Cenerentola* in Paris (an der Opéra), Buenos Aires und Kapstadt, *Werther* in Rouen, Buenos Aires und San Diego, *La traviata* in Kapstadt und Ottawa, *Les Pêcheurs de perles* in Rouen und Paris sowie *Le Comte Ory* in Ottawa, *Rigoletto* in Houston und *Falstaff* in Miami. Auf Tonträger hat er unter anderem Offenbachs *Robinson Crusoe* für die Reihe Opera Rara und *La traviata* für

Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation aufgenommen.

Der Bariton **Patrick Wheatley** hat bei einem in Leicestershire ansässigen Gesangslehrer studiert, ehe er ein Peter-Stuyvesant-Stipendium zur Ausbildung am London Opera Centre erhielt. Der English National Opera trat er 1974 bei und hat dort zahlreiche Rollen gesungen, darunter Haly (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Des Grieux und De Brétigny (*Manon*), Schaunard (*La bohème*), Sharpless und Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*), Germont (*La traviata*), Albert (*Werther*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Vladislav (in Smetanas *Dalibor*), Gorjantschikow (in Janáčeks *Aus einem Totenhaus*), Fabrizio (*La gazza ladra*) und John Sorel (in Menottis *The Consul*). Außerdem ist er an der Opera North aufgetreten (als Manz in Delius' *A Village Romeo and Juliet*) und mit der New Opera Company (als Bettler in Martinůs *Julietta*).

Der im schottischen Hamilton geborene **Harold Blackburn** wurde in Glasgow privat ausgebildet und trat 1948 nach einer Spielzeit an der Carl Rosa Opera dem Chor der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera) bei, wo er sich bald in kleinen Rollen bewährte und später zum Ersten Baß

avancierte. Gleichmaßen im ernsten und komischen Fach bewandert, beruhte sein Ansehen auf unverbrauchten Interpretationen und seiner ausgeprägten Konzentration auf den Text. Zu seinen zahlreichen Erfolgen gehörten Don Pasquale, Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*), der Bürgermeister Gottardo Podestà (*La gazza ladra*), der Erzieher (*Le Comte Ory*), Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Colline (*La bohème*), Des Grieux (*Manon*) und der Amtmann (*Werther*), außerdem Osmin, Sarastro, Plunkett (Flotows *Martha*), Kecal (*Die verkaufte Braut*), Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Fasolt (*Das Rheingold*), Hunding (*Die Walküre*) und Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Er nahm viele zeitgenössische Rollen in Angriff, darunter Vater Barré in Pendereckis *Die Teufel von Loudun*, William Humpage in *A Penny for a Song* und Sherrin in *The Mines of Sulphur* (beide von Sir Richard Rodney Bennett). Er gastierte mehrmals an der Scottish Opera, der Welsh Opera und der English Opera Group, mit der er Kanada, Japan und Australien bereiste und wo er besonders für seinen Mr. Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera* in Erinnerung ist. Harold Blackburn verstarb 1981.

Dame Janet Baker ist zusammen mit den namhaftesten Dirigenten und Orchestern der

Welt aufgetreten und hat mit allen bedeutenden Operntruppen Aufzeichnungen auf Tonträger vorgenommen. Sie wurde in der englischen Grafschaft Yorkshire geboren und erst von Helene Isepp, dann von Meriel St Clair ausgebildet. 1956 gewann sie den zweiten Preis beim Kathleen-Ferrier-Gesangswettbewerb, und seither hat sie es als Künstlerin, die sich mit der Interpretation von Liedern ebenso hervortut wie in der Oper und auf dem Konzertpodium, zu weltweiter Anerkennung gebracht. Zu ihren denkwürdigen Auftritten zählen Purcells Dido 1962 in Aldeburgh mit der English Opera Group, die Titelrolle in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1964 und 1970) und Kate in *Owen Wingrave* (1971).

Für die Royal Opera, Covent Garden hat sie die Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*) gesungen, und Glucks Alceste, für Glyndebourne Diana/Jupiter (Cavalli's *La Calisto*) und Penelope (Monteverdis *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), und für die Scottish Opera Dido (Berlioz' *Les Troyens*). Für die English National Opera hat sie ein Repertoire gesungen, das von Monteverdi bis Massenets *Werther* reicht und Händels *Giulio Cesare* sowie Marguerite in Berlioz' *La Damnation de Faust* einschließt. Ihr letztes Gastspiel bei der Truppe erfolgte in

einer Inszenierung von Donizettis *Maria Stuarda*. Janet Baker hat zahlreiche Auszeichnungen erhalten, darunter den Hamburger Shakespeare-Preis (1971) und die Ehrendoktorwürde der Universitäten von London, Birmingham und Oxford. Sie wurde 1970 zum Commander, 1976 zum Dame of the British Empire und 1994 zum Companion of Honour erhoben. Zu ihren Aufzeichnungen auf Tonträger gehören Händels *Ariodante*, Glucks *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Mahlers *Das Lied von der Erde*, zahlreiche Recitalprogramme und, für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Giulio Cesare* und *Maria Stuarda*.

Die Sopranistin **Joy Roberts** wurde in Huddersfield geboren. Im Anschluß an ihr Studium an der Royal Academy of Music trat sie den BBC Northern Singers bei und ging dann mit der Welsh National Opera for All auf Tournee. Sie hat viele Male bei der Handel Opera Society gastiert und mit der Glyndebourne Festival Opera den Cherubino gesungen. Sie wurde 1976 Ensemblemitglied der English National Opera und hat dort unter anderem Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Annina (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* von Johann Strauß (Sohn)), Sophie (*Werther*), Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*), Cupid (*Orphée aux enfers*

von Offenbach), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) und die Titelrolle von Martinůs *Julietta* gesungen. An der Opera North war sie als Thérèse (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* von Poulenc), Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) und Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) zu sehen. Joy Roberts ist im Rundfunk aufgetreten (in Humperdincks *Hänsel und Gretel*) und hat unter anderem *Christopher Columbus* für die Reihe Opera Rara auf Tonträger aufgenommen.

Nach seinem Studium am Royal Manchester College of Music hat **John Tomlinson** regelmäßig an der English National Opera sowie an der Royal Opera, Covent Garden gesungen und ist seit 1988 jedes Jahr bei den Festspielen von Bayreuth aufgetreten. Zu seinen zahlreichen Wagner-Partien zählen Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Wotan/der Wanderer, Hagen, König Marke, Hans Sachs, Titirel und Gurnemanz. In Großbritannien war er außerdem an der Opera North, der Scottish Opera, beim Glyndebourne Festival und dessen Touring Opera sowie an der Kent Opera tätig. In ganz Europa und Nordamerika haben ihn bedeutende Opernbühnen engagiert, u.a. als Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Rocco (*Fidelio*), Philipp II. (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*),

Lindorf, Coppelius, Le docteur Miracle und Dapertutto (alle in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), für die Titelrollen in *Boris Godunow* sowie Verdis *Oberto* und *Attila*. John Tomlinson ist an zahlreichen Ton- und Videoaufnahmen beteiligt gewesen. Seine Diskographie umfaßt bei Opera Rara Donizettis *Gabriella di Vergy* und bei Chandos, außer seinem Claggart in Brittens *Billy Budd* unter der Leitung von Richard Hickox, Partien in *Maria Stuarda* und *Giulio Cesare* ebenso wie Auszüge aus *Boris Godunow* und dem *Rosenkavalier* sowie eine Soloaufnahme mit Opernarien (die im Herbst 2000 zur Veröffentlichung ansteht), eingespielt in Verbindung mit der Peter Moores Foundation. John Tomlinson wurde 1997 mit dem Orden Commander of the British Empire ausgezeichnet.

Der Tenor **Terry Jenkins** hat an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama und am London Opera Centre studiert, ehe er zum Glyndebourne Festival Chorus stieß und sowohl bei mehreren Festivals als auch auf Tournee diverse Hauptrollen übernahm. Er hat an zahlreichen irischen und britischen Opernhäusern gastiert, zum Beispiel an der Dublin Grand Opera, der D'Oyly Carte Opera

Company und der Garsington Opera. Als Ensemblemitglied der English National Opera von 1973 bis 1994 und seither als regelmäßiger Gast hat er über sechzig Partien gesungen, darunter Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Wanja (*Katja Kabanowa*), Orpheus (*Orphée aux enfers*), Pedrillo, Don Basilio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Spalanzani (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Jack (*A Midsummer Marriage*), Snout (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) und Hauk-Schendorf (*Die Sache Makropulos*). Sein Debüt an der Royal Opera, Covent Garden gab er in Henzes *We Come to the River* und war dort erneut in *Salome* zu sehen. Außerhalb Großbritanniens hat er unter anderem Loge (*Das Rheingold*) an der Seattle Opera gesungen, Snout bei den Festspielen in Aix-en-Provence, an der Opéra-Comique in Paris, in Lyon, Caen, Montpellier, Nîmes, Bordeaux und Rom und den Lehrer (*Die griechische Passion* von Martinů) bei den Bregenzer Festspielen. Für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation ist er als Borsa bei der *Rigoletto*-Aufzeichnung der English National Opera unter der Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller dabei.

Der **Chor der English National Opera** ist eine Stütze der gesamten Truppe. In zahllosen Produktionen der English National Opera hat

er das Publikum mit der Kraft seines Gesangs und der Intensität seiner Darstellung entzückt. Der Chor besteht aus achtundsechzig Sängern, und die weit gefächerten Talente und Erfahrungen, die sie in ihre Darbietungen einbringen, kennzeichnen jede Inszenierung, an der sie mitwirken. Besondere Triumphe für den Chor waren Prokofjews *Krieg und Frieden*, Schostakowitschs *Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*, Brittens *Billy Budd* und *Peter Grimes*, Mussorgskis *Boris Godunow*, Bizets *Carmen* und Verdis *Otello*. Seine Aufnahme der letztgenannten Oper in der von Mark Elder geleiteten Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller wird unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation demnächst bei Chandos erscheinen, ebenso seine Aufzeichnung des gefeierten *Ring*-Zyklus unter der Leitung von Sir Reginald Goodall. Andere Aufnahmen des Chors für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (Regie: Jonathan Miller) und *La traviata*.

Das von der Kritik ebenso wie vom Publikum gefeierte **Orchester der English National Opera** unter Konzertmeister Barry Griffiths hat in den letzten Jahren mehrere angesehene Preise gewonnen, beispielsweise den

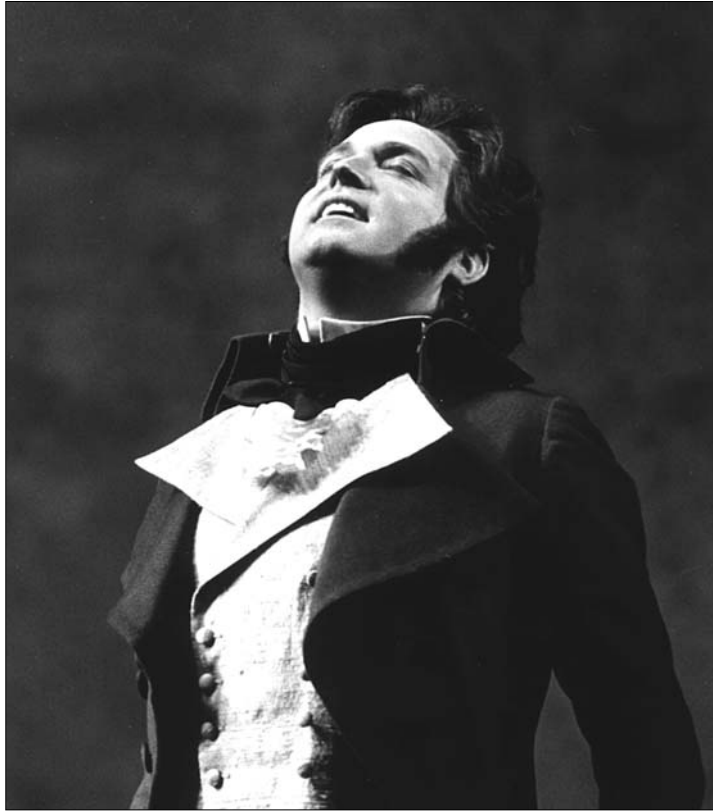
Musikpreis der *Royal Philharmonic Society* und einen *Olivier Award* für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper. Das Orchester ist von zentraler Bedeutung für das künstlerische Leben der Truppe und war nicht nur bei Opernvorstellungen im Londoner Coliseum, sondern auch auf dem Konzertpodium zu sehen. Zusätzlich sind viele der Musiker am Baylis-Programm der für Schul- und Gemeindearbeit zuständigen Abteilung des Orchesters beteiligt und arbeiten mit dem English National Opera Studio an der Entwicklung neuer Opern, speziell an Mark-Anthony Turnages *The Silver Tassie*, das im Februar 2000 uraufgeführt wurde. Das Orchester hat an vielen Einspielungen mitgewirkt, zum Beispiel am gefeierten *Ring*-Zyklus unter der Leitung von Sir Reginald Goodall, der demnächst bei Chandos herauskommen wird. Dies geschieht unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation, die sich auch auf seine Einspielung von Verdis *Otello* unter Mark Elder erstreckt. Andere Aufnahmen des Orchesters für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (in der Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller) und *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras wurde 1925 als Kind australischer Eltern in den USA geboren und studierte in Sydney und Prag. Sein Debüt als Operndirigent feierte er in Sadler's Wells Opera, wo er wesentlichen Anteil an der Produktion der sensationellen britischen Erstaufführung von Janáček's *Katja Kabanowa* hatte, die dazu führte, daß Janáček's Werke ihren Weg ins britische Standardrepertoire fanden. Er war Chefdirigent an der Hamburger Oper (1966–9) und Musikdirektor an der Oper von Sadler's Wells, der nachmaligen English National Opera (1970–7) sowie der Welsh National Opera (1987–91), wo unter anderem seine bemerkenswerten Janáček-Inszenierungen große Beachtung fanden. Die Inszenierung und Einspielung von *Osud* wurden von der Peter Moores Foundation gefördert. Sir Charles Mackerras ist Ehrendirigent des Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Emeritus-Dirigent der Welsh National Opera, erster Gastdirigent der San Francisco Opera und seit der Spielzeit 1998/99 Musikdirektor des Orchestra of St Luke's in New York. Er

arbeitet seit vielen Jahren mit der Royal Opera, Covent Garden zusammen und dirigiert regelmäßig Aufführungen an der Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras hat sich intensiv mit der Aufführungspraxis des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts befaßt, was seine musikalischen Interpretationen wesentlich beeinflusste. Seine beeindruckende Diskographie umfaßt den preisgekrönten Zyklus der Opern Janáček's mit den Wiener Philharmonikern, Brittens *Gloriana* und Dvořák's *Rusalka* (beide ausgezeichnet mit einem *Gramophone award*), die Sinfonien von Beethoven, Brahms und Mahler sowie Handels *Giulio Cesare* und Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* mit der English National Opera (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sir Charles Mackerras wurde 1974 mit dem CBE ausgezeichnet und 1979 für seine Verdienste um die Musik geadelt. Außerdem erhielt er die Verdienstmedaille der Tschechischen Republik, den Chopin-Preis und wurde zum Mitglied des Order of Australia ernannt.



Charlotte,
Act I

40



Werther,
Act I

41

Jules Massenet: Werther

Massenet reste mésestimé par les experts: aucun volume, par exemple, ne lui a encore été consacré dans la série “Master Musicians”, car plusieurs éditeurs, successivement, ont négligé de le prendre au sérieux et de le considérer comme un compositeur digne d’être commenté dans des ouvrages spécialisés. Tandis que, parmi les compositeurs français, Berlioz est porté aux nues, alors qu’en dépit de ses principes révolutionnaires, il n’avait que peu d’idées sur la manière de mettre en forme un opéra, son contemporain qui était, lui, un génie de la mise en scène et du rythme est souvent traité comme un compositeur de second rang. En réalité, Massenet était homme de théâtre jusqu’au bout des ongles, mais il connaissait aussi l’âme humaine et comprenait comme tout compositeur d’opéra la psychologie féminine. Tout au long de sa longue carrière de dramaturge, et Charlotte dans *Werther* en est l’exemple par excellence, il créa des héroïnes avec lesquelles son auditoire se sentait spontanément en empathie: Manon, Thaïs, Hérodiade, Cendrillon, Sapho, Esclarmonde...

