

CHAN 3067

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

Verdi

CELEBRATION
in English

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



AKG

Giuseppe Verdi

A Verdi Celebration

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1902)

	Time	Page
<i>from Nabucco</i>		
Chorus of Hebrew Slaves		
[1] 'Speed your journey'	4:51	60
(Va, pensiero)		
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir		
from CHAN 3032 (Great Operatic Arias with Alastair Miles)		
<i>from Luisa Miller</i>		
Rodolfo's Aria		
[2] 'Oft in the quiet evening hour'	4:19	60
(Quando le sere al placido)		
Dennis O'Neill		
from CHAN 3013 (Great Operatic Arias with Dennis O'Neill)		
<i>from Ernani</i>		
Elvira's Cavatina and Cabaletta		
[3] 'Darkness has fallen, and Silva's not returned yet'	2:15	60
(Surta è la notte)		
[4] 'Ernani, Ernani, rescue me'	4:20	60
(Ernani! Ernani, involami)		
Susan Patterson, Helen Williams		
from CHAN 3052(2) Ernani. Release date: Summer 2001		

	Time	Page
<i>from The Sicilian Vespers</i>		
Procida's Aria		
[5] 'Oh, my Palermo'	4:50	61
(O patria, o cara patria)		
Alastair Miles		
from CHAN 3032 (Great Operatic Arias with Alastair Miles)		
<i>from Rigoletto</i>		
The Duke's Aria (act II)		
[6] 'Women abandon us'	2:22	61
(La donna è mobile)		
Arthur Davies		
from CHAN 3030(2) Rigoletto		
<i>from Il trovatore</i>		
Miserere		
[7] 'Lord, have mercy upon a soul departing'	4:52	62
Miserere d'un'alma già vicina)		
Sharon Sweet, Dennis O'Neill		
from CHAN 3036(2) Il trovatore		

	Time	Page
<i>from Falstaff</i>		
Fenton's Sonnet		
[8] 'From these true lovers' lips'	4:39	62
(Dal labbro il canto estasiato)		
Bruce Ford		
from CHAN 3006 (Great Operatic Arias with Bruce Ford)		
<i>from Rigoletto</i>		
Quartet		
[9] 'If you want a faithful lover'	4:24	63
(Bella figlia dell'amore)		
Arthur Davies, Jean Rigby, Helen Field, John Rawnsley,		
from CHAN 3030(2) Rigoletto		
<i>from The Force of Destiny</i>		
Don Carlo and Alvaro's Duet		
[10] 'In death's awful shadow'	4:37	64
(Solenne in quest'ora)		
Dennis O'Neill, Anthony Michaels-Moore		
from CHAN 3013 (Great Operatic Arias with Dennis O'Neill)		

	Time	Page
<i>from Il trovatore</i>		
Count di Luna's Aria and Cabaletta		
[11] 'In the stars that shine above me' –	4:20	64
(Il balen del suo sorriso)		
[12] 'The hour has come'	3:01	64
Alan Opie, Clive Bayley, Geoffrey Mitchell Choir		
from CHAN 3036(2) Il trovatore		
<i>from I Lombardi</i>		
Oronte's Cavatina		
[13] 'My heart is full of happiness'	2:21	65
(La mia letizia infondere)		
Dennis O'Neill		
from CHAN 3013 (Great Operatic Arias with Dennis O'Neill)		
<i>from La traviata</i>		
Violetta's Aria		
[14] 'For ever I must leave thee'	2:55	65
(Addio del passato)		
Valerie Masterson		
from CHAN 3023(2) La traviata		

	Time	Page
<i>from A Masked Ball</i>		
Gustavus and Amelia's Duet		
[15] 'You love me, love me...' – (Amelia, tu m'ami?)		
'Ah! The sweetest glowing fire of love' (Ah! qual suave brivido)	4:24	65
Dennis O'Neill, Susan Bullock from CHAN 3013 (Great Operatic Arias with Dennis O'Neill)		
<i>from Simon Boccanegra</i>		
Fiesco's Scena		
[16] 'A last farewell I bid you' (A te l'estremo addio) –		
'My soul is torn with suffering' (Il lacerato spirito)	6:17	66
John Tomlinson, Geoffrey Mitchell Choir from CHAN 3044 (Great Operatic Arias with John Tomlinson)		

	Time	Page
<i>from Otello</i>		
Desdemona's and Otello's Duet		
[17] 'Now in the silent darkness' (Già nella notte densa)	2:30	67
[18] 'Once when you told me' (Quando narravi l'esule tua vita)	7:33	67
Rosalind Plowright, Charles Craig from CHAN 3068(2) Otello. Release date: Autumn 2001		
<i>from La traviata</i>		
Brindisi		
[19] 'Be happy, be happy and raise your glass with me' (Libiamo, libiamo ne'lieti calici)	3:07	69
John Brecknock, Valerie Masterson from CHAN 3023(2) La traviata		

TT 79:05

Philharmonia Orchestra with David Parry (tracks 1, 2, 5, 8, 10 & 13)
English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus, with David Parry (tracks 3 & 4),
with Mark Elder (tracks 6 & 9), with Sir Charles Mackerras (tracks 14 & 19)
London Philharmonic Orchestra with David Parry (tracks 7, 11 & 12)

Giuseppe Verdi

To the librettist's by-line for almost any of Giuseppe Verdi's operas can be added the phrase 'and the composer'. He took uncommon care about the words he set. From first to last he bombarded his poets with requests, suggestions, demands. His verbal concerns ranged from the shaping of the large structures to the choice of individual words – and especially of the *parola scenica*, the word that 'defines, encapsulates, makes vivid' a dramatic situation. In *Nabucco*, Verdi's first big success, Temistocle Solera was instructed to replace a love-duet with Zaccaria's fierce, solemn prophecy. Camille du Locle, during the revision of *Don Carlos*, was told (in French) exactly what the Queen should say during her indignant outburst. To *Falstaff* Boito was asked to add Mistress Quickly's narrative. Verdi wrote respectfully to the seasoned Salvatore Cammarano, the librettist of four of his operas. To the famous, touchy Scribe, the librettist of *The Sicilian Vespers*, he wrote tactfully. To long-suffering, faithful Francesco Maria Piave, the librettist of eleven of his operas, he wrote with a bluntness that could

be almost brutal at times. And to all of them he wrote firmly.

He valued singers who uttered words – his carefully planned words – clearly and tellingly. He wanted those words to be understood by those who heard them. Translation into the language of the audience was the norm in those days. There were exceptions, anomalies: at the Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden, Italian ruled. There *Il flauto magico*, *I maestri cantori*, *Gli Ugonotti* and *I pescatori di perle* were heard; and even English operas, such as Stanford's *Veiled Prophet*, were sung in Italian translation. During the inaugural season of the Metropolitan Opera in New York (1883–84), everything was sung in Italian (including *Faust*, *Lohengrin* and *Carmen*); and then, from 1884 to 1891, everything was sung in German (including *Faust*, *Aida* and *Carmen*). The 1891–92 season brought some French operas sung in French, but the German operas reverted to Italian translation. Paris had its Théâtre-Italien; but when the Paris Opéra suggested staging *Aida* in Italian, Verdi said no, at the national house that would be absurd. The opera was translated into French for the

triumphant Opéra premiere that Verdi conducted in 1880. So was *Falstaff* for its Paris premiere, at the Opéra-Comique, and *Otello* for the Opéra, both in 1894. *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* and *La traviata*, *Aida* and *Otello* naturally had their German premieres in German. And so on. The 'foreign-language fad' is modern thing. Great international singers used to be proud of their ability to perform their roles in several languages.