La musique des œuvres composées par

Massenet pour l’Opéra-Comique est essentiellement déclamatoire si bien qu’en dépit de leur contenu d’inspiration musicale, elles peuvent être considérées comme des pièces de théâtre mises en musique. Comme Massenet savait que toute nuance dans le rôle d’un chanteur est importante, il joncha ses partitions d’annotations essentielles à l’expression du caractère et de la signification de la ligne vocale. Ses interprètes les ignorent à leurs risques et périls. Ces parties vocales ont un lien étroit avec la langue française et c’est pourquoi la compréhension de tous les détails verbaux et vocaux est indispensable pour que l’interprétation de l’œuvre devant un auditoire anglais, dans la langue vernaculaire, produise l’effet voulu. Lorsque la traduction est aussi fluide que celle que l’on entend dans cette interprétation, cet objectif est merveilleusement atteint. Et puisque l’œuvre est chantée en anglais, il est essentiel que les mots soient compris! Je me souviens, que lors de cette représentation – et l’audition de cet enregistrement le confirme –, les chanteurs, contrairement à certains de leurs successeurs au London Coliseum, énonçaient le texte avec

clarté, en prenant grand soin, et l’on s’en réjouit, aux inflexions vocales.

Le texte de l’opéra provient du roman autobiographique de Goethe *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Les souffrances du jeune Werther) écrit sous forme de lettres. Il fut adapté pour la scène avec une extrême ingéniosité par les librettistes de Massenet. A l’époque de sa composition en 1886–1887, Massenet atteignait les sommets de son art. Le perfectionnement de sa technique par rapport à *Manon* (1884), plus populaire à une certaine époque que *Werther* – mais qui, à juste titre, ne l’est pas resté – est évident. Les deux œuvres paraissent quelque peu semblables, à première vue, en ce qu’elles traitent toutes deux d’amours vouées à l’échec. Mais *Werther* aborde le sujet beaucoup plus en profondeur, à la fois musicalement et psychologiquement. Déjà les mesures introductives, par exemple, suggèrent l’issue fatale de l’engouement obsessionnel du héros pour Charlotte. Massenet avait également appris à traiter les motifs principaux d’une manière beaucoup plus sophistiquée: ceux-ci réapparaissent sous des formes diverses tout au long de la partition, harmonieusement entrelacés et émaillés, incidemment, d’une multitude de détails subtilement orchestrés.

Massenet crée un saisissant contraste entre le contentement apparent qui caractérise la vie bourgeoise dans la maison du Bailli – l’environnement domestique et les certitudes morales sont reflétées par une écriture diatonique et enjouée – et l’extase et l’agonie de l’amour de Werther, ainsi que l’émoi de Charlotte – rendus en un style harmoniquement plus complexe. Toute la musique de *Werther* est formulée en termes passionnés qui expriment toujours sa sensibilité poétique et les émotions violentes dont il est la proie. Massenet les décrit en une série d’accès de passion et/ou de réflexion. Le héros romantique “s’exprime” souvent sous forme de métaphores, comme dans son ode à la nature, pleine d’exaltation, de l’acte I et dans sa méditation sur le suicide de l’acte II, ou – comme dans le lied d’Ossian de l’acte III – véhicule ses sentiments au travers les paroles d’un autre.

Charlotte est un caractère plus intéressant encore. C’est une femme complexe, déchirée entre le devoir et la passion: en effet, c’est certainement Werther qui éveille en elle ces sentiments érotiques si différents de ceux que lui inspire la conformité rigide de son époux, Albert. Contrairement à Werther, Charlotte évolue énormément au cours de l’action. Le

calme apparent des deux premiers actes dans lesquels elle est plus mère que jeune femme (devant s'occuper des plus jeunes enfants de son père veuf) se métamorphose dans l'acte III, le plus intense de l'opéra, en trouble et en anxiété sous l'effet de ses sentiments pour Werther. Ceux-ci sont mis en évidence par la lecture de ses lettres dans lesquelles il fait allusion à son amour et à sa solitude.

C'est à la perfection que Massenet esquisse cette scène en termes vocaux et instrumentaux. Il poursuit par l'"Air des larmes" et la prière de Charlotte dans lequel elle donne libre cours à ses émotions contradictoires. Suit alors le retour de Werther, la veille de Noël, comme l'avait exigé Charlotte lorsqu'elle l'avait repoussé dans l'acte II. Après le lied d'Ossian, Werther l'oblige à avouer son amour sans que cela soit vraiment contre sa volonté. Dans la scène finale, après que Werther a dirigé vers lui l'un des pistolets que lui a donnés l'époux de Charlotte, les amants évoquent leur passé et Charlotte devient une partie de lui-même; le cours ordinaire de la vie est suggéré par les chants de Noël qui résonnent joyeusement.

Le rôle d'Albert est court mais essentiel. Le personnage simple et balourd de l'acte I devient l'époux inquiet de l'acte II et l'homme aigri de l'acte III, qui oblige sa femme à

remettre à Werther les armes qui deviendront l'instrument de son suicide. Même le personnage relativement peu compliqué de Sophie évolue: insouciant dans les deux premiers actes, elle devient inquiète dans l'acte III. Le vieux Bailli remplit, dans l'acte I, son rôle de brave père, plein de sagesse, un père qui incarne les valeurs bourgeoises. Les personnages de Johann et de Schmidt, amis du Bailli, ajoutent un élément de contraste par rapport aux amants.

Les débuts de l'œuvre ne furent guère faciles. L'Opéra-Comique la refusa en 1887, la jugeant trop lugubre. Pendant quatre ans, elle resta dans les tiroirs du compositeur. Mais après le succès que lui valut *Manon* au Hofoper de Vienne en 1890, Massenet fut invité par la direction à lui fournir une autre œuvre. *Werther* fut alors ressuscité et sa création eut lieu le 16 février 1892; l'opéra fut très applaudi. Le ténor héroïque belge van Dyck assumait le rôle titre et Massenet ajouta à l'acte II "Désolation" (Another! Another's wife!/Un autre est son époux!), solo plein d'effet à son intention. Ensuite, l'opéra fit son chemin dans les pays de langue allemande, phénomène assez étonnant, car le *Faust* de Gounod qui y était toujours intitulé *Margarethe*, comme pour indiquer qu'il n'était pas vraiment digne du chef-d'œuvre de

Goethe, avait été traité avec une certaine prudence. Ce ne fut pas le cas de *Werther*, jugé relativement fidèle à l'original, qui avait été considéré comme une émanation du romantisme lors de sa parution en 1774. Le roman se focalise presque exclusivement sur le héros, Werther, Charlotte étant le lointain objet de son obsession. Massenet et ses librettistes prirent conscience de la nécessité de la mettre en valeur pour qu'il y ait deux protagonistes d'importance presque identique. Ceux-ci pouvaient alors se voir confier les longs duos qui sont l'essence même du drame musical. Le bon sens de Charlotte compense de manière appréciable les caprices et le comportement de poète de Werther, du moins jusqu'à ce qu'elle fasse enfin partie de sa vie et se donne à lui, mais trop tard. La tragédie qui s'ensuit est aussi vive pour elle que pour lui et on se demande, alors, comment se déroula l'existence de Charlotte en tant qu'épouse soumise d'Albert.

Werther fut finalement interprété à l'Opéra-Comique en 1893, mais ce fut sa reprise, dix ans plus tard, qui établit sa popularité en France. Pendant les cinq décennies suivantes, tous les artistes français de renom le chantèrent. Le rôle titre fut interprété par des ténors lyriques comme Charles Friant, grand chanteur et comédien, par Tito Schipa, ainsi

que par des ténors à la voix plus imposante, comme Georges Thill que l'on entend dans le premier enregistrement de l'œuvre. Au cours de la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle, des ténors célèbres comme Alfredo Kraus, un interprète lyrique, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras et Roberto Alagna ont chanté ce rôle. Il en est de même pour le rôle de Charlotte: des sopranos lyriques telles Ninon Vallin (également dans ce premier enregistrement) ou Victoria de los Angeles, tout comme des mezzos dramatiques telles Dame Janet Baker, ici, s'y sont essayées. Massenet voulait apparemment que la soprano, Rose Caron, fût la première Charlotte française. Toutefois, le rôle fut finalement interprété par Marie Delna, une mezzo-soprano; donc, dès le début, deux types de voix se sont partagées le rôle. Mais ce qui importe bien plus que le type de voix est la nécessité pour chaque interprète des rôles principaux de s'identifier à ceux-ci; l'exécution dont il est question ici en souligne l'évidence.

Cet enregistrement en direct provient de la première reprise d'une production du English National Opera en 1977, qui fut un énorme succès. La mise en scène imaginative et évocatrice de John Copley (tellement supérieure à celle qui, malheureusement, la remplaça quelque dix ans plus tard) fut portée

aux nues. L'expérience visuelle ne peut être suggérée par l'enregistrement, mais l'interprétation merveilleusement expressive qu'en donna Charles Mackerras qui dirigeait l'œuvre avec la contribution convaincante de l'orchestre de l'English National Opera de l'époque nous réjouira tout au long de son audition. La mise en forme de la partition et le rythme sont irréprouchables du début jusqu'à la fin de l'exécution.

Avec Janet Baker dans le rôle de Charlotte, l'un de ses plus grands succès, l'exécution ne pouvait guère être un échec. Sa voix cristalline exprime tous les aspects de ce caractère complexe. Réserve et bienveillante comme le personnage apparemment conventionnel de Charlotte dans les actes I et II, elle nous offre une interprétation puissamment tragique dans l'acte III lorsque les Lettres, les Larmes et les Prières forment partie intégrante d'un ensemble convaincant, et elle s'imprègne de tout le désespoir de l'acte IV quand Charlotte tente de reconforter Werther qui se meurt. Et, répondant à notre attente, elle manie le texte anglais, tout au long de l'opéra, avec un sens infailible de sa signification intrinsèque, soulignant certains termes et nuancant l'éclairage de sa délicate expression lorsque la situation l'exige. Un bel exemple de sa maîtrise est l'épisode qui suit le

retour de Werther à la veille de Noël dans l'acte III. Charlotte contemple avec Werther la pièce dans laquelle ils se sont entretenus quelques mois auparavant et ils se souviennent des moments heureux qu'ils ont vécus ensemble. Dans une phrase que chacun répète, Charlotte rappelle que "Ev'rything is still here in the place where you knew it" (Toute chose est encore à la place connue). Janet Baker chante la phrase avec une délicate intimité d'expression: c'est un passage harmonieux qui va au cœur même de la question. Quelques instants plus tard, Werther réussit à briser la réserve de Charlotte: l'effusion de passion de Baker est spontané et pleine de vigueur, et cède immédiatement place à un sentiment d'horreur à la vue de ce qu'elle vient de faire. Il ne s'agit que de l'atmosphère d'une interprétation d'une qualité rare, fort heureusement sauvegardée désormais pour la postérité.

John Brecknock réussit tout aussi bien que sa partenaire à formuler son discours, si bien qu'il n'est guère nécessaire d'avoir le livret devant soi. Sans que jamais la délicatesse et la sûreté de son expression en soient troublées, il nous transmet tout le désespoir de Werther. Il relève le défi qui lui est lancé dans les moments les plus passionnés, mais chante avec douceur dans les épisodes plus méditatifs. Le ton et le discours

fermes et élégants de Patrick Wheatley correspondent exactement à ce qu'exige le rôle d'Albert. Joy Roberts est une Sophie délicieusement fraîche, chantant ses deux airs avec une insouciance qui est tout à fait de mise. Harold Blackburn fut un favori de l'English National Opera (et auparavant du Sadler's Wells) pendant plus de vingt ans. Son Ochs dans *Der Rosenkavalier* fut très admiré à l'époque où il interpréta merveilleusement ce rôle du Bailli satisfait. Le jeune John Tomlinson s'impose en tant que Johann. Dans son ensemble, c'est donc une interprétation qui laisse un souvenir digne de ce que l'on pouvait espérer de l'époque Harewood/Mackerras à l'English National Opera.

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Synopsis

L'action se situe à Wetzlar, près de Francfort, vers la fin du dix-huitième siècle.

Acte I

Un après-midi de juillet. Le jardin de la maison du Bailli

Le Bailli, qui est veuf, apprend à ses enfants un chant de Noël, et deux voisins, Schmidt et Johann, contemplent avec amusement leurs

progrès. Ils demandent où est Charlotte, la fille aînée du Bailli, et apprennent qu'elle se prépare, comme les autres jeunes de Wetzlar, à aller au bal qui a lieu ce soir-là dans la localité. Werther, jeune homme sérieux que le Bailli apprécie mais que les voisins trouvent antipathique, l'escortera. Ils en viennent à parler d'Albert qui doit revenir bientôt pour demander la main de Charlotte qui a promis à sa mère de l'épouser. Les deux amis invitent le Bailli à dîner à l'auberge et s'en vont pour se mettre en appétit.

Werther arrive en s'extasiant sur la beauté de la soirée. Sans être vu d'elle, il observe Charlotte qui coupe du pain puis le beurre, pour le souper des enfants. Il est accueilli par le Bailli qui explique que depuis le décès de son épouse, Charlotte est devenue une seconde mère pour ses jeunes frères et sœurs. Quand les jeunes sont partis au bal, Sophie dit à son père de rejoindre ses amis à l'auberge. Donc, ni Charlotte, ni son père, ne sont là quand Albert revient, à l'improviste. Il dit à Sophie qu'il voulait leur faire une surprise et lui parle de son amour pour Charlotte. Puis, il part en promettant de revenir le lendemain matin.

Les jeunes rentrent du bal. Werther est tombé amoureux de Charlotte, mais la voix du Bailli qui annonce le retour d'Albert

interrompt sa déclaration. Charlotte affirme à Werther qu'elle avait oublié, jusqu'à ce moment précis, qu'elle était promise à Albert, et Werther, le cœur brisé, la presse de ne pas enfreindre sa promesse.

Acte II

Un dimanche après-midi, au mois de septembre suivant. Devant l'église

Johann et Schmidt boivent à l'extérieur de l'auberge, tandis que, dans l'église, le pasteur célèbre ses noces d'or. Albert qui est maintenant l'époux de Charlotte chante son bonheur. Werther les voit ensemble et est au désespoir parce qu'elle ne lui appartiendra jamais. Albert lui dit qu'il est triste qu'il n'ait pas su que Charlotte était fiancée avant que naisse son amour pour elle, mais Werther lui prétend qu'il n'éprouve maintenant pour eux deux que de l'amitié. S'il en était autrement, dit-il, il quitterait Wetzlar pour toujours. Sophie tente, avec enjouement, de divertir les hommes qui restent pensifs. Albert suggère à Werther de porter son attention sur elle. Werther s'avoue qu'il n'est pas guéri de sa souffrance. Il implore Charlotte de se souvenir de la soirée du bal, mais elle refuse de reconnaître ses sentiments pour lui et, lorsqu'il persiste, elle lui ordonne de quitter la ville et

de ne rentrer qu'à la veille de Noël. Werther entrevoit la mort comme seul remède à sa tristesse et dit à Sophie qu'il disparaîtra à jamais. Albert se rend compte que Werther est encore amoureux de Charlotte.

Acte III

La veille de Noël à cinq heures du soir. La maison d'Albert

En l'absence d'Albert, Charlotte relit les lettres de Werther. Sophie arrive et l'invite à rendre visite à son père et à sa famille, et lorsque Charlotte se met à pleurer en entendant prononcer le nom de Werther, elle redouble d'insistance. Charlotte promet de venir, puis, seule une fois de plus, elle prie afin de trouver la force de résister à l'amour qu'elle éprouve pour un homme autre que son époux. Werther apparaît à la porte. Charlotte se montre modérément contente de son retour et lui demande de lire sa traduction du lied d'Ossian comme il le faisait autrefois. Werther choisit le passage dans lequel le poète prédit sa propre mort et Charlotte l'implore de s'arrêter. Il se rend compte qu'elle l'aime et l'étreint. Horrifiée, Charlotte crie qu'ils ne doivent plus jamais se revoir et Werther décide de se suicider. Albert entre, surpris de trouver Charlotte éperdue. La servante de Werther

apporte un message dans lequel il demande s'il peut emprunter les pistolets d'Albert car il doit partir "pour un lointain voyage". Albert se rend compte, en voyant les réactions de Charlotte, que les sentiments que Werther lui porte sont réciproques, et il lui demande de lui remettre elle-même les pistolets. Puis Charlotte se lance à la poursuite de la servante, pleine d'anxiété et de remords.

Acte IV

Plus tard dans la nuit. Le cabinet de travail de Werther

Charlotte découvre Werther mortellement blessé. Elle lui déclare son amour et Werther lui demande pardon. Il meurt tandis que retentissent dans le lointain les voix des enfants chantant Noël.

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Traduction: Marie-Françoise de Meeûs

Né près de Nottingham, le ténor **John Brecknock** fit ses études à la Birmingham School of Music et avec Denis Dowling. Il devint membre du Sadler's Wells Opera (plus tard English National Opera) où il chanta de nombreux rôles, notamment Don Ottavio, Belmonte, Ferrando, le Comte Ory, Almaviva

(*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Alfredo, des Grioux (*Manon*), Tamino, le Duc (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* de Johann Strauss II) et Werther. Il se produisit également dans *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Die lustige Witwe* et *La gazza ladra*. Au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, il a chanté Fenton (*Falstaff*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Iopas (*Les Troyens*) et Gennaro (*Lucrezia Borgia*). Il s'est également produit au Welsh National Opera. A l'étranger, il a chanté dans *Don Giovanni* au Metropolitan Opera de New York, Ottawa et Buenos Aires; dans *Die Zauberflöte* à New York (Metropolitan Opera), New Orleans et Ottawa; dans *Il barbiere di Siviglia* à San Francisco, Miami et Vienne; dans *La Cenerentola* à l'Opéra de Paris, Buenos Aires et Cape Town; dans *Werther* à Rouen, Buenos Aires et San Diego; dans *La traviata* à Cape Town et Ottawa; dans *Les Pêcheurs de perles* à Rouen et Paris, et dans *Le Comte Ory* à Ottawa, *Rigoletto* à Houston et *Falstaff* à Miami. Parmi ses enregistrements, on citera *Robinson Crusoe* d'Offenbach pour Opera Rara et *La traviata* pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation.

Le bariton **Patrick Wheatley** prit des leçons auprès d'un professeur de chant dans le Leicestershire avant de remporter la bourse

d'études Peter Stuyvesant pour venir poursuivre sa formation au London Opera Centre. Il devint membre de l'English National Opera en 1974 où il a chanté de nombreux rôles, notamment Haly (*L'italiana in Algeri*), le Comte des Grieux et Brétigny (*Manon*), Schaunard (*La bohème*), Sharpless et Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*), Germont (*La traviata*), Albert (*Werther*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Vladislav (*Dalibor* de Smetana), Goryanshikov (*De la maison des morts* de Janáček), Fabrizio (*La gazza ladra*) et John Sorel (*The Consul* de Menotti). Il s'est également produit à l'Opera North (dans le rôle de Manz de *A Village Romeo and Juliet* de Delius) et avec la New Opera Company (le Mendiant dans *Julietta* de Martinů).

Né à Hamilton en Ecosse, **Harold Blackburn** fit ses études en privé à Glasgow. En 1948, après une saison au Carl Rosa Opera, il devint membre du chœur du Sadler's Wells Opera (plus tard English National Opera) où il imposa rapidement sa marque dans des petits rôles, et fut par la suite nommé basse principale. A l'aise aussi bien dans les rôles sérieux que dans les rôles comiques, il se fit remarquer pour son approche nouvelle de l'interprétation et pour sa concentration sur le

texte. Ses innombrables succès incluent Don Pasquale, Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*), le maire Gottardo (*La gazza ladra*), le Tuteur (*Le Comte Ory*), Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Colline (*La bohème*), le Comte des Grieux (*Manon*) et la Magistrat (*Werther*), mais également Osmin, Sarastro, Plunkett (*Martha* de Flotow), Kecal (*La Fiancée vendue*), Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Fasolt (*Das Rheingold*), Hunding (*Die Walküre*) et le Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Il interpréta de nombreux rôles contemporains, notamment ceux du Père Barré dans *Die Teufel von Loudun* (Penderecki), William Humpage dans *A Penny for a Song* et Sherrin dans *The Mines of Sulphur* (deux opéras de Sir Richard Rodney Bennett). Il fut invité à chanter au Scottish Opera, au Welsh Opera et à l'English Opera Group. Avec l'English Opera Group, il effectua des tournées au Canada, au Japon et en Australie, et laissa en particulier le souvenir de son interprétation de Mr Peachum dans *The Beggar's Opera*. Harold Blackburn est mort en 1981.

Dame Janet Baker s'est produite avec les orchestres et les maestros les plus illustres dans le monde et elle a enregistré avec toutes les plus grandes troupes lyriques. Née dans le

Yorkshire, elle étudia le chant avec Helene Isepp puis Meriel St Clair. En 1956 elle remporte le deuxième prix du Kathleen Ferrier Award et dès lors s'impose sur la scène internationale, où elle devient tout autant réputée pour ses récitals de Lieder, ses rôles lyriques que ses solos de concert. Elle se fait remarquer entre autres dans *Dido and Aeneas* de Purcell à Aldeburgh avec l'English Opera Group en 1962, dans le rôle-titre du *Rape of Lucretia* de Britten (en 1964 et 1970) et dans le rôle de Kate dans *Owen Wingrave* (1971).

Pour le Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres elle est Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*) et l'Alceste de Gluck, pour Glyndebourne elle interprète Diana/Jupiter (*La Calisto* de Cavalli) et Pénélope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* de Monteverdi) et pour le Scottish Opera elle est Didon (*Les Troyens* de Berlioz). Pour l'English National Opera elle chante un répertoire allant de Monteverdi au *Werther* de Massenet, en passant par *Giulio Cesare* de Handel et *La Damnation de Faust* de Berlioz (Marguerite). C'est avec une production de *Maria Stuarda* de Donizetti qu'elle fait ses adieux à l'English National Opera. Elle a reçu de nombreuses distinctions, comme le Prix Shakespeare de Hambourg en 1971 et le titre de docteur

honoris causa de l'université de Londres, de l'université de Birmingham et de celle d'Oxford. Janet Baker est devenue Commander of the British Empire (CBE) en 1970, Dame of the British Empire (DBE) en 1976 et Companion of Honour en 1994. Elle a fait de très nombreux enregistrements, gravant entre autres *Ariodante* de Handel, *Orfeo ed Euridice* de Gluck, *Das Lied von der Erde* de Mahler, un grand nombre de récitals et, pour Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Giulio Cesare* et *Maria Stuarda*.

La soprano **Joy Roberts** est née à Huddersfield, et après avoir étudié à la Royal Academy of Music de Londres, elle devint membre des BBC Northern Singers, et effectua des tournées avec le Welsh National Opera for All. Elle s'est fréquemment produite avec la Handel Opera Society, et a chanté le rôle de Cherubino au Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Elle devint membre de l'English National Opera en 1976, et y a chanté les rôles de Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Annina (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* de Johann Strauss II), Sophie (*Werther*), Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*), Cupidon (*Orphée aux enfers* d'Offenbach), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) et le rôle titre de *Julietta* de Martinů. A l'Opera North, elle a

chanté Thérèse (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* de Poulenc), Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) et Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Joy Roberts se produit à la radio (*Hänsel und Gretel* de Humperdinck), et elle a notamment enregistré *Christopher Columbus* pour Opera Rara.

John Tomlinson fit ses études au Royal Manchester College of Music. Il a chanté régulièrement à l'English National Opera, au Royal Opera, Covent Garden, et se produit chaque année au Festival de Bayreuth depuis 1988. Ses nombreux rôles wagnériens incluent Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Wotan/Wanderer, Hagen, le Roi Mark, Hans Sachs, Titurel et Gurnemanz. En Grande-Bretagne, il a également chanté à l'Opera North, au Scottish Opera, au Festival de Glyndebourne, avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera et au Kent Opera. Il s'est produit sur les grandes scènes lyriques d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord dans des rôles tels que celui du Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Rocco (*Fidelio*), Philippe II (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Lindorf, Coppélius, Dr Miracle et Dapertutto dans *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), et les rôles titres dans *Boris Godounov* et dans *Oberto* et *Attila*

de Verdi. John Tomlinson figure dans de nombreux disques et vidéos. Sa discographie comporte, pour Opera Rara, *Gabriella di Vergy* de Donizetti et pour Chandos, en plus de son Claggart dans *Billy Budd* de Britten sous la baguette de Richard Hickox, des rôles dans *Maria Stuarda* et *Giulio Cesare*, des extraits de *Boris Godounov* et du *Rosenkavalier*, et un récital solo d'arias d'opéras (à paraître à l'automne 2000), réalisé en association avec la Peter Moores Foundation. John Tomlinson a été fait Commander of the British Empire (CBE) en 1997.

Le ténor **Terry Jenkins** fit ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres et au London Opera Centre, puis devint membre du Glyndebourne Festival Chorus, et chanta plusieurs rôles principaux dans des festivals et en tournées. Il s'est produit avec de nombreuses compagnies irlandaises et britanniques, notamment au Dublin Grand Opera, avec la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company et au Garsington Opera. À l'English National Opera, en qualité de membre de 1973 à 1994, et depuis comme invité régulier, il a chanté plus de soixante rôles parmi lesquels figurent Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Vanja (*Katya Kabanova*),

Orphée (*Orphée aux enfers*), Pedrillo, Don Basilio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Spalanzani (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Jack (*A Midsummer Marriage*), Snout (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) et le Comte Hauk-Sendorf (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*). Il fit ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres dans *We Come to the River* de Henze, et y chanta de nouveau dans *Salome*. À l'étranger, Terry Jenkins a chanté Loge (*Das Rheingold*) à l'Opéra de Seattle; Snout au Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, à l'Opéra-Comique (Paris), et à Lyon, Caen, Montpellier, Nîmes, Bordeaux et Rome; le Maître d'école (*La Passion grecque* de Martinů) au Festival de Bregenz. Pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation, il a chanté le rôle de Borsa dans l'enregistrement de l'English National Opera de *Rigoletto* mis en scène par Jonathan Miller.

Le Chœur de l'English National Opera est l'un des plus beaux atouts de cette compagnie lyrique. Remarquable autant pour la puissance de son chant que l'intensité de son jeu, cet ensemble a enthousiasmé le public dans d'innombrables productions de l'English National Opera. Ces soixante-huit choristes, riches d'une vaste expérience et d'une multitude de talents, marquent de leur sceau

toutes les représentations auxquelles ils participent. Le Chœur a triomphé entre autres dans *Guerre et paix* de Prokofiev, *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk* de Chostakovitch, *Billy Budd* et *Peter Grimes* de Britten, *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgsky, *Carmen* de Bizet et *Otello* de Verdi. Leur enregistrement de ce dernier opéra, dans une mise en scène de Jonathan Miller et sous la direction de Mark Elder, sortira prochainement chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation, tout comme leur enregistrement combien célèbre du cycle du *Ring* dirigé par Sir Reginald Goodall. Ils ont aussi enregistré pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller) et *La traviata*.

Salué autant par la critique que par le public, L'Orchestre de l'English National Opera, avec Barry Griffiths comme premier violon, s'est vu décerner ces dernières années plusieurs prix prestigieux comme le Prix de la Royal Philharmonic Society et un *Olivier Award* pour sa contribution exceptionnelle au monde lyrique. L'Orchestre est au cœur de la vie artistique de la Compagnie et outre les représentations lyriques au Coliseum à Londres,

il se produit également en concert. De plus, de nombreux membres de l'Orchestre participent au Projet Baylis mis sur pied par la branche de la Compagnie chargée de l'éducation ainsi qu'au développement de nouveaux opéras avec l'English National Opera Studio, comme *The Silver Tassie* de Mark-Anthony Turnage dont la création mondiale eu lieu en février 2000.

L'Orchestre a participé à de nombreux enregistrements, comme le fameux cycle du *Ring* dirigé par Sir Reginald Goodall qui doit prochainement paraître chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation, tout comme son enregistrement d'*Otello* de Verdi sous la baguette de Mark Elder. Parmi ses autres enregistrements pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, notons *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller) et *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras naquit en 1925 aux Etats-Unis de parents australiens et fit ses études à Sydney et Prague. Il fit ses débuts de chef lyrique au Sadler's Wells Opera, où il contribua à la première britannique de *Katya Kabanova* de Janáček, une création sensationnelle qui assura à Janáček de figurer au répertoire des troupes britanniques. Il fut

Chef d'orchestre principal de l'Opéra de Hambourg (1966–1969) et directeur musical du Sadler's Wells Opera (qui deviendrait l'English National Opera) entre 1970 et 1977 et du Welsh National Opera entre 1987 et 1991, où ses productions remarquables de Janáček entre autres furent accueillies avec enthousiasme. La production et l'enregistrement d'*Osud* ont été financés par la Peter Moores Foundation. Il est Chef d'orchestre honoraire du Scottish Chamber Orchestra et du Welsh National Opera, l'un des chefs réguliers de San Francisco Opera et, depuis la saison 1998–1999, directeur de l'Orchestra of St Luke's à New York. Il est associé depuis de nombreuses années avec le Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, et dirige régulièrement au Metropolitan Opera de New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras a fait des recherches poussées sur l'interprétation aux dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles qui ont profondément influencé la façon dont il aborde le répertoire aujourd'hui. Sa vaste discographie comprend un cycle primé des opéras de Janáček avec la Philharmonie de Vienne, *Gloriana* de Britten et *Rusalka* de Dvořák (primés tous les deux par la revue *Gramophone*), des symphonies de Beethoven, Brahms et Mahler, et avec l'English

National Opera *Giulio Cesare* de Handel et *Maria Stuarda* de Donizetti (pour Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sir Charles Mackerras est Commander of the British Empire (CBE) depuis 1974 et a été

anobli en 1979 pour services rendus à la musique. Il s'est vu également décerner la Médaille du mérite de la République tchèque, le Prix Chopin et le titre de Companion of the Order of Australia.



Werther
and Charlotte,
Act I

56



At the Inn, Act II

57

Jules Massenet: Werther

Massenet è a tutt'oggi snobbato da persone superiori: per esempio, non gli è stato ancora concesso un volume nella serie di "Master Musicians" avendo successivi editori mancato di prenderlo sul serio quale compositore di considerato commento. Mentre fra i compositori francesi Berlioz viene portato alle stelle, pur avendo, malgrado tutte le sue idee rivoluzionarie, un limitato concetto di come plasmare un'opera, il suo quasi-coevo, che aveva il genio dell'arte scenica e del momento musicale, è spesso trattato come un compositore di secondo rango. In effetti, Massenet non era solo uomo di teatro al cento per cento, ma conosceva anche il cuore umano e capiva la psiche femminile al pari di qualsiasi operista. Durante la sua lunga carriera di compositore per il teatro (e soprattutto nella Charlotte del *Werther*) creò eroine con le quali il pubblico si trova istintivamente in simpatia: Manon, Thais, Herodiade, Cendrillon, Sapho, Esclarmonde...

Per quanto riguarda la sua musica, le opere composte per l'Opéra-Comique manifestano uno stile scrupolosamente di conversazione, di modo che – malgrado il loro ispirato contenuto musicale – possono essere considerate come

drammi messi in musica. Rendendosi conto che ogni sfumatura nella parte vocale era di grande importanza, Massenet disseminò notazioni espressive in tutte le sue partiture: notazioni che sono essenziali nella proiezione del personaggio e nel significato della linea vocale. Gli interpreti le ignorano a loro rischio. Per quanto siano queste parti vocali strettamente legate alla lingua francese è essenziale capire tutti i dettagli vocali e verbali quando si esegue l'opera per un pubblico inglese affinché la traduzione possa assolvere il suo compito. Quando essa è così naturale come quella che si ascolta nella presente esecuzione, lo scopo viene raggiunto alla perfezione. Visto che l'opera viene cantata in inglese è più che mai vitale che si sentano le parole: come ricordo dall'ascolto in teatro, memoria confermata da questa registrazione, i presenti interpreti – a differenza di alcuni loro successori al London Coliseum – pronunciano il testo con chiarezza e ben gradita consapevolezza delle sue inflessioni.

Il testo in questione proviene dal romanzo autobiografico di Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (I dolori del giovane Werther), scritto sotto forma di epistolario. Fu adattato per la

scena con la massima abilità dai librettisti di Massenet. Al tempo in cui compose l'opera, nel 1886–7, Massenet stava giungendo all'apice delle sue forze creative. Il progresso nella sua tecnica rispetto a *Manon* (1884) – un tempo più popolare del *Werther*, adesso, giustamente, non è più così – è evidente. Le due opere possono avere delle superficiali somiglianze, in quanto che ambedue trattano il soggetto di amori senza scampo, ma *Werther* lo fa ad un livello musicale e psicologico assai più approfondito. Già sin dalle prime battute, ad esempio, sappiamo che l'ossessiva infatuazione dell'eroe in Charlotte finirà male. Massenet aveva inoltre imparato ad usare in maniera assai più raffinata motivi primari che ricorrono in modi diversi per tutta una partitura, tessuta ininterrottamente dal principio alla fine e inoltre ricca di particolari strumentati con sottile destrezza.

Massenet presenta un sorprendente contrasto tra l'apparente felicità della vita borghese nella casa del Magistrato, il suo ambiente domestico e le certezze morali espressi fondamentalmente in termini diatonici e baldanzosi, e l'estasi e l'agonia dell'amore di Werther, il tumulto di emozioni nell'animo di Charlotte descritti in una maniera armonicamente più complessa. Tutta la musica di Werther parla in termini

appassionati, sempre eloquenti nel descrivere la sua sensibilità poetica e le violente emozioni che lo dilanano. Massenet li dipinge in una serie d'impulsi volta a volta appassionati e riflessivi. L'eroe romantico spesso "parla" in metafore, come avviene nel suo appassionato inno alla natura nell'Atto I, nelle sue meditazioni sul suicidio nell'Atto II, oppure – come nella Romanza di Ossian nell'Atto III – lascia che i suoi sentimenti si esternino tramite le parole altrui.