Arguing the pros and cons of opera in the original versus opera in the language of the audience will never cease, and I won't embark on it now. There are things to be said on both sides. By and large, the great composers have favoured translation; they wanted direct communication from the singers to the audience. But after translating eight of Verdi's operas for performance in English, I still take an 'it all depends' view. It depends on the company engaged, the theatre in question, the circumstances (a festival or a repertory performance?), and the availability or not of a translation that sings convincingly. On this disc we hear the work of eight different Verdi translators striving to 'match' Verdi's lines with sounds that fit the music and convey the sense, reflecting so far as possible the vowels long or short, open or closed; the consonants

liquid or crunchy; the little 'articulations' that make can the difference between song that sounds stilted and song that flows naturally. Some specific translation points are touched on in the notes that follow.

1 **Nabucco** (1842): Chorus of Hebrew Slaves. *Nabucco*, Verdi's third opera, was his first great success, carrying his name throughout Italy and, soon, across the world from Vienna to Valparaiso, Santiago to Sydney. The famous chorus is Solera's paraphrase of Psalm 137, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, o Zion'. It was the first of Verdi's great 'patriots in exile' choruses; successors were 'O Signore, dal tetto natio' in *I Lombardi* and 'Patria oppressa' in the first version of *Macbeth*. Tom Hammond and Norman Tucker's 'Speed your journey' fits 'Va, pensiero [rest] sull'ali dorate' more closely than the 'Let our thoughts fly' (with the stress of 'horsefly') of a later translation. In my version I returned to the Psalmist: 'By the waters, the waters of Babylon'.

2 **Luisa Miller** (1849): Rodolfo's aria. Rodolfo has received Luisa's letter saying that she does not love him (a false confession wrung from her by the villainous Wurm as the

price of saving her father's life). Cammarano's libretto is based on Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*; but, as Julian Budden says, 'nothing in Schiller can equal the beauty of Rodolfo's *andante* recalling the happier times he spent in her company'. Many commentators noted in *Luisa Miller* a new delicacy and intimacy. 'Oft in the quiet evening hour' is scored with a solo cello, and clarinet arpeggios beneath and around the voice. For twelve bars the melody moves only by step, until it approaches the despairing climax 'She betrayed me!' The start is marked *piano*, *appassionatissimo*, and the climax *con disperazione*, with *ff* and *pp* juxtaposed in the final bar.

[3] – [4] **Ernani** (1844): Elvira's cavatina. After *Nabucco*, Verdi composed *I Lombardi*, another 'epic' opera, for La Scala; and then, for Venice, he tackled a very different kind of subject, Victor Hugo's controversial *Hernani* (1830), high Romantic drama about three men in love with the same woman. The role of Elvira was composed for Sophia Loewe, a fiery yet delicate soprano (later the heroine of *Attila*, and Verdi's first thought for Lady Macbeth), and this is her entrance-aria. She awaits the arrival of her lover, Ernani, to rescue her from a planned marriage to her elderly guardian. The vocal line

holds big leaps, tumbling descents, many high Cs; it calls for powerful coloratura, arpeggios leaping through the registers, fleet runs, and sudden dynamic contrasts.

[5] **The Sicilian Vespers** (1855): Procida's aria. Verdi's first opera for Paris was *Jérusalem* (1847), an amplified reworking of *I Lombardi*. For his first brand-new Paris opera he insisted on working with Scribe, Meyerbeer's collaborator in Paris Opéra successes. Scribe provided two subjects that Verdi rejected, and then a libretto, *Le Duc d'Albe*, written for but never finished by Donizetti, but with its action now transferred from Brussels to Palermo. (Donizetti's opera was later completed by his pupil Matteo Salvi, and appeared in Rome in 1882.) Verdi accepted the second-hand stuff but insisted on many changes, both verbal and structural. He complained when Italians seemed to be slighted. But Procida's aria, the Sicilian patriot's greeting of his homeland, was acceptable in sentiment. Verdi composed the aria twice. The earlier version, not orchestrated, is in the Opéra library.

[6] **Rigoletto** (1851): the Duke's canzone. Verdi's fondness in triple metre for setting a stressed syllable on the second beat (with a

cross-accent effect of 'one-TWO-three' or 'ONE-TWO-three', not simple 'ONE-two-three') causes problems for translators into languages with strong tonic accents: as in 'PaRlgi, o cara' in *La traviata*, or the Duke of Mantua's light-hearted 'La DONna è mobile' when, in the last act of *Rigoletto*, he comes to his tryst with Maddalena. Italian can be more flexibly uttered. Some earlier English versions are: 'Woman is fickle and' (John Oxenford), 'Plume in the summer wind' (Natalia Macfarren), 'Wayward as thistledown' (E.J. Dent), 'Woman's fidelity' (Ruth and Thomas Martin), 'Women are light as air' (Mary Jane Matz), 'Woman is changeable' (A.P.). None of them can be stressed and delivered quite as easily an Italian tenor naturally delivers 'La donna è mobile'. James Fenton's translation was made for English National Opera's *mafioso* production of the opera (1982), directed by Jonathan Miller and set in New York's 'Little Italy'. The Dook dropped a coin into a jukebox and sang to its 'accompaniment'. *Rigoletto*, which was written, like *Ernani*, for Venice, was Verdi's second Victor Hugo opera, based on *Le Roi s'amuse* (1832). He chose an 'outlandish' subject – a hunchback hero – and composed one of the handful of operas that from its

premiere to the present day has never left the repertory.

[7] **Il trovatore** (1853): Miserere. Verdi was a composer who sought to break the standard shackles of his 'galley years' in Italian opera. In correspondence with Salvatore Cammarano, the librettist of *Il trovatore*, he said that the usual sequences of choruses, arias, duets, etc, seemed to him like a concert, not a drama: 'if only an opera could be, so to speak, all one number!' And in similarly Wagner-foreshadowing vein Cammarano wrote to him that in ideal world a single mind would create both the libretto and the score of an opera. *Il trovatore*, which has often been called an old-fashioned piece, is in fact structurally innovative. The Miserere is an astonishing expansion of the traditional *tempo di mezzo*, that brief bridge passage after the first movement of an aria (here Leonora's 'D'amor sull'ali rosee') which provides the information to prompt its cabaletta ('Tu vedrai che amore in terra'). The Miserere is a *tempo di mezzo* grown from the traditional few bars of convention into a dramatic three-tier episode: a funeral bell tolls and offstage monks intone a death chant; Manrico's voice, calling for death to come soon, rings

out from the tower in which he is imprisoned; on-stage, the *prima donna*, hearing him, utters passionate commentary, accompanied by the *di-di-dum* 'death motif'. Then Verdi brings all three elements together.

[8] **Falstaff** (1893): Fenton's sonnet. Arrigo Boito's libretto for *Falstaff* is, among other things, a marvel of metrical subtleties, and Verdi's last opera is a miracle of refined, delicate composition. The final scene opens in Windsor forest, distant horncalls stealing through the moonlit enchantment, and Fenton enters, singing a sonnet of love. A corrected proof of *Falstaff* survives to attest to Verdi's subtle recompositions of the long lines. They lead to the 'Bocca baciata' refrain that throughout the opera the young lovers, Nannetta and Fenton, have adopted as their private 'motto'. (Boito borrowed it from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where it has a bawdier connotation.) In a stage performance, Nannetta's voice answers Fenton's at last, with the 'Ever returning' line, beneath which Fenton closes the sonnet with 'The singing dies when lips can be united' – and Mistress Alice then cuts short the lovers' ecstatic cadence as it closes on a kiss.