Charlotte è un personaggio ancor più interessante. È una donna complessa, divisa fra il dovere e l'interna passione. Senz'alcun dubbio è proprio Werther che risveglia in lei quei sentimenti erotici che tanto differiscono da quelli in lei ispirati dall'arido conformismo del marito Albert. A differenza di Werther, Charlotte si sviluppa immensamente nel corso dell'opera. La superficiale calma dei primi due atti, in cui Charlotte è più madre che giovane donna (essendosi trovata a dover badare ai figli piccoli del padre vedovo) viene rimpiazzata nell'Atto III, il più impegnato dell'opera, dal tumulto e dall'ansietà che i suoi sentimenti verso Werther le causano: sentimenti che vengono rinfocolati dalla lettura delle lettere nelle quali egli fa accenno ai suoi desideri e alla sua solitudine.

Massenet dipinge perfettamente quella scena in termini vocali e strumentali, facendole poi seguito con lo scatenarsi di tutte le emozioni contrastanti di Charlotte nella successiva “Air des larmes” (che si può solamente tradurre come “Le lacrime”) e dalla sua Preghiera. Il tutto viene seguito dal puntuale ritorno di Werther la vigilia di Natale, come Charlotte aveva voluto quando lo aveva bandito nell’Atto II. Dopo la Romanza di Ossian egli la costringe, non esattamente contro la sua volontà, a confessare il suo amore. Nell’ultima scena, dopo che Werther si è sparato con una delle pistole che il marito di Charlotte gli ha dato, gli amanti ricordano il passato, Charlotte essendo ormai interamente parte della sua psiche, mentre, al di fuori, il mondo ordinario è ritratto nelle gaie canzoncine natalizie.

Albert ha una parte breve ma significativa. Il personaggio semplice e tedioso dell’Atto I diventa il marito ansioso dell’Atto II e l’uomo rancoroso dell’Atto III che ordina alla moglie di consegnare le armi che diventeranno lo strumento del suicidio dell’amante. Persino la relativamente lineare Sophie evolve dalla ragazzina spensierata dei primi due atti all’adolescente inquieta dell’Atto III; il vecchio Magistrato (Le Bailli nell’originale francese)

serve al suo scopo di confortevole e paterno uomo d’esperienza dell’Atto I, epitome dei valori borghesi. Le parti di Johann e Schmidt, amici del Magistrato, sono due cammei che aggiungono un ulteriore elemento di contrasto agli amanti.

L’opera non ebbe inizialmente vita facile. L’Opéra-Comique la respinse nel 1887 ritenendola troppo lugubre. Per quattro anni rimase nel cassetto del compositore. Quando Massenet nel 1890 ebbe successo a Vienna, all’Hofoper, con *Manon* la direzione del teatro richiese un altro pezzo. *Werther* venne resuscitata e fu rappresentata con grande successo il 16 febbraio 1892. Il belga van Dyck, tenore di forza, cantò la parte di Werther e Massenet aggiunse l’aria “Désolation” (Another! Another’s wife!/Un altro è suo marito!) all’Atto II: un’aria energica ben adatta alla sua voce. In seguito l’opera fece regolari progressi in paesi di lingua tedesca: cosa piuttosto sorprendente visto che il *Faust* di Gounod, in quest’area sempre chiamata *Margarethe*, ad indicare che non era proprio all’altezza del capolavoro goethiano, era stata trattata con una certa precauzione. Non fu così per *Werther*: l’opera venne considerata ragionevolmente fedele all’originale che era stato stimato l’incarnazione del

Romanticismo quando fu pubblicato nel 1774. Il romanzo è quasi esclusivamente centrato sull’eroe del titolo, con Charlotte remoto oggetto della sua ossessione. Massenet e i suoi librettisti si resero conto che dovevano metterla più in vista per poter creare due personaggi quasi egualmente principali. A questi sarebbero quindi toccati gli estesi duetti che rappresentano il fulcro del melodramma. Il buon senso di Charlotte fa da giusto contrappeso agli atteggiamenti e alle fantasie romantiche di Werther: almeno fin quando non diventa ella stessa parte della sua vita e – troppo tardi – a lui si cede. La successiva tragedia finisce per coinvolgere lei quanto lui, e ci si domanda, dopo, come sarà poi stata la sua rimanente esistenza di fedele moglie di Albert.

Werther finalmente arrivò all’Opéra-Comique nel 1893, ma fu una ripresa dieci anni dopo ad assicurare la sua popolarità in Francia. Per il successivo mezzo secolo fu cantata da tutti i noti artisti francesi dell’epoca. La parte del protagonista è stata assunta sia da tenori lirici come Charles Friant, grande cantante-attore, e Tito Schipa, sia da tenori più pesanti come Georges Thill, che appare nel primo disco dell’opera. Nella seconda metà del Novecento tenori di vaglia come Alfredo Kraus, interprete lirico, e

Plácido Domingo, José Carreras e Roberto Alagna hanno assunto il ruolo. Similmente, Charlotte è stata cantata da soprani lirici come Ninon Vallin (pure in quel primo disco) e Victoria de los Angeles, e da mezzosoprani drammatici come Dame Janet Baker in questo disco. A quanto pare Massenet voleva un soprano, Rose Caron, come la sua prima Charlotte francese. Comunque il ruolo venne infine dato a Marie Delna, mezzosoprano, cosicché fin dal principio è stato diviso fra due tipi di cantanti. Molto più importante che il tipo di cantante è la necessità che ogni interprete delle parti principali sappia identificarsi con esse, cosa che si manifesta nell’esecuzione qui esaminata.

Questa registrazione dal vivo deriva dalla prima ripresa di una produzione estremamente felice dell’English National Opera nel 1977. L’allestimento di John Copley, immaginoso ed evocativo (tanto superiore a quello che purtroppo lo rimpiazzò circa una decade dopo) destò grande entusiasmo. Quell’esperienza visiva non può essere riprodotta in una registrazione, ma la magnificamente idiomatica direzione di Charles Mackerras rimane un piacere continuo, così come del tutto convincente è il contributo dell’orchestra di allora dell’English

National Opera. La musica si snoda in perfetta forma e sincronia dal principio alla fine.

Con Janet Baker a disposizione per Charlotte, uno dei suoi ruoli più felici, l'esecuzione non poteva fare una grinza. Con una voce fresca come una rosa Janet Baker comunica ogni aspetto del complesso carattere. Contenuta e compassionevole nell'apparentemente convenzionale Charlotte del primo e secondo atto, la sua interpretazione si muta in una tragica forza nell'Atto III quando le Lettere, Lacrime e Preghiere divengono parte di un tutto convincente, ed essa afferra tutta la disperazione dell'Atto IV allorché Charlotte cerca di confortare Werther morente. Per tutto il tempo, come ci si può aspettare da lei, Janet Baker enuncia il testo inglese con un infallibile senso del suo intimo significato, sottolineando le parole, schiarendo ed oscurando il suo limpido tono così come esige la situazione. Un chiaro esempio della sua maestria è dimostrato al ritorno di Werther la vigilia di Natale nell'Atto III. La coppia contempla la stanza in cui avevano conversato mesi prima e ricorda le ore felici trascorse insieme. In una frase che ognuno dei due ripete Charlotte fa notare che "Ev'rything is still here in the place where you knew it" (Tutto è qui, al posto che tu conosci).

Janet Baker canta la frase con una dolce intimità, una linea posata che immediatamente coglie il segno. Pochi minuti dopo Werther riesce ad infrangere la riservatezza di Charlotte: lo sfogo di passione di Baker è spontaneo ed enfatico, subito seguito dal suo orrore all'idea di ciò che ha appena fatto. Questo è solo il punto culminante di un'interpretazione di rara distinzione ora felicemente conservata per i posteri.

John Brecknock è tanto abile quanto il suo partner nell'enunciare le sue parole tant'è vero che occorre appena avere davanti agli occhi il libretto. Senza mai disturbare la chiarezza della linea né il sicuro fraseggio ci lascia intravedere tutta la disperazione di Werther. Affronta valorosamente la sfida dei momenti più appassionati ma canta con squisita dolcezza in quelli più teneri. Il timbro rotondo e solido fraseggio di Patrick Wheatley sono esattamente quel che ci vuole per la parte di Albert. Joy Roberts è una Sophie deliziosamente fresca che canta le sue due incantevoli arie con la giusta spensieratezza. Harold Blackburn fu per oltre vent'anni un favorito della Sadler's Wells Opera prima e dell'English National Opera poi. Il suo Baron Ochs, in *Der Rosenkavalier*, era grandemente ammirato al tempo in cui presentò questo delizioso cammeo del

soddisfatto Magistrato. Il giovane John Tomlinson si distingue nel ruolo di Johann. Tutto sommato, questo disco è quanto di meglio si possa desiderare come souvenir dell'era Harewood/Mackerras all'English National Opera.

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La trama

L'azione si svolge a Wetzlar, nei pressi di Francoforte, verso la fine del Settecento.

Atto I

Una sera di luglio. Il giardino della casa del Magistrato

Il Magistrato, un vedovo, sta insegnando ai suoi bambini una canzoncina natalizia e i loro progressi sono seguiti con divertimento da due vicini, Johann e Schmidt. Essi chiedono dov'è Charlotte, la figlia maggiore, e la risposta è che si sta preparando, come altre giovani di Wetzlar, al ballo pubblico che avrà luogo quella sera. Werther, uno studioso giovane che piace al Magistrato ma che i vicini trovano poco congeniale, le farà da scorta. La conversazione si volge su Albert che presto sarà di ritorno per chiedere la mano di Charlotte che ha promesso a sua madre di sposarlo. Poi i

due amici invitano il Magistrato a cena in trattoria ed escono per risvegliare l'appetito.

Werther arriva decantando la bellezza della sera ed osserva, non visto, Charlotte che affetta ed imburra il pane per la cena dei bambini. Il Magistrato lo saluta e gli spiega che dalla morte della moglie Charlotte ha fatto da seconda madre ai fratellini e sorelline. Quando la comitiva si è avviata al ballo Sophie dice a suo padre di andare a raggiungere i suoi amici in trattoria. Perciò né Charlotte né suo padre si trovano in casa quando inaspettatamente Albert ritorna. Egli dice a Sophie che aveva sperato di far loro una sorpresa e le confessa il suo amore per Charlotte. Parte con la promessa di tornare l'indomani mattina.

Tornano i ballerini. Werther si è innamorato di Charlotte ma la sua dichiarazione viene troncata a metà dalla voce del Magistrato che annuncia il ritorno di Albert. Charlotte assicura Werther che lei aveva fino a quel momento dimenticato di essersi promessa ad Albert, e Werther, col cuore infranto, la esorta a non ritirare la parola.

Atto II

Una domenica pomeriggio, il settembre successivo. Fuori della chiesa

Johann e Schmidt stanno bevendo fuori della

trattoria, mentre il Pastore celebra le sue nozze d'oro in chiesa. Albert, ormai sposato con Charlotte, canta la sua felicità: Werther, vedendoli insieme, si dispera perché Charlotte non sarà mai sua. Albert gli dice che gli rincresce che l'affetto di Werther per sua moglie sia stato risvegliato prima che egli fosse al corrente del fidanzamento, ma Werther lo assicura che ora sente solo amicizia per loro due; se non fosse così partirebbe da Wetzlar per sempre. Sophie allegramente cerca di svagare i pensosi uomini e Albert suggerisce a Werther di volgere la sua attenzione a Sophie. Werther riconosce che le sue pene non sono finite. Implora Charlotte di ricordare la sera del ballo, ma lei rifiuta di ammettere i suoi sentimenti verso di lui; quando lui insiste gli ordina di lasciare la città e di tornare solo la vigilia di Natale. Werther contempla la morte quale soluzione della sua infelicità e dice a Sophie che parte per sempre. Albert si rende conto che Werther è tuttora innamorato di Charlotte.

Atto III

La vigilia di Natale; le cinque del pomeriggio. In casa di Albert

Nell'assenza di Albert Charlotte rilegge le lettere di Werther. Arriva Sophie con un invito

a far visita al padre e alla famiglia e raddoppia la sua insistenza quando Charlotte comincia a piangere quando viene menzionato il nome di Werther. Promette di venire e poi, di nuovo sola, prega di avere la forza di resistere all'amore per un uomo che non è suo marito. Werther appare alla porta. Charlotte pretende di essere soltanto contenta che sia tornato e gli chiede di leggerle la sua traduzione di Ossian, come usava fare. Werther sceglie il passaggio in cui il poeta prevede la sua morte e Charlotte lo prega di smettere. Egli si accorge che Charlotte lo ama e l'abbraccia. Atterrita, Charlotte esclama che non si devono incontrare mai più e Werther decide di suicidarsi. Albert entra, sorpreso di trovare Charlotte disperata. Il servitore di Werther porta un messaggio in cui chiede ad Albert di prestargli le sue pistole perché "si accinge ad un lungo viaggio". Dalle sue reazioni Albert si accorge che Charlotte contraccambia l'amore di Werther; la costringe a consegnare lei stessa le pistole. Charlotte si affretta dietro al servitore, piena di ansietà e di rimorso.

Atto IV

Più tardi, la stessa sera. Nello studio di Werther
Charlotte scopre Werther mortalmente ferito. Gli dichiara il suo amore e lui le chiede di perdonargli. Muore mentre si sentono a

distanza le voci dei bambini che cantano le canzoncine di Natale.

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Traduzione: Marcella Barzetti
(In grateful memory)

Nato nei pressi di Nottingham, il tenore **John Brecknock** ha studiato presso la Birmingham School of Music e con Denis Dowling. È entrato alla Sadler's Wells Opera (successivamente divenuta English National Opera), dove ha interpretato numerosi ruoli, tra cui Don Ottavio, Belmonte, Ferrando, il conte Ory, Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Alfredo, Des Grieux (*Manon*), Tamino, il Duca (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* di Johann Strauss figlio) e Werther, oltre a comparire in *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Die lustige Witwe* e *La gazza ladra*. Alla Royal Opera del Covent Garden ha interpretato, tra l'altro, il ruolo di Fenton (*Falstaff*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Iopaas (*Les Troyens*) e Gennaro (*Lucrezia Borgia*). Ha cantato anche con la Welsh National Opera. All'estero, è stato impegnato, tra l'altro, nel *Don Giovanni* a New York (Metropolitan Opera), Ottawa e Buenos Aires; in *Die Zauberflöte* a New York (Metropolitan Opera), New Orleans e Ottawa; nel *Barbiere di Siviglia* a San Francisco, Miami e Vienna;

ne *La Cenerentola* a Parigi (Opéra), Buenos Aires e Città del Capo; nel *Werther* a Rouen, Buenos Aires e San Diego; ne *La traviata* a Città del Capo e Ottawa; in *Les Pêcheurs de perles* a Rouen e Parigi; in *Le Comte Ory* a Ottawa, nel *Rigoletto* a Houston e *Falstaff* a Miami. La sua discografia comprende *Robinson Crusoe* di Offenbach per Opera Rara e *La traviata* per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Dopo aver studiato privatamente con un insegnante di canto del Leicestershire, il baritono **Patrick Wheatley** vinceva una borsa di studio Peter Stuyvesant per il London Opera Centre. Entrava a far parte dell'English National Opera nel 1974; qui ha interpretato ruoli diversi, tra cui Haly (*L'italiana in Algeri*), i conti Des Grieux e de Brétigny (*Manon*), Schaunard (*La bohème*), Sharpless e Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*), Germont (*La traviata*), Albert (*Werther*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Vladislav (*Dalibor* di Smetana), Goryanshikov (*Da una casa di morti* di Janáček), Fabrizio (*La gazza ladra*) e John Sorel (*The Consul* di Menotti). Inoltre si è esibito con Opera North (Manz in *A Village Romeo and Juliet* di Delius) e con la New Opera Company (mendicante nella *Julietta* di Martinů).

Scozzese, nato a Hamilton, **Harold Blackburn** ha studiato privatamente a Glasgow. Nel 1948, dopo una stagione con la Carl Rosa Opera, entrava a far parte del coro della Sadler's Wells Opera (che avrebbe poi preso il nome di English National Opera). Ben presto si faceva notare interpretando alcune piccole parti e in seguito diventava basso solista. A proprio agio nei ruoli seri e anche in quelli comici, si faceva notare per la novità delle sue interpretazioni e l'attenta concentrazione sul testo. Tra i suoi numerosi ruoli di successo vanno ricordati Don Pasquale, Mustafà (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Gottardo (*La gazza ladra*), il Tutore (*Le Comte Ory*), Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Colline (*La bohème*), il conte Des Grieux (*Manon*) e il Magistrato (*Werther*) oltre ad Osmín, Sarastro, Plunkett (*Martha* di Flotow), Kezal (*La sposa venduta*), Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Fasolt (*Das Rheingold*), Hunding (*Die Walküre*) e il barone Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Ha affrontato numerosi ruoli contemporanei, tra cui il padre Barré in *Die Teufel von Loudun* (Penderecki), William Humpage in *A Penny for a Song* e Sherrin in *The Mines of Sulphur* (due opere di Sir Richard Rodney Bennett). È comparso diverse volte come ospite con la Scottish Opera, la Welsh Opera e l'English Opera Group con cui ha svolto una tournée in

Canada, Giappone e Australia e dove viene ricordato particolarmente per la sua interpretazione di Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera*. Harold Blackburn è morto nel 1981.