[9] **Rigoletto**: Quartet. The famous *Rigoletto* quartet (like the quartet 'A te, o cara' in Bellini's *Puritani*) opens as a tenor solo. Lady Macfarren's translation 'Fairest daughter of the graces' (heard at Covent Garden through the 1950s, with Erna Berger, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, and Joan Sutherland among many Gildas), and Dent's 'Lovely daughter thou of pleasure' (used by the Sadler's Wells/English National Opera for three decades, then replaced by mine) capture the tone of the Duke's highfalutin address to Maddalena. (Dent adds the direction 'with comically exaggerated gallantry'.) James Fenton's English version was made – see [6] above – for English National Opera's updated production. After the Duke's solo, the other voices enter: Maddalena in mocking staccato semiquavers; Gilda with heartbroken exclamations, broken phrases, and long high notes (on *i*, *a*, and *o* vowels) that sometimes swell from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, sometimes begin loud and are then fined down; Rigoletto in dark 'Did I not tell you?' vein and with fierce threats of vengeance. The six-line strophes for each character are metrically identical, but Verdi sets them with very different kinds of motion (and emotion), carefully overlapped in a way

that allows every important phrase to get a hearing.

[10] **The Force of Destiny** (1862): Don Alvaro and Don Carlo's first duet. The new, rampant, sometimes ridiculous 'gay musicology' has been slow to seize on Verdi's writing for a male-bonding tenor and baritone: in *A Masked Ball*, in *The Force of Destiny*, in *Don Carlos*, in *Otello*. Although there's no tenor–baritone duet in *A Masked Ball*, the baritone arias are addressed – one with tender concern, and the other with anger at apparent betrayal – to a tenor who has been dearly loved. A triangle of two men and one woman, whether she be wooed by both (as in *Trovatore*), or wife (as in *A Masked Ball*) or sister (as in *The Force of Destiny*) to one of them, can be potent on all three sides. Mary Jane Matz set Italian hairs a-bristle when at a 1969 *Don Carlos* congress she declared roundly, citing letters in evidence, that Verdi fell in love with the conductor Angelo Mariani ('dark-eyed angel', Rossini called him) – and both of them also in love with the same woman, the soprano Teresa Stoltz. At any rate, in *The Force of Destiny* the first encounter of Don Alvaro and Don Carlo is presented as something like love at first sight. 'In death's awful shadow', the first of

their three impassioned, extended duets, is a tenor–baritone love duet. Alvaro, gravely wounded, enjoins his friend to destroy a secret, locked in his valise, that must die with him. (In fact, Carlo rummages in the valise, finds a portrait, and discovers the secret: that his friend is his sister's lover, the half-breed, albeit Inca-royal, whom he has sworn to kill.) In a famous recording of the duet by Caruso and Antonio Scotti, the two voices were so well matched that buyers were challenged to determine where one took over from the other.

[11] – [12] **Il trovatore**: the Count's aria. See [7] above for comment on the structural innovations that Verdi aimed at in *Il trovatore*. The baritone's aria was originally planned for the Camp scene in Act III, but Verdi decided to shift it to the second scene of Act II – retaining in the Camp scene a recitative that seems to be leading to an aria but is suddenly interrupted by the capture of Azucena. The Act II aria is smooth and ardent. The accompaniment – sustained violas, clarinet arpeggios – lies low, but the voice rises high, to several Fs, and a high G. The cabaletta (also insistent on high Fs, and occasional G flats) ingeniously compounds the Count's solo and a little chorus from his followers.

^[13] **I Lombardi** (1843): Oronte's cavatina. *I Lombardi*, the opera that Verdi wrote after *Nabucco*, has high action so extravagant that it has been lauded as exemplar of Artaud's exciting 'theatre of the absurd'. The tenor's second aria is sung from heaven, harp-accompanied, as (having been converted to Christianity and baptized on his deathbed) he appears to the heroine in a vision scene. Oronte is the son of the Tyrant of Antioch. In his first aria, here recorded, he tells his mother (a secret Christian convert) that he has fallen in love with his father's lovely Christian captive.

^[14] **La traviata** (1853): Violetta's Act III aria. *La traviata* was another commission from the city, Venice, for which Verdi chose bold subjects: *Ernani*, a hunchback protagonist in *Rigoletto*, and in *La traviata* a whore as heroine. It was also contemporary subject matter. Alphonsine Plessis, Marie Duplessis, the Comtesse Eduoard de Perrigaux after her wedding at the Kensington Registry Office – the original of Alexandre Dumas the younger's Marguerite Gautier and Verdi's Violetta Valery – died in Paris in 1847. Verdi could easily have met her. Tradition says he attended the first night of

Dumas's play about her, *La Dame aux camélias* (1852). He himself was living with a 'woman gone astray', Giuseppina Strepponi, whom he married only in 1859. The first production of *La traviata* was not a success, but after the second it joined *Rigoletto* and *Il trovatore* among the small company of operas that have never dropped from the repertory. The dying Violetta begins in the minor and, maintaining the same syncopated rhythmic motif, breaks into the major at 'della traviata sorridi al desio' ('smile on the poor creature').

^[15] **A Masked Ball** (1859): Love Duet. *A Masked Ball* was Verdi's last fulfilment of an Italian commission. He had turned to a 'sure-fire' Scribe libretto, an adaptation of *Gustave III* (1833), Auber's international success. But Verdi's opera, ending with regicide, ran into censorship trouble at Naples and was not performed. Thereafter he composed *The Force of Destiny* for St Petersburg, *Don Carlos* for Paris, *Aida* for Cairo, and *Otello* and *Falstaff*, he insisted, for his own pleasure. The setting of *A Masked Ball* was changed from the Stockholm of Scribe's original to Pomerania, to Florence, then to

Boston (for the eventual premiere, in Rome), to Naples (in Paris and London), and in modern times often back to Sweden again. Full-scale soprano-tenor love duets in Verdi are comparatively rare. Usually they are duets of conflict or misunderstanding. But the *Masked Ball* love duet is a full-throated, full-hearted outpouring, not untroubled, for the love that the lovers avow is forbidden – Gustavus is the King, and Amelia is the wife of his dearest friend – yet rapturous. *A Masked Ball* – like *I due Foscari*, *Simon Boccanegra*, and *Don Carlos* – is an opera about duty, responsibility, and the moments when human passions cloud proper perception.

^[16] **Simon Boccanegra** (1857): Fiesco's aria. Another opera composed for Venice. I give the earlier date, 1857, since in his radical 1881 revision of *Simon Boccanegra* Verdi left Fiesco's aria unchanged, except for the alteration of a decorative triplet (at 'pray now, Maria, for me') into a straight descent. Fiesco, Verdi said, should have 'a voice of steel'. He mourns his dead daughter, curses her lover, Boccanegra, and reproaches the Virgin for allowing her to die. Inflexibility is mingled with tenderness.