Dame Janet Baker ha cantato con i più insigni direttori ed orchestre del mondo e inciso dischi per tutte le principali compagnie. Nata nello Yorkshire ha iniziato i suoi studi con Helene Isepp e continuato poi con Muriel St Clair. Nel 1956 vinse il secondo premio nel concorso Kathleen Ferrier e da allora ha acquistato fama internazionale di artista di pari rango in campo lirico, oratoriale e liederistico. Fra le sue interpretazioni degne di nota si includono il ruolo di Didone di Purcell a Aldeburgh con l'English Opera Group nel 1962, quello di protagonista ne *The Rape of Lucretia* di Britten (1964 e 1970) e di Kate in *Owen Wingrave*.

Per la Royal Opera, Covent Garden ha cantato Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*), e Alceste di Gluck; per Glyndebourne Diana/Jupiter (*La Calisto* di Cavalli), e Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* di Monteverdi), e per la Scottish Opera Didone (*Les Troyens* di Berlioz). Per la English National Opera il suo repertorio si è esteso da Monteverdi al *Werther* di Massenet includendo il *Giulio Cesare* di

Handel e Marguerite ne *La Damnation de Faust* di Berlioz. La sua ultima interpretazione per questa compagnia è stata in un'allestimento di *Maria Stuarda* di Donizetti. Ha ricevuto numerose onorificenze, fra le quali il Premio Shakespeare di Amburgo nel 1971 e lauree honoris causa dalle università di Londra, Birmingham e Oxford. Nel 1970 ha ricevuto il titolo di Commendatore (CBE), quello di Dame Janet Baker (DBE) nel 1976 e di Companion of Honour nel 1994. La sua cospicua discografia comprende l'*Ariodante* di Handel, *Orfeo ed Euridice* di Gluck, *Das Lied von der Erde* di Mahler, numerosi dischi di recitals e, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Giulio Cesare* e *Maria Stuarda*.

Joy Roberts, soprano, è nata a Huddersfield e ha studiato presso la Royal Academy of Music. Successivamente è entrata a far parte dei BBC Northern Singers e quindi ha svolto alcune tournée con la Welsh National Opera for All. Ha fatto numerose apparizioni con la Handel Opera Society e ha interpretato il ruolo di Cherubino alla Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Nel 1976 entrava a far parte della English National Opera, con cui ha interpretato, tra l'altro, i ruoli di Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Annina (*Eine Nacht in Venedig* di Johann

Strauss figlio), Sophie (*Werther*), Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*), Cupido (*Orphée aux enfers* di Offenbach), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) e il ruolo di protagonista nella *Julietta* di Martinů. Con Opera North ha interpretato i ruoli di Thérèse (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* di Poulenc), Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) e Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Joy Roberts canta per la radio (*Hänsel und Gretel* di Humperdinck) e le sue registrazioni comprendono *Christopher Columbus* per l'etichetta Opera Rara.

John Tomlinson ha studiato al Royal Manchester College of Music. Ha cantato regolarmente con le compagnie dell'English National Opera e della Royal Opera, Covent Garden, ed è apparso al festival di Bayreuth ogni anno dal 1988. I suoi numerosi ruoli wagneriani includono Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Wotan/Viandante, Hagen, Re Marco, Hans Sachs, Titirel e Gurnemanz. In Gran Bretagna ha cantato inoltre per Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival e Touring Opera e Kent Opera. È apparso sulla scena dei maggiori teatri lirici in Europa e nel Nord America in ruoli quali Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Mosè (*Moses und Aron*), Rocco (*Fidelio*), Filippo II (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die*

Zauberflöte), Lindorf, Coppélius, Dr. Miracle e Dapertutto (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*); ha inoltre cantato le parti di protagonista in *Boris Godunov*, nell'*Oberto* e *Attila* di Verdi. John Tomlinson appare in numerosi dischi e videoregistrazioni. La sua discografia include, per Opera Rara, *Gabriella di Vergy* di Donizetti, e per la Chandos, a parte il suo Claggart nel *Billy Budd* di Britten sotto Richard Hickox, ruoli in *Maria Stuarda* e *Giulio Cesare*, selezioni del *Boris Godunov* e *Der Rosenkavalier*, ed un recital di arie operistiche che verrà lanciato nell'autunno del 2000, incisi in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation. Nel 1997, John Tomlinson ha ricevuto l'onorificenza inglese Commendatore (CBE).

Il tenore **Terry Jenkins** ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama e presso il London Opera Centre prima di entrare a far parte del Coro dell'opera di Glyndebourne e ad interpretare diversi ruoli importanti sia durante i festival sia in tournée. Ha cantato con numerose compagnie irlandesi e britanniche, tra cui la Dublin Grand Opera, la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company e la Garsington Opera. Ha fatto parte dell'English National Opera dal 1973 al 1994 e in seguito

è stato suo ospite regolare, interpretando oltre sessanta ruoli, tra cui Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Vanjia (*Kát'a Kabanová*), Orfeo (*Orphée aux enfers*), Pedrillo, Don Basilio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Spallanzani (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Jack (*A Midsummer Marriage*), Snout (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) e il conte Hauk Šendorf (*L'affare Makropulos*). Ha esordito alla Royal Opera, Covent Garden, in *We Come to the River* di Henze e vi ha fatto ritorno per *Salome*. All'estero ha interpretato, tra l'altro, il ruolo di Loge (*Das Rheingold*) all'opera di Seattle; quello di Snout al festival di Aix-en-Provence, all'Opéra-Comique di Parigi e a Lione, Caen, Montpellier, Nîmes, Bordeaux e Roma; e il ruolo del maestro (*La Passione greca* di Martinů) al festival di Bregenz. Per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation compare nelle vesti di Borsa nella registrazione del *Rigoletto* rappresentato dall'English National Opera per la regia di Jonathan Miller.

Il **Coro di English National Opera** è una delle migliori risorse dell'Opera. In innumerevoli produzioni della English National Opera ha entusiasmato le platee con il potere del canto e l'intensità della recitazione. Si tratta di sessantotto coristi e l'ampia gamma di capacità

ed esperienza che portano nelle esibizioni costituiscono il tratto distintivo di ogni produzione in cui appaiono. Particolari trionfi per il Coro sono stati *Guerra e pace* di Prokofiev, *Lady Macbeth dei macelli* di Shostakovich, *Billy Budd* e *Peter Grimes* di Britten, *Boris Godunov* di Mussorgsky, la *Carmen* di Bizet e l'*Otello* di Verdi. La loro ultima registrazione, nella produzione di Jonathan Miller diretta da Mark Elder, uscirà presto per Chandos con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation, come la loro registrazione del famoso "Ciclo del *Ring*" diretti da Sir Reginald Goodall. Altre registrazioni Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation sono *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller) e *La traviata*.

Acclamata dalla critica e dal pubblico, l'**Orchestra di English National Opera**, primo violino Barry Griffiths, ha ricevuto negli ultimi anni diversi premi prestigiosi, tra cui il *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* e un *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. L'Orchestra è al centro della vita artistica dell'Opera e, oltre a esibizioni liriche al Coliseum di Londra è stata anche vista sul palco in concerto. Inoltre molti dei musicisti

partecipano al lavoro del Baylis Programme del dipartimento di educazione e "outreach" dell'Opera e con l'English National Opera Studio allo sviluppo di nuove opere, in particolare *The Silver Tassie* di Mark-Anthony Turnage che è uscita in prima mondiale nel febbraio 2000. L'Orchestra appare in numerose registrazioni, tra cui il famoso "Ciclo del *Ring*" diretto da Sir Reginald Goodall, che apparirà presto su Chandos con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation, come pure la sua registrazione dell'*Otello* di Verdi diretto da Mark Elder. Altre registrazioni per Chandos/ Peter Moores Foundation sono *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller) e *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras è nato nel 1925 negli Stati Uniti da genitori australiani ed ha studiato a Sydney e a Praga. In opera ha debuttato come direttore al Sadler's Wells Opera dove diresse la sensazionale prima esecuzione britannica della *Kát'a Kabanová* di Janáček, rappresentazione che inserì Janáček nel corrente repertorio britannico. È stato direttore stabile dell'opera di Amburgo dal 1966 al 1969 e direttore artistico del Sadler's Wells (poi English National Opera) dal 1970 al 1977 e della Welsh National Opera dal

1987 al 1991 per la quale diresse, fra l'altro, di nuovo Janáček con grande successo.

L'allestimento e la registrazione di *Osud* vennero sponsorizzati dalla Peter Moores Foundation. Sir Charles Mackerras è direttore ad honoris della Scottish Chamber Orchestra, direttore emeritus della Welsh National Opera, direttore principali della San Francisco Opera e dalla stagione 1998/99 direttore artistico dell'Orchestra of St Luke's di New York. Da molti anni collabora con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden, e dirige regolarmente alla Metropolitan Opera di New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha intrapreso estese ricerche nella pratica esecutiva della musica del Settecento e Ottocento esercitando

profonda influenza nell'interpretazione dei nostri giorni. La sua vasta discografia include un assai premiato ciclo di opere di Janáček con l'Orchestra Filarmonica di Vienna, *Gloriana* di Britten e *Rusalka* di Dvořák (che hanno vinto i premi *Gramophone*) e con la English National Opera il *Giulio Cesare* di Handel e *Maria Stuarda* di Donizetti (per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sir Charles Mackerras ha ricevuto l'onorificenza di Commendatore (CBE) nel 1974 e il titolo di Sir per la sua attività di musicista nel 1979. Gli è stata inoltre conferita la medaglia al merito della Repubblica Ceca, il premio Chopin ed è stato nominato "Companion of the Order of Australia".



Werther and Charlotte, Act II



Werther, Albert and Sophie, Act II



Charlotte, Act III

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Prelude

Act I

The Magistrate's House (July 178...)

To the left, the house, with large bay window, a practicable terrace covered with foliage, a wooden staircase in front. To the right, the garden. At the back, a small wicket-gate. In the distance, the town houses and countryside. Downstage, a fountain. As the curtain rises, the Magistrate is sitting on the terrace, among his six children who are singing under his instructions.

The curtain rises on a loud, prolonged outburst of laughter from the children.

The Magistrate *(scolding them)*

2 Enough! Enough!

All attend to me, just for once.
Begin again, begin again!
This time not quite so loud, not quite so loud!

The Children *(singing roughly and loudly, with no light and shade)*

Noel! Noel! Noel!
Jesus Christ from Heaven...

The Magistrate *(growing angry)*

No, no!

The Children

Unto us this day is given...

The Magistrate

That will not do!

No, no!

That will not do!

(severely)

Can you really sing quite so badly, when your own sister is indoors?

Ev'ry note that you sing can be heard by Charlotte!

(The children seem extremely moved by the name of Charlotte: they resume the carol, now with seriousness.)

The Children

Noel!

The Magistrate *(with satisfaction)*

That's good!

The Children

Noel!

The Magistrate

That's good!

The Children

Jesus Christ from Heaven,
Unto us this day is given,
Hear ye, men of Israel!
In the sky above
Guardian angels earthward winging,
Chant their hymn, bringing to all men
Tidings of good will on earth.
Noel! Noel! *etc.*

The Magistrate

Noel! That's very good.

The Children and the Magistrate

Noel! Noel!

(Johann and Schmidt, who had stopped at the garden gate to listen to the children's chorus from behind the hedge, have entered the courtyard.)

Johann

3 Bravo, to all the choir!

Schmidt

Bravo to all the song!

The Children *(running up joyously)*

Ah! Mister Johann! Mister Schmidt!

(Schmidt and Johann kiss the children and congratulate them.)

Johann *(to the Magistrate)*

But, what's all this now, singing of Noel in July?
My friend, is not this rather early!

(The Magistrate has come down and shakes hands with his friends.)

The Magistrate

You find that amusing, Johann!
But why?
Other people are not so quick as you at things.
And you'll find it's no easy matter teaching children to sing,
(emphatically)
to sing, when they're so young and thoughtless!

Schmidt *(to Sophie who has just entered)*

Good-day, Sophie!

Eh! Eh! Charlotte is not at home.

Sophie *(curtseying to him)*

Yes she is, Mister Schmidt, you see we are in charge, Charlotte and I, of all the household.

Johann *(to the Magistrate)*

Well, such a lovely day!
Let's go!

The Magistrate *(to Johann)*

One moment, please.

Sophie *(to Johann, continuing the conversation)*

My sister's dressing for the ball.

The Magistrate *(turning round to Schmidt)*

Yes, the ball, for parents and her friends, to be held in the town. Someone's taking Charlotte.

Schmidt

So that is it!
Koffel's got his very best frock-coat on, and Steiner's asked the brewer to lend him his horse, and Hoffmann's got his trap and Goulden his carriage.
What's more, why even Werther's come back down to earth!

The Magistrate *(to his two friends)*

Young Werther! I like him.

Johann

He has no int'rest in food, though...

The Magistrate (*insistently*)
He is refined, and very well read.

Schmidt (*in a lively tone of voice*)
But slightly melancholic.

Johann
Yes, that's it! Never smiles!

The Magistrate (*pursuing his idea*)
I hear the Prince has promised him some foreign posting. For he holds him in great regard.

Johann (*scornfully*)
A diplomat! Him! Bah!
But he's no good at eating!

Schmidt (*alike*)
Wouldn't know a wine glass if he saw one!

Johann (*to the Magistrate, holding out his hands to him*)
Well, see you soon, down at the Inn.

Schmidt (*alike*)
Yes, and it's your turn to treat us.

The Magistrate (*exclaiming*)
Again!

Johann (*turning back*)
Yes, sir!
And besides, today's the day for lobsters!
Fat and round as your arm,
old Grechen has promised us.

The Magistrate
Always it's food.
You're both alike, then!
(*The two men make as if to leave.*)
But why not wait, I'm sure Charlotte won't be long?

Schmidt (*to Johann*)
We'll see her at her ball.
We thought of going for a stroll down on the town.

The Magistrate (*smiling, to Johann*)
Working up an appetite?

Johann (*a bit peevishly, to Schmidt*)
He thinks the worst as usual!
Let's be off, we are late!

Schmidt (*coming back to the Magistrate*)
By the way!
Is Albert due back soon?

The Magistrate (*simply*)
I can't tell you, he has not sent me any word yet,
but I have heard that all his plans are going well.

Schmidt
I'm glad!
Oh, Albert is a good and steady fellow, he'll make
a model husband for your Charlotte, and we, we
old ones, we will dance until we're all out of
breath at the wedding!
(*the two men going off arm in arm*)
(*gaily*)
Well, goodnight, boys and girls!

Johann (*gaily*)
Goodnight, boys and girls!

Schmidt (*to the Magistrate, lowering his voice*)
See you soon!

Johann (*alike*)
See you soon!

The Magistrate
Yes!

Sophie, the Magistrate, Schmidt, Johann and the Children
Goodnight! Goodnight!

Sophie and the Children
Goodnight! Goodnight! Goodnight!

Johann (*at the top of his voice*)
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!

Schmidt (*alike*)
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!

(*They are now out of sight.*)

The Magistrate (*to the children*)
Go in!
And we will sing our carol through once more
before our meal, quaver by quaver!
(*The Magistrate has gone back up the staircase and once inside the house:*)
Sophie, please go and see what Charlotte is doing.
(*Sophie goes off.*)

[4] (*The Magistrate seats himself in his leather, adjustable-backed chair; the youngest children crouch down on their knees and listen religiously to the lesson he gives them.*
The glass bay-window is half-closed.
Werther, accompanied by a young countryman, comes into the courtyard and looks curiously at the house.)

Werther (*to the countryman*)
And so, is this the house where the Magistrate lives?
(*dismissing his guide*)
Thank you.
(*Alone, Werther comes further down into the courtyard and stops in front of the fountain.*)
I know not if I'm waking or if I still am dreaming.
I see in all around me a paradise on earth,
the breezes fill the wood like a harp with their music.

Before my wond'ring eyes a new world is revealed!
[5] O fair Nature, great is your bounty,
Queen of all time and all existence.
Take to your heart this man who passes and
gives you greeting, humble is he!
O strange mysterious silence! O calm solemnity!
I am under a spell! This wall, this quiet corner
and that clear, flowing brook, the coolness of the
shadows. Ev'ry field, ev'ry hedgerow, ev'ry plant,
ev'ry tree is in leaf and in flower, and caressed by
the breeze!
O fair Nature, come, make me drunk with your

airs, thou who art forever youthful, you so pure
and lovely! O fair Nature! And you, O Sun,
shine and engulf me in your rays!

The Children (*inside the house*)
Jesus Christ from Heaven,
Unto us this day is given,
Hear ye, men of Israel!

Werther (*listening*)
Happy children!

The Children
In the sky above
Guardian angels earthward winging,
Chant their hymn, bringing to all men...

Werther (*to himself*)
There is nothing so dear as a child!

The Children
Tidings of good will on earth. Noel!
Noel! Noel! Noel!

Werther
Happy children!
For us, all existence is bitter –
for them, their days are full of faith,
their spirits filled with God's own radiance!
Ah, how much better they than I!

[6] (*Werther goes up to the fountain and stays a
moment in calm contemplation.
Charlotte enters: the children leave the Magistrate's
arms and jump up and down in front of her.*)

Hans and Karl
Charlotte! Charlotte!

Max, Gretel, Clara and Fritz
Charlotte! Charlotte!

Charlotte (*to the Magistrate*)
And so, father, did they sing it well?

The Magistrate
They did, I'm pleased.
Surprising as it seems!

The Children (*surrounding Charlotte*)
Yes, papa's very pleased, very pleased, very pleased!

The Magistrate (*embracing his daughter and
admiring her costume*)
You're looking very lovely, Charlotte!

The Children
Yes, yes, she is!

The Magistrate (*taking Charlotte's hands and
inspecting her afresh*)
Come here, my fine young lady, where we can
see you.
We shall have some jealous friends.

Charlotte (*smiling*)
Our jealous friends will never learn to be on
time...
They will be late, you may be certain. While I
am waiting I might just as well give the children
their supper.

(*Charlotte goes to the sideboard to get a large,
round loaf which she starts cutting into slices and
handing round to the children.
The sound of sleighbells and the noise of a carriage
are heard in the distance.*)

The Magistrate
Hurry up, that's the sound of the carriage.

(*The children crowd around Charlotte, stretching
out their hands towards her. Werther, who has gone
up the staircase, stops and, staying out of sight,
surveys the scene for a moment.
The children, as they receive their portion, go away
jumping up and down.*)

Hans and Gretel
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, dear sister.

Karl and Clara
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, dear sister.

Max
Thank you.

Fritz
Thank you.

The Magistrate (*seeing Werther and going up to
him*)
Ah! Why, Mister Werther!
You have come to inspect my poor, humble
retreat here – no, my poor, humble kingdom.
I am proud of my home.
(*introducing Charlotte to him*)

My daughter, who has charge of all this
household and of these naughty children too,
who are her care since the day when their
mother died.

Charlotte (*simply*)
You must excuse me, sir, if I have kept you
waiting, but I am, as you see, a mother to these
children, and they don't like it if their bread is
cut by any other hand than mine.

[7] (*The guests come into the courtyard; the Magistrate
goes to meet them; Sophie too, who comes back
laughing.*)

The Magistrate
Brühlmann, do come along!
Charlotte is ready.
So are they all.

(*Brühlmann walks side by side with Käthchen; they
go, looking into each other's eyes, and pay no
attention at all to the Magistrate who follows them
laughing.*)

Brühlmann (*with a sigh of ecstasy*)
Goethe!

Käthchen (*quite carried away*)
Goethe's divine!

(*The children laugh.*)

The Magistrate (*to Brühlmann*)
Enough!
You tell her the rest at the party.

If you talk quite so much, you won't get there at all!

(Werther has remained silent and disconcerted, looking at Charlotte, and when the young girl turns to the mirror to put on her shawl, he takes hold of the youngest child and kisses him. The child is frightened by this outburst of tenderness.)

Charlotte *(to the child whom Werther has taken up in his arms)*
Come, give your cousin a kiss.

Werther *(getting up, surprised)*
Cousin?
Am I then worthy of the name?

Charlotte *(playfully)*
Of course. Cousin!
That is an honoured title. But we have so many that we should be grieved if you were not the very best of all!
(Werther moves away, looking at Charlotte.)
(to Sophie, with authority, but not severely, pointing to the children)
Tonight you are in charge, Sophie.
I know they are safe in your care.
(to the children)
Will you be good while I am away?

Sophie
Yes, but they would be better pleased if it were you!

Werther *(in ecstasy, while Charlotte kisses the children)*

[8] O sweet vision, ideal of love and of devotion, that binds my eyes and heart, both alike, in a spell.
Would heaven but grant me to live my whole existence awakened by her glance and cradled by her voice!

(Most of the guests have already left by now; Brühlmann and Käthchen are still there, near the fountain, silent and absorbed. Charlotte, now ready, comes down into the courtyard. Werther goes to meet her. Sophie and the children form a group on the terrace and send kisses to their elder sister.)

The Magistrate *(greeting Werther)*
Mister Werther!

Charlotte
Goodbye, father.

The Magistrate *(to Charlotte)*
Goodbye, my own darling.
(Charlotte and Werther go off followed by a group of guests. Brühlmann and Käthchen are the last to go, without having said a word.)
(good-humouredly, watching them and smiling)
There go two who have all they want.
Goethe! Goethe's divine!
This ecstasy that binds them!
It's quite beyond my comprehension!
(Sophie has taken the children back into the house.)

[9] Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!

(The Magistrate, humming the while, goes to look for his long porcelain pipe which he has taken down from the pipe-rack.)
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!
(Still humming and looking a little embarrassed, he seats himself in his armchair and sets about smoking.)
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!

(Sophie has come back and smiles, seeing the Magistrate; she has quite quietly taken from the corner of the room the Magistrate's stick and hat and presents them to him prettily.)

Sophie
And who was it who said he'd meet them at the Inn?

The Magistrate *(embarrassed)*
Who? I? And you alone here?

Sophie
Why not?

The Magistrate *(humming through his teeth)*
La la la la la la la la la! No!

Sophie *(gravely)*
Do not argue!
Johann and Schmidt will wonder where you are.

The Magistrate *(allowing himself to be won over and taking the hat and stick from Sophie's hands)*
I'll just look in perhaps.
(He goes off.)

(turning back, to Sophie)
After all... must keep my promise!

(Sophie accompanies the Magistrate and shuts the street-door after him. Night falls slowly. Albert appears; he comes from the garden, a cloak on his arm; he has entered quietly and inspects the house; he draws near and sees Sophie coming down.)

Albert
[10] Sophie!

Sophie *(turning and recognising Albert)*
Albert! So you've returned?

Albert
Yes, I'm back, and how are you, my dear?
(He kisses her.)

Sophie
Your Charlotte will be so happy to see you back.

Albert
Is she not here?

Sophie
No, not tonight.
She, who hardly ever is absent.
And so, so why did you not let us know?

Albert *(simply)*
I had meant to surprise you.
Tell me of her, at least.

I'm impatient to know if I'm remembered here or not. Six months away can seem a lifetime.

Sophie (*with simplicity*)

With us, absent friends are remembered.
And besides, is she not to be your wife?

Albert (*joyfully*)

My dearest child!
And what has happened here?

Sophie

Here?
We have been at work preparing for your wedding.

Albert

Preparing for our wedding.

Sophie

There has to be a dance? Yes?

Albert

Of course, dancing and feasting.
(*with warmth*)

Yes, I want all my friends to be happy that day.
I've such happiness myself.

(*leading Sophie back to the steps*)

Now, go in.

For fear they should call you and so find out that I am back. Not a word. I will come and see her as soon as it is light.

Sophie (*going in*)

So till then, my brother to be.

(*She closes the glass door.*)

Albert (*alone*)

Yes, she loves me.

And she thinks of me.

[11] Feelings of deepest thankfulness and love fill my heart with a joy beyond all expression.
How strange it is when we return, the things, great and small, that can move us, how ev'rything around us has charms that pierce the soul!

Ah, how I wish in this hour Charlotte might recall all the thoughts I left with her, my hopes, my dreams, my love so true and tender.

(*He goes off slowly.*)

[12] *It is now night; the moon gradually lights up the house.*

[13] *Charlotte and Werther appear at the garden gate; they come on slowly, arm in arm, only stopping at the bottom of the steps where they both stay in silence for a moment.*

Charlotte (*simply*)

And so we two must part. We're home, home once again and I must go to bed.

Werther (*with more emphasis*)

Ah, if only these eyes would never close in sleep, these eyes, circling my world, these sweet eyes, my one hope, my one and only joy.
What care I for sleep or for rest?
Though the stars above and the sun in their regular course reappear in the heavens, I know

not if it's day, I know not if it's night. My being is dead for evermore to all that is not you.

Charlotte (*smiling*)

[14] But, you know nothing of me.

Werther (*earnestly*)

My soul has spoken unto yours, Charlotte, I have seen and know you are all that I look for in a woman.

Charlotte (*smiling*)

How can you be sure?

Werther (*gravely and tenderly*)

I know you are the best as you are the loveliest of living creatures!

Charlotte (*in confusion*)

No!

Werther

Must I ask what the children think, those whom you speak of as yours?

Charlotte (*pensively, and approaching Werther*)

[15] Alas, yes, they are mine.

What you say is true.

Here in the heart of ev'ryone our dear mother's memory lives on. And I also seem to see her smiling as she watches while I am caring for her children, who now are mine.

(*tenderly*)

Ah, what would I not give if here within this dwelling she would return and stay for just a

while to see if I keep all the vows made in the hour she left us.

(*with deep emotion*)

Dearest, dearest mama, if only you could see us!

Werther

Oh Charlotte! Angel pure and good. May heaven's blessing give you strength to bear your sorrow!

Charlotte

If only you had known her! Ah! What could be more cruel than losing in this way those we love best of all...

The sweetness of their lives, the bitterness of loss!

Is all that we love doomed to perish?

And the children have felt all this as much as I. For they still come and ask, and I cannot console them: Why did those men in black take our mama away?

Werther

[16] Visions of rapture and joy!

My life I would surrender to possess evermore those eyes, that lovely brow, those two lips that I worship, so enchanted, so enraptured, and to call them my own, evermore, mine alone!

Smile from Heaven above me.

Oh! Charlotte! How I love you, how I love you, love you and adore you!

Charlotte (*recovering herself, quickly goes up the steps*)

We are both mad, please go.

Werther (*in a changed tone of voice, and holding her back*)

But, we shall meet again?

The Magistrate (*returning, calls loudly inside the house*)

[17] **Charlotte!** Charlotte! Albert has returned!

Charlotte (*faltering*)
Albert?

Werther (*questioning Charlotte*)
Albert?

Charlotte (*in a low voice and sadly to Werther*)
Yes, the man whom my mother in her last hour made me promise to wed.
(*still with lowered voice, and as if accusing herself*)
God is my witness, that here, close to you, far from all my thoughts was the vow I now remember.

(*Werther hides his face in his hands as if he were sobbing.*)

Werther (*with an effort*)
A solemn vow. You cannot break it. I, I shall die!
Charlotte!
(*Charlotte goes back for the last time.*)
(*alone, in despair, when Charlotte is out of sight*)
Another! Another's wife!

(*Curtain*)

Act II

[18] The Lindens

In Wetzlar. September, the same year

The square. At the back, the Protestant chapel. To the left, the parsonage. To the right, the Inn surrounded by hops. In front of the chapel, clipped linden-trees through which the door can be seen. A bench under the trees, near the chapel entrance. Schmidt and Johann are sitting at a table outside the Inn. Back, right, the road and countryside. Beautiful weather. Sunday afternoon.

Johann (*glass in hand*)

[19] **Vivat Bacchus!** Semper vivat! This is Sunday!

Schmidt (*alike*)
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat! This is Sunday!

Johann and Schmidt
Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat!

(*A waitress comes out of the bar and refills the glasses of the two friends.*)

Johann
Ah! What a beautiful day!
On sunny days like this I feel my soul uplifted.

Schmidt
Life indeed is sweet when the breezes are so mild, the sky so blue, the wine so clear.

Johann
This is Sunday!

Schmidt
This is Sunday!

[20] (*organ in the chapel*)

Schmidt (*in a bantering tone*)
Come on, let's sing the office while the organ is playing.
(*gaily and frankly*)
Let all men praise the Lord and each man in his way! I thank Him for His gifts and praise Him ev'ry day.
Glory to Him who provides us with such good wine...

Johann (*alike*)
Let all men praise the Lord, and each one in his way! I thank Him for His gifts, and praise Him ev'ry day.

Schmidt
...and has made our lives here so pleasant.

Johann and Schmidt
So let us praise the Lord!

Johann (*looking*)
More people and still more people.
They come from all around.
To help the Pastor celebrate his fifty years of happy marriage.

Schmidt
It's one thing for the Pastor, fifty years of marriage, God gives him strength!

But I, I never could have borne it, no, not half the time!

(*Charlotte and Albert appear. Johann gets up, looking at them, and leans towards Schmidt.*)

Johann
And yet, you know, there are some who appear undaunted by a happiness such as his.
(*pointing them out*)
Look! Those two, for example.

Schmidt (*getting up*)
Ah, well! Let's have another glass and toast their happy future.

(*They go back into the Inn.*)

[21] (*Charlotte and Albert are now under the lindens: they sit on the bench.*)

Albert (*tenderly*)
Three months!
It is three months since the day that we wed.
They have gone by so quickly, yet, you know, that it seems as if we had spent our lives always together.

Charlotte (*softly*)
My dear!

Albert
If I could say all I feel in my heart!
(*still more tenderly*)
But you, who were so young a girl and so quiet and always smiling with your dear ones around

you, can you say that you're happy and have no regrets?

Charlotte (*getting up, simply*)

When a young girl has beside her in marriage one whose spirit is true, whose soul is without equal, how could she have any regret?

Albert (*moved*)

Ah, that sweet word of comfort! When you speak to me so, I'm the proudest of men and your captive for ever.

(*Charlotte, accompanied by Albert, moves towards the chapel; then Albert exchanges a few words with people going to the service.*)

[22] *Werther is seen at the top of the road. He comes down and observes from afar the intimacy of the married couple, himself obviously in torment.*)

Werther (*to himself, sadly*)

Another! Another's wife!
Bountiful God, if on my way through life you had given me leave to have this angel by my side, my whole existence then would have been evermore one long prayer of devotion.
Yet, as I speak, sometimes I fear lest I blaspheme.
It's I! I! I that she could have loved!

[23] These arms would now be holding the most divine, the loveliest of all created beings, formed for man by God himself. It's I, it's I, I that she could have loved.

I saw heav'n open wide in all its glory and close once again as I gazed.

It's I, it's I, I that she could have loved. *etc.*
All my body is trembling, and all my being...
(*in heart-rending tones*)
...cries aloud in torment.

(*Werther, greatly agitated, makes as if to go away, but he falls overcome on the bench, his head in his hands.*)

Schmidt and Johann reappear on the threshold of the Inn.

Schmidt offers his arm to Brühlmann, who is woebegone and silent.)

Schmidt (*entering, to Brühlmann*)

[24] Yes, Käthchen will come back, I am sure.

Johann (*to Brühlmann, as they walk*)

At what hour, on what day she may come back again, no matter. For she will surely come.

(*gesture of denial from Brühlmann*)

Schmidt

For she will surely come.

Johann

A seven years' engagement, that could not be forgotten so quickly!

Schmidt (*pulling Brühlmann along*)

Do hurry up! That's the bell for the dance.

If we are too late for church, at least we will start the ball!

(*They go out stumbling.*)

Albert has come down out of the chapel. He puts his

hand on Werther's shoulder, who trembles and moves as if to get away from Albert.)

Albert (*to Werther*)

With a joy filling my whole being, my friend, at times I still feel a sense of remorse.

Werther (*surprised*)

Of remorse?

Albert (*frankly*)

I know well your true and loyal heart.

[25] But she to whom I now am married, she crossed your path one day and you thought she was free, and perhaps being near her you may have seen a vision that has faded away?

When I see her beauty and sweetness, I know so well the worth of all that now is mine that I can understand that losing her is cruel!

(*taking his hand affectionately*)

And understanding this, how can I not forgive?

Werther

You said to me: My heart is sincere and is loyal.
(*with difficulty restraining his emotion*)

If I thought of the past with too bitter a pain, I would take back this hand from this hand it is clasping and would go far away never more to return.

But, as when storms are over, the sea once more is tranquil, my heart forgets the pain of a dream that is past.

And the man who could read my innermost emotions... he would discover there friendship,

and that alone, and this will be my joy, my one joy, for ever.

[26] (*Sophie runs in, flowers in her hands.*)

Sophie (*to Albert, gaily*)

Brother, look here. Look here, see my bouquet. In honour of the Pastor I've been robbing the garden.