^[17] **Otello** (1887): Love duet. Boito created the first-act finale of *Otello*, the love duet, by assembling and shaping lines from several different scenes of Shakespeare's play. He worked freely, transferring Othello's line to Desdemona, 'O my fair warrior', into her 'Mio superbo guerrier' ('O my warrior so proud') and following it with lines from an earlier scene, the Desdemona declarations reported by Othello now sung by Desdemona herself. Iago, Shakespeare's sneering onlooker commenting on the encounter, was banished from the duet only during Verdi's careful, repeated revisions of the finale. Othello's 'fatal flaw' and Desdemona's steady strength are spelled out in the detailed stage directions for the close of the duet: 'At the peak of emotion Othello feels weak... While he steps backward, she follows him, supporting him. At the words 'I tremble', Othello sits down, almost fainting. Desdemona bends over him. Coming to, Othello turns to Desdemona and says 'un bacio'. [My translation, 'I kiss you', misses the sense of entreaty; I relied on the tenor to provide it; Charles Craig did so.] Bending further down, she exclaims 'Othello!' with an emotional, sweet inflexion.' And Verdi's four solo cellos, beneath a high violin trill, cast a sensual spell.

¹⁸ **La traviata:** Brindisi. Violetta invites the newcomer to her salon to propose a toast, *un brindisi*. Alfred 'extemporizes', and Violetta

responds. But beneath the glittering gaiety, the more earnest themes of the drama are sounded in Violetta's and Alfred's exchanges.

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Anthony Michaels-Moore



Susan Bullock

Justin Pumfrey



© Clive Bara/PAL

Dennis O'Neill as
Riccardo in The Royal
Opera's 1994 production
of *A Masked Ball*

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.

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.

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started



Christina Burron/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

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

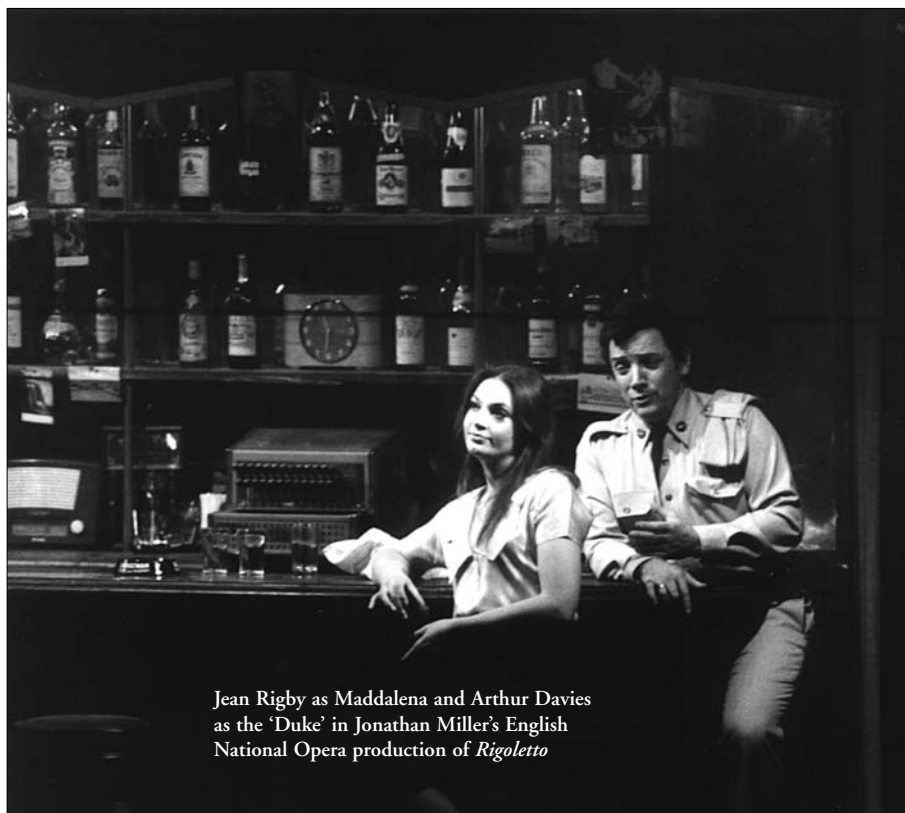
In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

the recording of operas from the core repertoire 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.

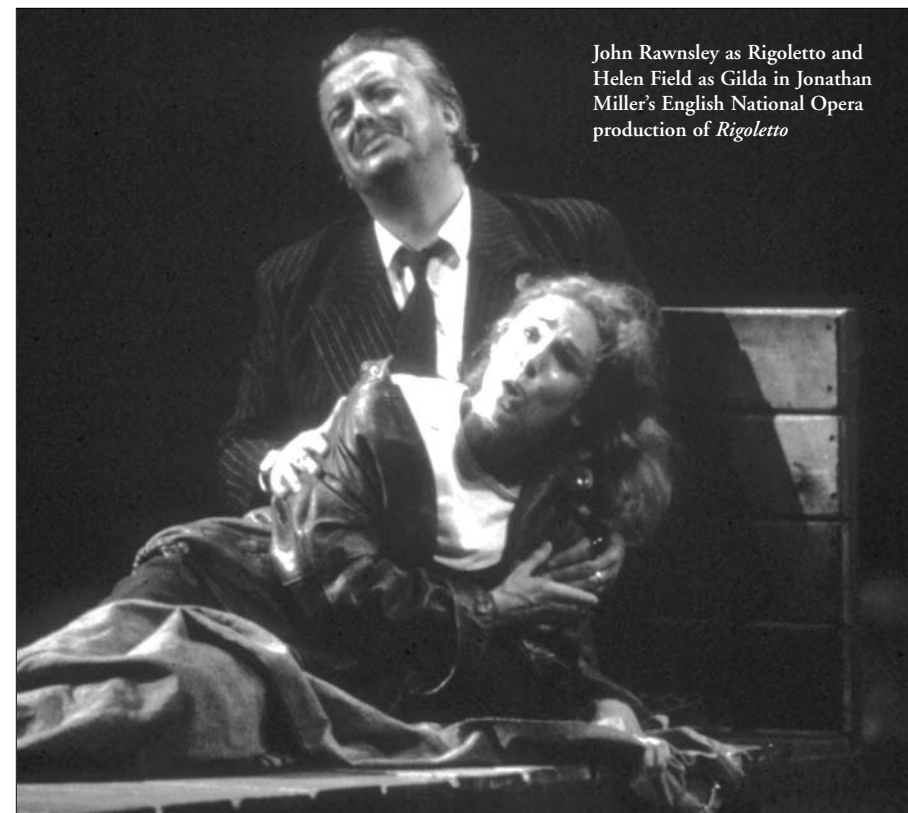
The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

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.



Catherine Ashmore

Jean Rigby as Maddalena and Arthur Davies
as the 'Duke' in Jonathan Miller's English
National Opera production of *Rigoletto*



Clive Barda

John Rawnsley as Rigoletto and
Helen Field as Gilda in Jonathan
Miller's English National Opera
production of *Rigoletto*

Giuseppe Verdi

Die Aufzählung der Librettisten für die meisten Opern Giuseppe Verdis lässt sich mit dem Zusatz „und der Komponist“ versehen. Er verwandte ungewöhnliche Sorgfalt auf die Texte, die er vertonte. Von Anfang bis Ende bombardierte er seine Textdichter mit Bitten, Vorschlägen und Forderungen. Seine Sorge um das Verbale reichte von der Gestaltung umfangreicher Strukturen bis zur Wahl einzelner Wörter – und galt vor allem der *parola scenica*, dem Wort, das eine dramatische Situation „definiert, einfängt, anschaulich macht“. Im Falle von *Nabucco*, Verdis erstem großem Erfolg, wurde Temistocle Solera angewiesen, ein Liebesduett durch Zaccarias grimmig feierliche Prophezeiung zu ersetzen. Camille du Locle bekam im Zuge der Überarbeitung von *Don Carlos* genau (und auf Französisch) mitgeteilt, was die Königin in ihrem empörten Ausbruch sagen sollte. Arrigo Boito wurde aufgefordert, *Falstaff* durch Mistress Quicklys Erzählstrang zu ergänzen. Verdi schrieb respektvoll an den erfahrenen Saltavore Cammarano, der die Libretti zu vieren seiner Opern lieferte. An den berühmten, hochempfindlichen Eugène

Scribe, den Librettisten von *Les Vêpres siciliennes*, schrieb er taktvoll. An den leidgeprüften, treuen Francesco Maria Piave, den Librettisten von elf seiner Opern, schrieb er mit einer Unverblümtheit, die manchmal fast schon brutal wirkte. Und an alle schrieb er in entschiedenem Tonfall.