And then, we are to dance.

(*to Werther*)

For the first minuet I shall count upon you, sir.
(*looking at Werther and scolding gently*)

Oh, but why look so gloomy?

(*simply and artlessly*)

Not on this day, this happy day.

All the world should rejoice.

There is joy in the air.

Look at the sun brightly shining.

Not a cloud is in the sky.

The golden warmth we feel on our faces warms our hearts too.

All the world should rejoice.

There is joy in the air.

And the bird that soars aloft on the sighing of the breezes brings to us all God's own message: let all the world now rejoice.

All the world should rejoice. *etc.*

Werther (*aside, more sadly*)

Rejoice! How could I any longer!

Albert (*to Sophie*)

Don't be late for the dance.

Go and present your flowers, I won't be long.
(Sophie goes a few steps back.)
(to Werther)
 Werther!
 We were speaking of joy.
 You may search far and wide, you may call it and
 entreat it.
(meaningfully)
 Yet, perhaps, it is there all the time, right in your
 path.
 With a smile on her lips and with flowers in her
 hands.

(Werther remains silent.)

Sophie *(on the threshold of the chapel, to Albert)*
 Oh brother, come along now.
(to Werther)
 And Mister Werther, don't forget, you are my
 partner in the first minuet.
(approaching and retiring bit by bit)
 Look at the sun brightly shining. etc.

(disappearing)

*(Albert has overtaken Sophie and has gone with her
 into the parsonage.)*

Werther *(alone)*

^[27] Was I not right?
 My love for Charlotte, is it not the most pure
 and the most sacred love? Was there ever an
 unworthy desire within this soul of mine?
(breaking out)
 Yes, it is false, it is false! O God, to suffer always

or live a life that's false!
 That is too shameful, that is weakness. I must,
 will go away.
*(Charlotte appears on the threshold of the chapel
 and moves towards the parsonage.
 Werther sees her and, very moved, changes his tone.)*
(aside)
 Away? No, my desire is only to be near her.

Charlotte *(without noticing Werther)*
 How divine when we pray a new strength to
 sustain us!

Werther *(at a distance)*
 Charlotte!

Charlotte *(turning towards him)*
 Ah, and will you come to greet our Pastor?

Werther *(approaching, sadly)*
 What's the use? I should only see you with another.
(coming nearer to Charlotte who stays motionless)

^[28] Ah, how far off that day, that sweet day that we
 shared.

When you and I first gazed on one another, that
 time when first we met.
 When we stood, side by side, you and I, for so
 long, so close, and without speaking.
 While the rays of the setting sun, which were
 shining so bright, seemed to promise a blessing
 on all our thoughts we could not speak.

Charlotte *(coldly)*
 Albert loves me and I am his wife!

Werther *(bursting out)*
 Of course, he loves you! Who could help loving
 you?

Charlotte *(more gently)*
 Werther!

^[29] Is there no other young girl in this place worthy
 to have your love, free to accept your love? I am
 no longer free, why do you then love me?

Werther
 Why?
 Ask a madman what has robbed him of his
 power of reason!

Charlotte *(resolutely)*
 And so... since it is fate that divides us forever,
 please go away!
 Please, go! Please, go!

Werther
 Can you mean what you have said?

Charlotte *(gravely)*
 I say what must be said and you must hear me.

Werther *(violently)*
 And what then will compel me?

Charlotte
 Your duty!
(more gently)
 Sometimes to go away makes a sorrow less bitter.

Werther *(sadly)*
 If I should go away, I still could not forget.

Charlotte *(still more gently)*
 But why forget?
 My friend, think instead of Charlotte, of her and
 of her peace. Be strong, be kind.

Werther *(gradually calming down)*
 Yes, I want nothing more if only you are happy.
(in tears, but calm)
 But to see you no more, cannot ask that! No!

Charlotte *(with great gentleness)*
 My friend, I could not ask you to make such a
 promise; this would not be for ever I send you
 away.
(controlling herself)
 You shall come back quite soon, but wait till
 Christmas Eve.

(She goes.)

Werther *(beseeching)*
 Charlotte!...

Charlotte *(turns back and then goes off)*
 Till Christmas Eve!

*(Werther wants to call her back; but he retraces his
 steps, discouraged and disheartened.)*
*(musing and looking at the path by which
 Charlotte has disappeared)*

Werther *(after a moment of despondency, resolutely)*
^[30] Yes, all that she commands me, for her own
 peace, that I will do.
 And if my strength of mind deserts me, then it's

I, evermore, I who will be at peace.
(musing)
 Why be afraid when faced with death?
 Faced with one's own death?
(feverishly)
 The veil is drawn aside...
(mysteriously)
 ...and we pass to what lies there beyond.
 And that is the meaning of death.
(still musing)
 Do we break faith with heav'n if we rest from our
 pain?
(simply)
^[31] When any son returns to his home unexpected,
 he hears no word of blame, he sees no angry
 look. At the sound of his footsteps all the house
 is alive and his father embraces him so joyously.
 O God, you who have made me, would you be
 less kind?
 No, I will not believe you would turn from your
 threshold and cast back to the night your own
 wandering son.
(sadly)
 Your son!
(tenderly)
 He would know from your smile as it shone
 through the starlight that he's returned to you,
 his sins forgiven him. Father, father, father
 whom I can never know yet whom alone I trust,
 speak to my heart, Oh call to me!
 Speak to my heart!
(tonelessly, almost spoken)

Speak to my heart!
^[32] *(Werther is about to go off when Sophie appears on
 the threshold of the parsonage.)*
Sophie *(gaily)*
 Do come along. The procession is starting. I
 don't wish to reproach you but it's you who are
 late.
Werther *(abruptly)*
 I won't be there. I'm leaving.
Sophie *(choking)*
 You are leaving!
Werther *(embarrassed)*
 Now at once.
Sophie *(repeating his words, very moved)*
 Now at once... Oh, but surely you will come
 back? Tomorrow? Quite soon?
Werther *(violently and with deep emotion)*
 No! No more! Farewell!
(He runs off.)
Sophie *(very moved, calling him)*
 Mister Werther!
(She runs after him as far as the road.)
(anxious and troubled)
 He is there at the corner, he's out of sight, he's
 gone!
(bursting into tears)
(She comes back down.)
 Oh dear, and just when I was so very happy.

*(The Jubilee procession is seen; people come from
 different directions.)*
Charlotte *(seeing Sophie and running up to her)*
 Ah, what is this? You are crying. Sophie!...
Sophie *(falling into Charlotte's arms)*
 Ah, sister, Mister Werther has left...
Albert *(startled)*
 Left...
Sophie
 And won't come back! He told me so this
 moment, and then...
(sobbing)
 ...he ran away as if mad!
Charlotte *(to herself, deeply wounded)*
 Not come back!
Albert *(sombrely, watching Charlotte)*
 He loves her!
*(The Jubilee procession crosses the square. Cheers
 and huzzas)*
(Curtain)

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

- ^[1] **Charlotte and Werther** (24 December 178...)
 24 December, 5 o'clock in the evening
*In Albert's house. The drawing-room. Back right,
 deeply recessed, folding doors. Left, in the same
 corner, a large green earthenware stove. At the
 back, the harpsichord, with keyboard in view;
 nearby, a window. Right, door of Albert's room.
 Left, door of Charlotte's room. In the foreground,
 left, a writing desk; nearer the middle, a work
 table and chair. Further to the right, still in the
 foreground, a sofa. A lighted lamp, with shade, on
 the table.*
Charlotte *(alone, sitting near the table, musing)*
^[2] Werther!... Ah, Werther!
 Could anyone have told me the place he'd hold
 in my heart to this time?
 Yet since he went away, I am weary of life.
(She lets her work fall.)
 And my soul lives only for him.
*(Slowly, she gets up as if drawn towards the writing
 desk, which she opens.)*
 These letters, these letters! Ah, how often I have
 read them. How they enthral me and yet fill me
 with such sadness! I know I should destroy
 them. But I cannot.
*(She has come back, near the table, her eyes fixed
 on the letter she is reading.)*

(reading)

- [3] 'Here in my room I'm writing you this letter.
Overhead the skies of December, heavy and grey,
hang like a shroud. And I'm alone. All, all alone.'
Ah, alone and no one near!

(moved)

No companion to share his lonely life or speak a
kindly word.

God, how could I have found the desperate
courage to decree such an exile far from all his
friends?

- [4] *(After a time she has taken another letter and opens it.)*

(reading)

'The children's happy cries float through my
garret window. Such happy cries! And I think of
those joyous times when round us in your home
the children played and sang.
Perhaps they will forget me?'

(stopping reading)

No, ah no, you will always have your own
special place in their hearts, and when at last you
come... yes, but ought you to come?

(fearfully)

Ah, this last letter chills my heart with fateful
terror!

(reading)

'Wait till Christmas: you said, and I cried out:
no more! We both will know quite soon now
who was right, you or I. And if on the day that
you spoke of I do not come back again, then do
not condemn, but forgive.'

(repeating in terror, afraid of understanding)

'...then do not condemn, but forgive.'

(continuing her reading)

'When with those eyes that so enchant me you
read my letters once again, then your tears will
fall and bedew them.

Oh Charlotte, then you'll be afraid!

(repeating the words, without reading)

You'll be afraid! You'll be afraid!

(weeps)

Sophie *(coming in quickly and stopping at the
door; she is carrying in her arms toys for the
evening party)*

- [5] Charlotte, good-day.

*(Charlotte, surprised, hastily hides on her person the
letters she had in her hand.)*

What have you to tell me?

*(Sophie comes forward gaily and puts the things
down on a piece of furniture.)*

Since Albert has left, we see you no more and
father is very displeased.

Charlotte *(still preoccupied)*

My dear!

Sophie *(who has caught Charlotte by the waist)*

But, you are ill?

Charlotte *(freeing herself from Sophie's arms)*

Why, what should make you think so?

Sophie *(who has kept hold of her hand)*

See, your hand is so icy...

(looking at her straight in the eyes)

...and your eyes too are red.

Yes, I can tell.

Charlotte *(turning away in embarrassment)*

No, no it's nothing...

(recovering herself)

At times perhaps I feel out of spirits, rather
lonely, and if at times my soul has felt a strange
disquiet,

(in a lively but constrained tone of voice)

well, that's all over now, and, as you see, I'm
smiling again.

Sophie *(coaxing her)*

Yes, that's right, let's laugh, laugh again as in
other times!

Charlotte *(aside, meaningfully)*

Other times...

Sophie *(gaily)*

- [6] Ah! Yes, laughter's a gift, so quick, so light, so
joyous!

It flies aloft, it is like a bird, just like a bird of
the morning.

Just like a bird!

It is the heart's clear light, flowing in liquid rays.

Ah, yes laughter's a gift, etc.

*(Sophie leads Charlotte to the chair and slips down
on her knees.)*

Now listen.

I am old enough to know when people hide
their feelings. Yes, all the faces here have grown

so long and gloomy...

(hesitating)

...ever since Werther ran away.

(Charlotte trembles.)

But could he not have sent some message...

(lowering her eyes)

...to those who have remained so loyal?

Charlotte *(disengaging herself from the arms of
Sophie, gets up)*

All, even this dear child, even she speaks of
him.

Sophie *(coming back to Charlotte)*

You're crying? Please, forgive me, I entreat you.
Yes, I should not have mentioned it at all.

Charlotte *(holding herself in no longer)*

- [7] Ah! Now let my tears flow freely.

(affectionately)

This will do me good, my own darling.

The bitter tears we cannot shed seem to sink
back again within us, and there, relentless and
unceasing, they pound on the sick, weary heart.
Its strength exhausted, it fights no longer. The
heart grows weak, its beat grows faint. So great a
wound cannot be healed, so great a sorrow soon
will break it, soon will break it!

Sophie *(frightened)*

- [8] Now, Charlotte, I'm sure, you should not be
alone. Come to us. We will show you how to
forget all your cares.

(playfully changing her tone of voice)

Father spends his time teaching the children how to sing their very best for Christmas Day.

(Sophie goes to pick up the toys which she laid down when she came in.)

Charlotte *(aside, greatly troubled)*
Oh, Christmas! Ah, that last letter!
(repeating in sombre tones)
'And if on the day that you spoke of I do not come back again, then do not condemn, but forgive, but forgive.'

Sophie *(turning again towards Charlotte)*
And so, it is agreed. You will come?

Charlotte *(without conviction)*
Yes, perhaps.

Sophie *(with affectionate impatience)*
No! No! Say that you will.

Charlotte *(trying to smile)*
Well, then I will.

Sophie *(insisting)*
You're sure?

Charlotte *(reassuring her)*
Yes, I'm sure.
I give you my word, my darling.

Sophie *(wheedling her)*
You will come?

Charlotte
Yes, I will.

Sophie *(goes away slowly, watching her sister with tenderness)*
You will come?

(Charlotte, with a sudden gesture, calls her back and kisses her effusively.)

Charlotte *(in an outburst)*
Ah, come back, and give me one more kiss.
(Sophie goes off.)

[9] **Charlotte**, *alone, comes slowly back towards the table.*
(in despair, spontaneously and as if despite herself)
Ah! I am losing all my courage!
O Lord! O Lord!
(in an outburst of fervent entreaty)

Hear my prayer, O Lord. I have kept your law. I have and I want to do all that is right. You alone can help me. Stern and hard is the trial, frail and weak is my heart.
O Lord God, O Lord God, O Lord God!
You can read within me all, alas, that wounds me. Alas, all that wounds and fills me with terror. Show your pity to me, sustain me in weakness, O God.

Come unto my aid. Hear me when I call you.
Mighty God, O God, mighty God!
You alone can help me. O Lord God! O Lord God!
(The door at the back opens and Werther appears.)
(quickly)

[10] **Werther!** Ah!

(Werther is standing near the door, pale, almost fainting, leaning against the wall.)

Werther *(in broken tones, hardly looking at Charlotte)*

Yes, it is I... I am back... yet I vow while away I had never let a day go by or an hour without saying that I rather would die than...
(violently)

...go to her.
When at last it arrived, the day that you had set for my return I had to come! Even then on the threshold I fought against it still. I turned away!
(tonelessly)
But what does all that matter now?
(overcome)
I am here.

Charlotte *(very moved, trying to control herself and appear indifferent)*
But why speak bitter words of greeting?
Why, and why turn away? When we all have looked for your return, my father, all your friends?

Werther *(approaching with a pressing curiosity)*
And you?
You as well?

Charlotte *(cutting short the words which she senses are on Werther's lips and without answering him)*
You see that the house has remained the same just as on the day you left it.
And when you see it so,
(tenderly)
can you doubt that the household would give you a welcome?

Werther *(glancing round about him)*
Yes, I see, that here nothing is changed...
(sadly)

...but the hearts. Ev'rything is still here in the place where I knew it.

Charlotte *(tenderly and simply)*
Ev'rything is still here in the place where you knew it.

Werther *(goes through the room)*
Here is my well-loved friend who would sing of my joys and would weep and sigh for my sorrows, all those hours when your voice would accompany my voice!

Charlotte *(moved)*
All those hours when your voice would accompany mine!

Werther *(coming near the table)*
These books too, the ones that so often we read side by side, our heads so nearly touching.
(going to the writing desk on which is set the case of pistols)
And these pistols. One day I held them in my hands,
(in a hollow voice)
already then I could not wait for that repose for which I hunger.

(Charlotte, not seeing this last movement, has gone back up towards the harpsichord from which she has taken a manuscript; then she comes back towards Werther.)

Charlotte

And Ossian, open here still; these many poems
that you were translating.

Werther (*taking the manuscript*)

These poems... Ah, many times my dreams have
soared aloft upon this winged verse, and it's you,
dear companion, and yours the words that spoke
all that I could not.

(*with an inspired melancholy*)

All of my soul is here.

[11] 'Why rouse me from my sleep,

O voices of the spring,

Why rouse me from my sleep?

On my brow I feel your caresses,

yet I know the time is at hand

of the storm clouds and deepest anguish.

(*despairingly*)

Why rouse me from my sleep,

O voices of the spring?

Tomorrow through the vale

a man will make his way

and will remember the fame that was mine.

He will search all in vain for my splendours of old
and all that he will find is grief and desolation.

Alas!

(*despairingly*)

Why rouse me from my sleep,

O voices of the spring?

Charlotte (*in great distress*)

[12] Do not go on!

Alas!

All this despair, this grief, it would seem just as if...

Werther

Heav'n, can it be true?

Can it be true?

(*panting*)

This voice I hear that trembles, these eyes I see
that fill with tears, is it not a confession I read?

Charlotte (*trembling*)

Ah, don't ask.

Werther (*in ever-mounting excitement*)

But why try to deceive each other any longer?

Charlotte (*pleading*)

Werther, have pity!

Werther (*ardently*)

No, let us lie no more nor evermore pretend that
we can fight the love that's afire in our hearts.