Er schätzte Sänger, die den Text – seinen sorgfältig geplanten Text – klar und aussagekräftig artikulierten. Er wollte, dass dieser Text von denen verstanden wurde, die ihn hörten. Übersetzungen in die Landessprache des Publikums waren damals die Norm. Es gab auch Ausnahmen, Anomalien: Am Königlich Italienischen Opernhaus Covent Garden war Italienisch angesagt. Dort wurden *Il flauto magico*, *I maestri cantori*, *Gli ugonotti* und *I pescatori di perle* zu Gehör gebracht, und selbst englische Opern wie Stanfords *Veiled Prophet* wurden in italienischer Übersetzung gesungen. Auch in der Eröffnungssaison der Metropolitan Opera in New York (1883/84) wurde ausschließlich Italienisch gesungen (auch *Faust*, *Lohengrin* und *Carmen*); und dann sang man von 1884 bis 1891 alles auf Deutsch (einschließlich *Faust*, *Aida* und *Carmen*). In der

Saison 1891/92 kamen einige französische Opern heraus, die auf Französisch gesungen wurden, während die deutschen Opern zur italienischen Übersetzung zurückfanden. Paris hatte sein Théâtre-Italien, doch als die Pariser Opéra vorschlug, *Aida* auf Italienisch aufzuführen, sagte Verdi nein, das wäre am französischen Nationaltheater absurd. Die Oper wurde für die triumphale Premiere an der Opéra, die Verdi 1880 selbst dirigierte, ins Französische übersetzt. Das gleiche gilt für die Pariser Premiere von *Falstaff* an der Opéra-Comique und von *Otello* an der Opéra, die beide 1894 stattfanden. *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* und *La traviata*, *Aida* und *Otello* erhielten natürlich ihre deutschen Erstaufführungen auf Deutsch. Und so weiter. Die „Fremdsprachenmarotte“ ist eine moderne Erscheinung. Bedeutende Sänger mit internationalen Verpflichtungen waren früher stolz auf die Fähigkeit, eine bestimmte Partie in mehreren Sprachen zu singen.

Der Streit über das Für und Wider, ob man Opern in der Originalsprache belassen oder in die des Publikums übertragen soll, wird niemals aufhören, und ich will das Thema hier nicht auswalzen. Es gibt auf beiden Seiten gute Argumente. Im Großen und Ganzen haben die bedeutenden Komponisten Übersetzungen

bevorzugt; sie wünschten sich direkte Kommunikation zwischen Sängern und Publikum. Aber nachdem ich acht von Verdis Opern zur Aufführung in englischer Sprache übersetzt habe, vertrete ich immer noch den Standpunkt: „Es kommt ganz darauf an.“ Es kommt auf das engagierte Ensemble an, auf die jeweilige Bühne, auf die Umstände (Festival- oder Repertoireaufführung) und auf die Verfügbarkeit einer Übersetzung, die sich glaubhaft singen lässt. Auf der vorliegenden CD hören wir die Werke von acht verschiedenen Verdi-Übersetzern, die sich bemüht haben, Verdis Vorlage mit Lauten zu entsprechen, die zur Musik passen und den Sinn vermitteln, indem sie so weit wie möglich die langen oder kurzen, offenen oder nicht offenen Vokale wiedergeben, die flüssigen oder kantigen Konsonanten, die kleinen sprachlichen Feinheiten, die den Unterschied ausmachen können zwischen Gesang, der gestelzt klingt, und solchem, der natürlich fließt. In den folgenden Anmerkungen werden einige spezifische Fragen der Übersetzung berührt.

1 **Nabucco** (1842): Chor der hebräischen Sklaven. *Nabucco*, Verdis dritte Oper, war sein erster großer Erfolg und machte seinen Namen erst in ganz Italien und dann von

Wien bis Valparaiso, von Santiago bis Sydney rund um die Welt bekannt. Der berühmte Chor ist Soleras Paraphrase des 137. Psalms: “An den Wassern zu Babel saßen wir und weinten, wenn wir an Zion gedachten.” Er war der erste von Verdis großen Chören zum Thema “Patrioten im Exil”; es folgten in diesem Sinne “O Signore, dal tetto natio” in *I Lombardi* und “Patria oppressa” in der ersten Fassung von *Macbeth*. Tom Hammonds und Norman Tuckers “Speed your journey” passt besser zu “Va pensiero [–] sull’ali dorate” als das “Let our thoughts fly” einer späteren Übersetzung. In meiner Version habe ich auf die Worte des Psalmisten zurückgegriffen: “By the waters, the waters of Babylon.”

[2] **Luisa Miller** (1849): Rodolfos Arie. Rodolfo hat Luisas Brief erhalten, in dem steht, dass sie ihn nicht liebt (ein falsches Bekenntnis, das ihr der Schurke Wurm als Preis für die Rettung ihres Vaters vor dem Tod abgerungen hat). Cammaranos Libretto stützt sich auf Schillers *Kabale und Liebe*, aber wie Julian Budden sagt, kommt “nichts bei Schiller der Schönheit von Rodolfos *Andante* gleich, als er der glücklicheren, in ihrer Gesellschaft verbrachten Zeit gedenkt”. Viele Kommentatoren haben in *Luisa Miller* eine

neue Zartheit und Intimität festgestellt. “Ofte in the quiet evening hour” [“Quando le sere al placido...” – “Als sie am Abend mit mir...”] ist mit einem Solocello besetzt, die Gesangsstimme mit Klarinettenarpeggien unterlegt und umgeben. Zwölf Takte lang bewegt sich die Melodie nur schrittweise voran, bis sie sich dem verzweifelten Höhepunkt “She betrayed me” nähert. Der Anfang ist mit *piano*, *appassionatissimo* bezeichnet, der Höhepunkt mit *con disperazione*, wobei im Schlusstakt *ff* und *pp* nebeneinandergestellt sind.

[3] – [4] **Ernani** (1844): Eliviras Kavatine. Im Anschluss an *Nabucco* komponierte Verdi für die Scala *I Lombardi*, eine weitere “epische” Oper; dann wandte er sich für Venedig einem Thema ganz anderer Art zu: Victor Hugos kontroverser Schauspiel *Hernani*, einem hochromantischen Drama um drei Männer, die in ein und dieselbe Frau verliebt sind. Die Partie der Elvira wurde für Sophia Loewe komponiert, einen feurigen, aber feinfühligten Sopran (sie war später die Heldin in *Attila* und Verdis erste Wahl für Lady Macbeth), und dies ist ihre Aufttrittsarie. Sie erwartet die Ankunft ihres Geliebten Ernani, der sie vor der geplanten Heirat mit ihrem älteren Vormund

retten soll. Die Gesangslinie enthält große Sprünge, überstürzte Abstiege und viele hohe Cs; sie verlangt eine kräftige Koloraturstimme, Arpeggien, die vom einen ins andere Register springen, flinke Läufe und jähe dynamische Kontraste.

[5] **The Sicilian Vespers** (Les Vêpres siciliennes, 1855): Procidas Arie. Verdis erste Oper für Paris war *Jérusalem* (1847), eine erweiterte Neubearbeitung von *I Lombardi*. Für seine erste vollkommen neue Pariser Oper bestand er darauf, mit Scribe zusammenzuarbeiten, Meyerbeers Mitarbeiter an mehreren Erfolgen der Opéra. Scribe legte zwei Stoffe vor, die Verdi zurückwies, und dann ein Libretto mit dem Titel *Le Duc d’Albe*, das für Donizetti geschrieben, aber von diesem nie fertig umgesetzt worden war, und dessen Handlung er von Brüssel nach Palermo verlegt hatte. (Donizettis Oper wurde später von seinem Schüler Matteo Salvi fertiggestellt und kam 1882 in Rom heraus.) Verdi nahm die Ware aus zweiter Hand an, beharrte jedoch auf zahlreichen Text- und Strukturänderungen. Er beschwerte sich, wenn er den Eindruck hatte, daß irgendwelche Italiener verunglimpft wurden. Procidas Arie dagegen, die Begrüßung der Heimat durch den sizilianischen Patrioten,

war vom Empfinden her akzeptabel. Verdi komponierte die Arie zweimal. Die nicht orchestrierte ältere Fassung befindet sich in der Bibliothek der Opéra.

[6] **Rigoletto** (1851): die Kanzone des Herzogs. Verdis Vorliebe dafür, im Dreiertakt eine betonte Silbe auf den zweiten Schlag zu setzen (im Effekt ein Gegenakzent: “eins-ZWEI-drei” oder “EINS-ZWEI-drei” anstatt schlicht “EINS-zwei-drei”), bereitet Übersetzern in Sprachen mit starken Betonungen Schwierigkeiten. Beispiele sind “PaRlgi, o cara” in *La traviata* oder das beschwingte “La DONna è mobile” des Herzogs von Mantua, wenn er im letzten Akt von *Rigoletto* zu seinem Stelldichein mit Maddalena erscheint. Das Italienische ist von der Aussprache her flexibler. Einige der älteren englischsprachigen Versionen sind: “Woman is fickle and” (John Oxenford), “Plume in the summer wind” (Natalia Macfarren), “Wayward as thistledown” (E.J. Dent), “Woman’s fidelity” (Ruth und Thomas Martin), “Women are light as air” (Mary Jane Matz), “Woman is changeable” (A.P.). Aber keine lässt sich so leicht betonen und aussprechen, wie ein italienischer Tenor ganz natürlich “La donna è mobile” singt. James Fentons Übersetzung

entstand für die im Mafia-Milieu angesiedelte Produktion der Oper an der English National Opera (1982), die von Jonathan Miller inszeniert wurde und im New Yorker Stadtteil "Little Italy" spielt. Dort steckte "The Dook" eine Münze in die Jukebox und sang zu deren "Begleitung". *Rigoletto*, das wie *Ernani* für Venedig geschrieben wurde, war Verdis zweite Victor-Hugo-Oper auf der Grundlage von *Le Roi s'amuse* (1832). Er wählte ein ausgefallenes Sujet – einen buckligen Helden – und komponierte eine der wenigen Opern, die sich von der Uraufführung an bis auf den heutigen Tag im Repertoire behauptet haben.

[7] **Il trovatore** (1853): Miserere. Verdi war ein Komponist, der sich bemühte, die Fesseln seiner "Fronzeit" an der italienischen Oper abzustreifen. In seinem Briefwechsel mit Salvatore Cammarano, dem Librettisten von *Il trovatore*, sprach er davon, dass ihm die übliche Abfolge von Chören, Arien, Duetten usw. wie ein Konzert vorkämen, nicht wie ein Drama: "Wenn doch eine Oper gewissermaßen nur eine einzige durchgehende Nummer sein könnte!" Und auf ähnliche, Wagner vorausahnende Art schrieb Cammarano zurück, dass in einer idealen Welt ein einziger schöpferischer Geist sowohl das

Libretto als auch die Musik einer Oper ersinnen würde. *Il trovatore*, oft als altmodisches Werk bezeichnet, ist in Wahrheit strukturell innovativ. Das Miserere ist eine erstaunliche Weiterentwicklung des traditionellen *tempo di mezzo*, jener kurzen Überbrückungspassage im Anschluss an den ersten Satz einer Arie (hier Leonoras "D'amor sull'ali rose"), in der die Information gegeben wird, welche die zugehörige Kabaletta ("Tu vedrai che amore in terra") veranlasst. Das Miserere ist ein *tempo di mezzo*, das aus den herkömmlichen paar Takten zu einer dramatischen dreistufigen Episode anwächst: Eine Totenglocke läutet, und hinter der Bühne stimmen Mönche einen Trauerchoral an; Manricos Stimme, die den baldigen Tod herbeiruft, erklingt aus dem Turm, in dem er eingekerkert ist; auf der Bühne kommentiert die Primadonna leidenschaftlich das Gehörte, begleitet vom "Todesmotiv" *di-di-dum*. Und dann faßt Verdi alle drei Elemente zusammen.

[8] **Falstaff** (1893): Fentons Sonett. Arrigo Boitos Libretto für *Falstaff* enthält unter anderem phänomenale metrische Feinheiten, und Verdis letzte Oper ist ein Wunderwerk der raffinierten, einfühlsamen Komposition. Die Schlusszene beginnt im Wald von Windsor,

wo ferne Hornsignale leise die mondhelle Verzauberung durchdringen und Fenton auftritt, um ein Sonett von der Liebe zu singen. Ein korrigierter Fahnenabzug von *Falstaff* ist erhalten geblieben und bezeugt Verdis geschickte Bearbeitung der langen Gesangslinien. Sie führen zum Refrain "Bocca baciata", den Nannetta und Fenton, die jungen Liebenden, im Verlauf der Oper zu ihrem privaten "Motto" gemacht haben. (Boito hatte ihn aus Boccaccios *Decamerone* entlehnt, wo er eine eher zweideutige Konnotation hat.) In der englischsprachigen szenischen Aufführung antwortet Nannettas Stimme Fenton am Ende mit der Zeile "Ever returning", während Fenton das Sonett mit "The singing dies when lips can be united" beschließt – und Mistress Alice unterbricht die ekstatische Kadenz der Liebenden im selben Moment, als sie in einem Kuss endet.

[9] **Rigoletto**: Quartett. Das berühmte *Rigoletto*-Quartett beginnt (wie das Quartett "A te, o cara" in Bellinis *I puritani*) als Tenorsolo. Lady Macfarrens Übersetzung "Fairest daughter of the graces" (die in den 1950er Jahren in Covent Garden immer wieder zu hören war, unter anderem mit Erna Berger, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf oder Joan

Sutherland als Gilda) und Dents "Lovely daughter thou of pleasure" (das drei Jahrzehnte lang von der Sadler's Wells bzw. English National Opera benutzt und erst dann durch meine Version ersetzt wurde) geben den Tonfall der hochtrabenden Ansprache des Herzogs an Maddalena treffend wieder. (Dent fügt die Regieanweisung "mit komisch übertriebener Galanterie" hinzu.) James Fentons englische Fassung entstand – siehe [6] oben – für die aktualisierte Inszenierung der English National Opera. Im Anschluss an das Solo des Herzogs setzen die übrigen Stimmen ein: Maddalena in spöttischen Staccato-Sechzehnteln, Gilda mit tieftraurigen Ausrufen, gebrochenen Phrasen und langgezogenen hohen Tönen (auf den Vokalen *i*, *a* und *o*), die manchmal von *pianissimo* auf *fortissimo* anschwellen, manchmal laut anfangen und dann gedämpft werden, *Rigoletto* im düsteren Sinne von "Hab ich es dir nicht gesagt?" und mit grimmigen Drohungen, Rache zu nehmen. Die sechszeiligen Strophen für jede Figur sind vom Versmaß her identisch, aber Verdi setzt sie musikalisch mit sehr unterschiedlichen Fortschreitungen (und Emotionen) um, sorgfältig überlappend gesetzt, so dass jeder wichtige Satz zu hören ist.