Charlotte

Werther!

Werther (*panting with ecstasy*)

Ah, the first kiss of love for which I thirst and
hunger, the joy so long desired which I glimpse
now this day! It burns upon my lips still
unquenched by your own lips. This first kiss, I
implore you to grant me the first kiss of love.

Charlotte (*near exhaustion, falls distracted on the sofa*)

Ah!...

I have lost my reason...

Werther (*throwing himself at her feet*)

You love me, you love me, you love me!

Charlotte (*pushing him away*)

No. Can we forget the barrier that must part us
forever?

Werther (*insistant*)

You love me.

Charlotte (*resisting all the time*)

No more!

Werther

Farewell to all remorse...

Charlotte

No!

Werther

...farewell to all our pain!

Charlotte

No, Werther!

Werther

Outside us there is nothing, all else on earth is
dead.

Charlotte

Ah! O Lord, protect me now.

Werther (*in ecstasy*)

In love alone is life, for that is God's decree.

Charlotte (*distracted*)

Protect me now, O Lord, protect me now!

Against myself. Protect me now, O Lord, against
him, against myself!

Werther

Come! I love you. Farewell to all remorse.

In love alone is life, for that is God's own decree!
I love you.

Charlotte

No more!

Werther

I love you.

Charlotte

No more!

Werther

I love you!

Charlotte (*in Werther's arms*)

Ah!

(*drawing herself up, frantic.*)

[13] Ah!

(*in bewilderment*)

!! !!

(*getting away from him*)

In his arm!

Werther (*suddenly, recovering himself, pleading
with Charlotte*)

Forgive me!

Charlotte (*resolutely, at last in command of
herself*)

No!

We must not meet again!

Werther
Charlotte!...

Charlotte (*with a heart-rending reproach*)
And you, you, wretched soul, from whom I part
forever!
Depart from here, now and for ever more!

(Charlotte runs off and closes the door of the room
behind her.
Werther rushes after her.)

Werther (*horror-stricken*)
But no, you cannot leave me. Hear what I say.
Oh, hear when I call you.
(*panting*)
Come back.
I vow to hold you sacred.
Come back! Come back!
(*almost silent*)
No!
Not one word.
She does not hear.
(*resolutely*)
So, then farewell! Charlotte condemns me to
death!
(*going up towards the door at the back*)
(*with breadth*)
Don your veil, O fair nature, fair nature. Your
son you loved so well, your own lover must die.
And must bear to the grave his eternal torment.
O grave, now open wide!
(*He runs off.*)

Albert (*entering, preoccupied and gloomy, harshly*)
[14] So Werther has returned...
(*as he lays his cloak on a piece of furniture*)
He was seen in the town.
(*changing his tone, in astonishment*)
Nobody here? The window open to the roadway.
(*He looks for a moment from the side of the
window, as if he saw someone going away. Then,
with darkened face, he moves to the side of
Charlotte's room.*)
What's the meaning of this?
(*spoken, calling*)
Charlotte!...
(*louder, persistently*)
Charlotte!

Charlotte (*appearing and terrified at the sight of
her husband*)
Ah!

Albert (*brusquely*)
What is wrong?

Charlotte (*in ever greater distress*)
Why, nothing.

Albert (*insistently*)
But you seem upset and worried.

Charlotte (*trying vainly to compose herself*)
Yes, I was startled.

Albert (*suspicious, almost violent*)
Well then, who has been here?

Charlotte (*stammering*)
Here?

Albert (*sombrely*)
Who was here?
(*A servant has come in bringing a letter. Albert
notices his presence and turns abruptly towards him.*)
A message?
(*Albert recognises the writing and looks fixedly at
Charlotte.*)
From Werther!

Charlotte (*unable to hold back a cry of surprise*)
God!

Albert (*gravely and without letting Charlotte out
of his sight, reading*)
'I'm leaving on a far-off journey. As a favour, my
friend, lend me your pistols.'

Charlotte (*aside, feeling faint*)
He's leaving!

Albert (*continuing*)
'May the Lord keep you both.'

Charlotte (*terrified*)
Ah! This fatal foreboding!

Albert (*to Charlotte, coldly*)
Give them to him.

Charlotte (*drawing back in dismay*)
Who? I?

Albert (*unconcerned and staring at her*)
Who else?

(Charlotte, as if fascinated by her husband's look,
moves mechanically towards the writing desk on
which the case of pistols is lying.)

Charlotte (*aside*)
How he stares!
(*Albert moves towards his room on the right and,
before going in, looks again at Charlotte who,
hardly able to support herself, goes up towards the
servant to whom she hands the case. The servant
goes out.*)
Albert crumples up the letter which he has been
holding, throws it away with an angry gesture and
goes quickly into his room.
Now alone, Charlotte takes stock of the situation,
seems to recover herself and runs to get a cloak
which is lying on one of the chairs.)
(*with resolution*)
God, grant me this last prayer: let me reach him
in time!

(*She runs off, in despair.*)

Act IV

[15] Scene 1: Christmas Eve

[16] Scene 2: The Death of Werther (Werther's Study)

A three-branched candlestick, with a reflector
attached, gives a poor light to the table, loaded with
books and papers, on which it stands. At the back,
a little to the left, a large octagonal window,

through which can be seen the village square and the snow-covered houses. One of the houses, the Magistrate's, is lit up. Back, right, a door. Moonlight fills the room. Werther, mortally wounded, is lying near the table. The door opens suddenly. Charlotte enters. At once coming to a stop and leaning against the frame of the door, as if her courage had suddenly deserted her.

Charlotte *(with an anguished call)*
Werther! Ah, Werther!
(She moves forward, anxiously.)
Nothing!
(Going and looking behind the table, she discovers the lifeless body of Werther. She throws herself on it.)
(crying out and shrinking back suddenly, terrified)
God! Ah! It's blood!
(She comes back to him. On her knees, she takes him in her arms.)
(in a stifled voice)
No, no, I won't believe it. No, it cannot be true.
Ah, Werther! Ah, Werther!
Ah! Open your eyes, and speak! And speak!
Ah! This is horror!

Werther *(at last opening his eyes)*
Who's speaking?
(recognising Charlotte)
Charlotte! Ah! It's you.
(tonelessly)
You must forgive me.

Charlotte
I forgive you!
When it's I who have killed you, when the blood that is flowing fast from your wound by me, by me was shed.

Werther *(who has raised himself up a little)*
No, all you have done has been right, has been good.
(with an effort which exhausts him at once)
My soul will bless you always for this death which has saved you from sinning and has spared me remorse.

(He weakens.)

Charlotte *(distracted and turning towards the door)*
But I must find you help, you need help. Ah!...

(Werther restrains her.)

Werther *(raising himself on one knee)*
No, call no one, I beg you. I am now past all help.
(leaning on Charlotte and rising)
Let me hold your hand in mine.
(smiling)
There! All the help I need is what your hand can give me.
(He falls back to a sitting position. Then, his forehead on Charlotte's hand, and in a very quiet, almost wheedling tone of voice.)
Besides, it is not right that anyone should come between us now.
With you I feel at ease.
(taking her hand)

¹⁷ In this last hour of life I am truly bless'd. I die in telling you that I adore you.

Charlotte *(with passionate tenderness)*
And I, ah Werther... and I,
(in a transport)
I love you.
(very moved)
Yes, since the day when I first saw you face to face, I have found that a bond that no power could break was uniting us both. But I held to my vow, choosing instead to hurt you, and so, to save myself, alas,
(sobbing)
I ruined you.

Werther
Speak, my dearest, speak again, I implore you.

Charlotte *(continuing despite the deepest emotion)*
But, if the end approaches, before death takes you from me,
(carried away)
a first embrace,
(tenderly)
a first kiss, ah yes, that shall at least be yours.
Let your soul in my soul deeper and deeper mingle till in this kiss it forgets evermore all the grief, all the tears; all the pain that is past.

Werther
All, let us forget.

Charlotte
All, let us forget.

Werther and Charlotte
Let us forget...
(almost a sigh)
...All! All!
(the children's voices, far off, in the Magistrate's house)

The Children
¹⁸ Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!

Charlotte *(listening, sadly)*
God! These cries of joy, this laughter in this solemn hour.

(Charlotte has gone up towards the window, but she comes down at once to Werther.)

The Children
Jesus Christ from Heaven,
Unto us this day is given,
Hear ye, men of Israel.

Werther *(raising himself a little, in a kind of hallucination)*
Ah, the children... or angels...

The Children
Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!

Werther
Yes, Noel!
It's the song of mankind's redemption.

The Children
Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!

Werther

Once more the children sing the hymn of man's forgiveness.

The Children

Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!

(laughter)

Charlotte *(coming near, frightened by this onset of delirium)*

Ah, Werther!

Werther *(more and more in a state of hallucination)*

Why are you weeping? Do you think that in this hour my life comes to its end?

(in ecstasy, rising right up)

It is beginning once again!

Sophie *(far off, in the Magistrate's house)*

Noel!

The Children

Noel!

Sophie

God's own message is joy.

There is joy in the air.

The Children

Noel!

Sophie

All the world should rejoice.

The Children

Noel!

Sophie

There is joy in the air.

The Children

Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!

Sophie

God's own message is joy.

(Werther, who has listened standing, trembling, his eyes wide open, leans suddenly on the chair and falls down on it with a groan.)

Charlotte *(looking at him, in anguish)*

¹⁹ Ah! His eyes are closing,
(strongly declaimed)

his hand is icy.

(frightened)

He will die, will die. Ah, dear God, pity.

(sobbing)

It must not be, it must not be. Ah! Werther!

Werther! Oh, speak!

(heart-rendingly)

Oh, speak!

Speak, if you still can hear me.

(quietly and tenderly, pressing Werther against her)

Enfolded in my arms, death shall not take you from me!

(with the deepest emotion)

You shall live, you shall live.

(in a murmur)

See, I have lost all fear!

Werther *(in the chair, in a faint voice)*

No, Charlotte!... I'm dying,

(Charlotte tries to protest. Werther, with a gesture of resignation:)

²⁰ yes, but...

(calmly and gravely)

...hear what I ask.

Down there, beside the churchyard wall, where two tall lindens grow, it's there for evermore I would fain lie at rest.

Charlotte *(choking)*

No more, no more!

Werther

But if this request be refused, if a burial in Christian ground must be denied wretches like me, then, near the road or deep in some vale, far from all men, there let me rest for ever. The priest will pass me by and turn away his eyes!

Charlotte

Werther! No more!

Werther *(continuing)*

But, under the cloak of darkness, there a woman will come to the outcast's retreat and, as a kindly tear falls on his shade in remembrance, the dead, the wretched dead will know that he is blest.

(His voice stops. He makes some attempts to breathe. Then his arms, at first stretched out, fall and his head drops. He dies.)

Charlotte *(terrified)*

Ah!...

(Unable to believe what she sees, she takes Werther's head in her hands.)

The Children *(far off)*

Jesus Christ from Heaven,

Unto us this day is given,

Hear ye, men of Israel!

Charlotte *(calling him desperately)*

Ah! Werther!

(growing weak)

Ah!

(At last understanding the truth, she faints and falls lifeless on the ground in front of the chair.)

The end is come!

The Children

Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel! etc.

(noisy laughter, clink of glasses, cries of joy)

(Curtain)

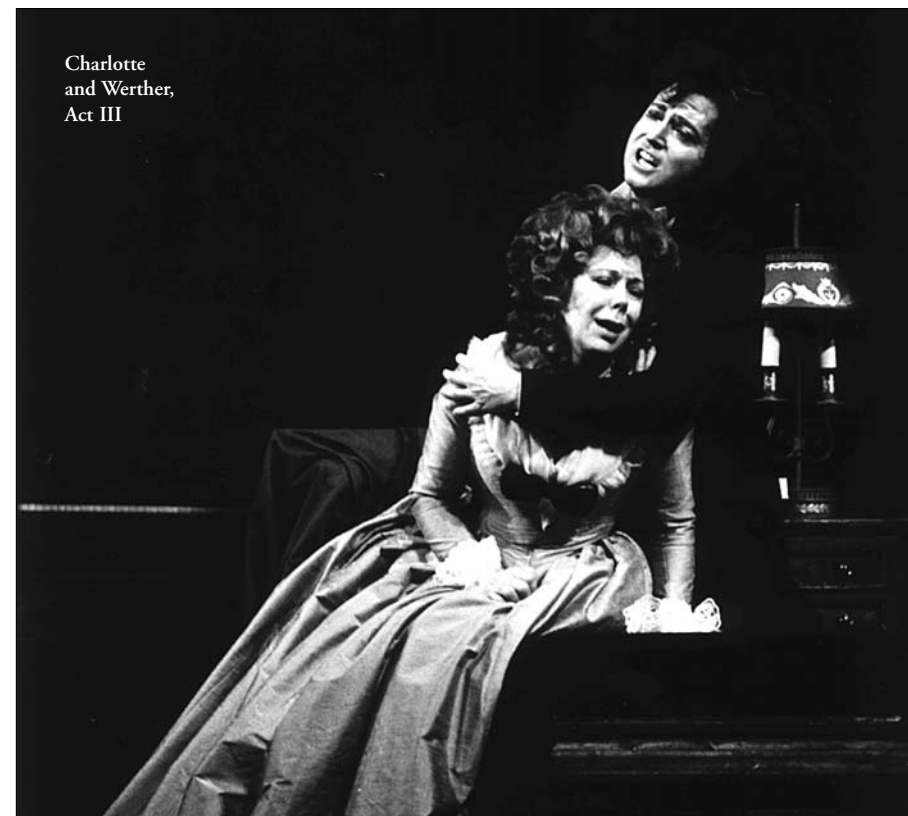
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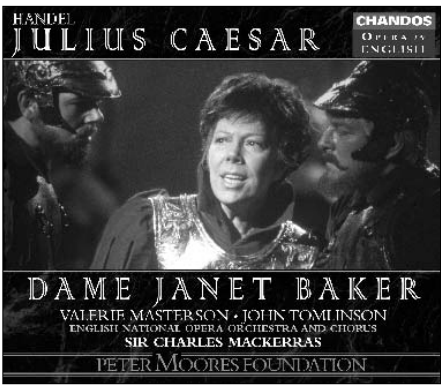


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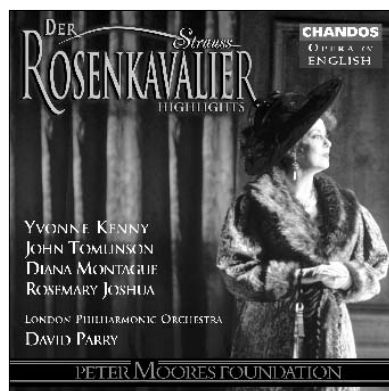


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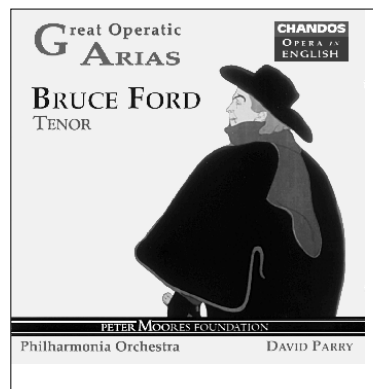
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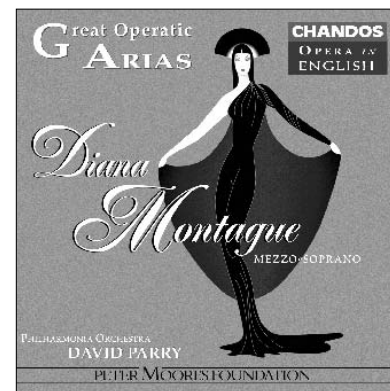


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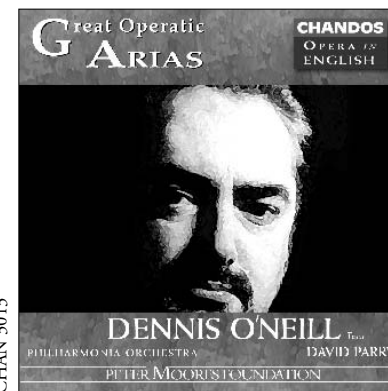


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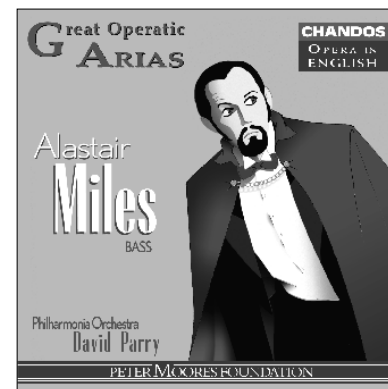
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Designer: Stefanos Lazaridis
Costume designer: Michael Stennett
Lighting: Robert Bryan
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Charlotte
and Werther,
Act IV



MASSENET: WERTHER



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