^[10] **The Force of Destiny** (La forza del destino, 1862): Don Alvaros und Don Carlos erstes Duett. Die neuerdings grassierende, manchmal lächerliche "schwule Musikwissenschaft" hat sich Zeit gelassen, Verdis Nummern für Tenor und Bariton aufzugreifen und im Sinne von "zwei Männer kommen sich nahe" zu interpretieren, nämlich Duette in *Un ballo in maschera*, *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello*. Zwar kommt in *Un ballo in maschera* kein Tenor-Bariton-Duett vor, doch die Baritonarien sind – eine mit zärtlicher Sorge, die andere mit Groll über einen scheinbaren Verrat – an einen innig geliebten Tenor gerichtet. Ein Dreieck aus zwei Männern und einer Frau – ob sie von beiden umworben wird (wie in *Il trovatore*) oder die Gemahlin (wie in *Ballo*) oder Schwester (wie in *Forza*) des einen ist – kann für alle drei bedeutungsvoll sein. Mary Jane Matz hat dafür gesorgt, dass sich den Italienern die Haare sträubten, als sie 1969 bei einem *Don-Carlos*-Kongress rundheraus erklärte und als Beweis Briefe zitierte, dass Verdi sich in den Dirigenten Angelo Mariani verliebt habe (einen "dunkeläugigen Engel" hat Rossini ihn genannt) – und dass beide außerdem in dieselbe Frau verliebt gewesen seien, die Sopranistin Teresa Stoltz. Wie dem auch sei:

In *The Force of Destiny* wird die erste Begegnung zwischen Don Alvaro und Don Carlo als eine Art Liebe auf den ersten Blick dargestellt. "In death's awful shadow" ["Solenno in quest'ora" – "In dieser heiligen Stunde"], das erste ihrer drei leidenschaftlichen, langen Duette, ist ein Liebesduett zwischen Tenor und Bariton. Alvaro ist schwer verletzt und erlegt seinem Freund die Verpflichtung auf, eine Geheimsache zu vernichten, die sich in seinem Gepäck befindet, die aber unbedingt mit ihm sterben soll. (Carlo kramt daraufhin in der Tasche, entdeckt ein Porträt und kommt hinter das Geheimnis: Sein Freund ist kein anderer als der Geliebte seiner Schwester, der von Inkakönigen abstammende Mestize, den zu töten er geschworen hat.) In einer berühmten Aufnahme des Duetts von Caruso und Antonio Scotti harmonisieren die beiden Stimmen so gut, dass man seinerzeit die Käufer herausforderte, festzustellen, wo der eine zu singen aufhörte und der andere anfangt.

^[11] – ^[12] **Il trovatore**: die Arie des Grafen. Ein Kommentar zu den strukturellen Neuerungen, die Verdi in *Il trovatore* angestrebt hat, ist unter ^[7] oben nachzulesen. Die Baritonarie war ursprünglich für die Heerlagerszene im

dritten Akt gedacht, aber Verdi beschloss, sie in die zweite Szene des zweiten Akts zu verlegen – und behielt in der Heerlagerszene ein Rezitativ bei, das zu einer Arie zu führen scheint, jedoch unvermutet von der Gefangennahme Azucenas unterbrochen wird. Die Arie im zweiten Akt ist geschliffen und feurig. Die Begleitung – ausgehaltene Bratschen, Klarinettenarpeggien – hält sich zurück, aber die Stimme schwingt sich hoch empor, zu mehreren Fs und einem hohen G. Die Kabaletta (die ebenfalls auf hohen Fs und einem gelegentlichen Ges besteht) verbindet auf geniale Art das Solo des Grafen und einen kleinen Chor seiner Gefolgsleute.

^[13] **I Lombardi alla prima crociata** (1843): Orontes Kavatine. *I Lombardi*, die Oper, die Verdi nach *Nabucco* komponiert hat, ist von der Handlung her so turbulent und ausgefallen, dass sie als Beispiel für Artauds spannende Theorie vom "Theater des Absurden" gepriesen wurde. Die zweite Arie des Tenors wird mit Harfenbegleitung vom Himmel herab gesungen, als er (zum Christentum bekehrt und auf dem Totenbett getauft) der Heldin in einer Visionsszene erscheint. Oronte ist der Sohn des Tyrannen von Antiochia.

In seiner hier vorliegenden ersten Arie teilt er seiner Mutter (einer heimlich Bekehrten) mit, dass er sich in die reizende christliche Gefangene seines Vaters verliebt hat.

^[14] **La traviata** (1853): Violettas Arie im dritten Akt. *La traviata* war eine weitere jener Auftragskompositionen für die Stadt Venedig, für die Verdi kühne Themen gewählt hat: erst *Ernani*, dann der bucklige Protagonist von *Rigoletto* und nun in *La traviata* eine Hure als Heldin. Zu allem Überfluss war der Stoff seinerzeit hochaktuell. Alphonsine Plessis, Marie Duplessis, die Comtesse Edouard de Perrigaux nach ihrer Heirat im Standesamt des Londoner Stadtteils Kensington – das Vorbild für die Figur Marguerite Gautier bei Alexandre Dumas d.J. und für Verdis Violetta Valéry – war 1847 in Paris gestorben. Verdi kann ihr ohne weiteres persönlich begegnet sein. Es heißt, er sei bei der Premiere von *La Dame aux camélias* (1852), Dumas' Schauspiel über sie, zugegen gewesen. Er selbst lebte mit Guiseppina Strepponi zusammen, einer "gefallenen" Frau, die er erst 1859 heiratete. Die erste Inszenierung von *La traviata* war kein Erfolg, aber nach der zweiten gesellte sie sich zu *Rigoletto* und *Il trovatore* und der

kleinen Schar von Opern, die nie aus dem Repertoire verschwunden sind. Die sterbende Violetta hebt in Moll zu singen an und bricht, das immer gleiche synkopierte rhythmische Motiv beibehaltend, bei “della traviata sorridi” (“lächle über die arme Irregeleitete”) in Dur aus.

^[15] **A Masked Ball** (Un ballo in maschera, 1859): Liebesduett. *Ballo* war der letzte italienische Auftrag, den Verdi ausgeführt hat. Er hatte ein “bombensicheres” Scribe-Libretto gewählt, eine Bearbeitung von *Gustave III* (1833), Aubers internationalem Erfolg. Aber Verdis Oper, die in der Urfassung mit einem Königsmord endet, stieß in Neapel auf Schwierigkeiten mit der Zensur und wurde nicht aufgeführt. Danach komponierte Verdi *Forza* für St. Petersburg, *Don Carlos* für Paris, *Aida* für Kairo sowie *Otello* und *Falstaff* – darauf beharrte er – zu seinem eigenen Vergnügen. Der Schauplatz von *Ballo* wurde von Scribes Stockholm nach Pommern, nach Florenz und schließlich (für die endlich in Rom stattfindende Uraufführung) nach Boston verlegt, nach Neapel (in Paris und London) und in heutiger Zeit oft zurück nach Schweden. Ausgewachsene Liebesduette zwischen Sopran und Tenor kommen bei Verdi

relativ selten vor. Gewöhnlich sind es Duette, in denen Konflikte oder Missverständnisse abgehandelt werden. Das Liebesduett in *Ballo* ist jedoch ein leidenschaftlicher Erguss aus vollem Hals und vollem Herzen: nicht ungetrübt, denn die Liebe, zu der sich die Liebenden bekennen, ist verboten – Gustavus ist der König, Amelia die Frau seines treuesten Freundes – und doch verzückt. *Ballo* ist – wie *I due Foscari*, *Simone Boccanegra* und *Don Carlos* – eine Oper über Pflicht, Verantwortung und jene Augenblicke, in denen menschliche Leidenschaften die klare Wahrnehmung trüben.

^[16] **Simon Boccanegra** (1857): Fiescos Arie. Eine weitere für Venedig komponierte Oper. Ich gebe das frühere Datum an, weil Verdi 1881, als er *Simone Boccanegra* radikal überarbeitete, Fiescos Arie bis auf die Umwandlung einer dekorativen Triole (im vorliegenden Fall bei “pray now, Maria, for me”) in eine linear absteigende Tonfolge unverändert gelassen hat. Fiesco, so Verdi, sollte “eine Stimme aus Stahl” haben. Er beklagt seine tote Tochter, verflucht deren Liebhaber Boccanegra und tadelt die Jungfrau Maria dafür, dass sie ihren Tod zugelassen hat. Starrsinn ist mit Zärtlichkeit vermengt.

^[17] – ^[18] **Otello** (1887): Liebesduett. Boito hat das Finale zum ersten Akt von *Otello*, das Liebesduett, durch Zusammenstellung und Bearbeitung von Zeilen aus mehreren verschiedenen Szenen in Shakespeares Schauspiel geschaffen. Er arbeitete frei, übertrug Otellos “O meine holde Kriegerin” auf Desdemona, verwandelte es in ihr “Mio superbo guerrier” und schloss Zeilen aus einer früheren Szene an, so dass Desdemonas von Othello berichtete Äußerungen nun von Desdemona selbst gesungen werden. Iago, Shakespeares höhnischer Lauscher, der die Begegnung kommentiert, wurde erst im Laufe der sorgfältigen, wiederholten Überarbeitung des Finales durch Verdi aus dem Duett verbannt. Otellos “fataler Makel” und Desdemonas unerschütterliche Kraft werden in den detaillierten Regieanweisungen für den Schluss des Duetts angeführt: “Auf dem Höhepunkt der Emotion fühlt Othello sich schwach... Als er zurückweicht, folgt sie ihm

und stützt ihn. Bei den Worten ‘Ich zittere’ setzt Othello sich hin, der Ohnmacht nahe. Desdemona beugt sich über ihn. Wieder zu sich kommend wendet Othello sich Desdemona zu und sagt: ‘Un bacio’. [Meine Übersetzung “I kiss you” trifft das Flehentliche daran nicht; ich habe mich auf den Tenor verlassen, es hineinzulegen; Charles Craig hat mir den Gefallen getan.] Indem sie sich noch tiefer herabbeugt, ruft sie in gefühlvollem, zärtlichem Ton: ‘Othello!’ Und Verdis vier Solocelli sorgen unter einem hohen Violintriller für sinnliche Verzauberung.

^[19] **La traviata**: Brindisi. Violetta lädt den neuen Bekannten in ihren Salon ein, um einen Trinkspruch auszugeben, *un brindisi*. Alfred “improvisiert”, und Violetta geht darauf ein. Aber unter der glanzvollen Fröhlichkeit sind im verbalen Austausch zwischen Violetta und Alfred die ernsthafteren Themen des Dramas herauszuhören.

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Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Sharon Sweet as Leonora in
the 1990 Metropolitan Opera
production of *Il trovatore*

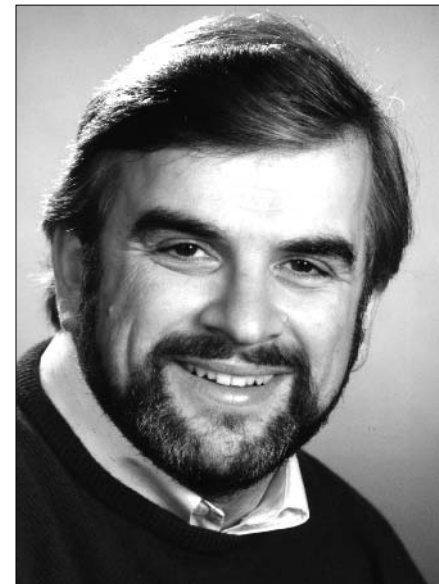


Winnie Klotz/The Metropolitan Opera

Steve Shipman



Alastair Miles



Alan Opie

Robert Carpenter Turner

Giuseppe Verdi

Dans presque tous les opéras de Verdi, la mention “et le compositeur” pourrait être ajoutée à la signature du librettiste. Verdi prêtait une attention peu commune aux mots qu’il mettait en musique. Du premier au dernier, ses poètes furent bombardés de requêtes, suggestions et demandes. Son souci de l’expression verbale allait de la formulation des larges structures au choix des mots individuels – et particulièrement de la *parola scenica*, le mot qui “définit, illustre, donne vie” à une situation dramatique. Dans *Nabucco*, le premier grand succès de Verdi, Temistocle Solera reçut l’instruction de remplacer un duo d’amour par la farouche et solennelle prophétie de Zacharie. Camille du Locle, durant la révision de *Don Carlos*, reçut des instructions très précises (en français) à propos de ce que la Reine devait dire au cours de son accès d’indignation. Dans *Falstaff*, Boito fut enjoint d’ajouter le récit de Mistress Quickly. Verdi écrivait avec respect à Salvatore Cammarano, librettiste aguerri qui avait écrit quatre de ses opéras. Au célèbre et susceptible Scribe, le librettiste des *Vêpres siciliennes*, il écrivait avec tact. A Francesco

Maria Piave, le librettiste de onze de ses opéras, collègue fidèle, d’une patience à toute épreuve, il écrivait avec une franchise parfois presque brutale. Et il écrivait à tous avec fermeté.

Il appréciait les chanteurs qui prononçaient les paroles – ses paroles soigneusement élaborées – avec clarté et éloquence. Il voulait que ces paroles soient comprises par ceux qui les entendaient. Il était de règle à l’époque que l’œuvre soit traduite dans la langue de ceux qui l’écoutaient. Il y avait cependant des exceptions, des anomalies: c’était l’italien qui régnait au Royal Italian Opera House de Covent Garden. On y entendait *Il flauto magico*, *I maestri cantori*, *Gli Ugonotti* et *I pescatori di perle*, et on y chantait même les opéras anglais tels que *Veiled Prophet* de Stanford, en traduction italienne. De même au cours de la saison inaugurale du Metropolitan Opera de New York (1883–84), tout fut chanté en italien (y compris *Faust*, *Lohengrin* et *Carmen*), puis de 1884 à 1891, tout fut chanté en allemand (y compris *Faust*, *Aida* et *Carmen*). Et si la saison 1891–92 amena quelques opéras français chantés en français,

les opéras allemands furent de nouveau donnés en traduction italienne. Paris avait son Théâtre-Italien, mais lorsque l’opéra de Paris suggéra de monter *Aida* en italien, Verdi refusa, disant que ce serait absurde sur la scène de l’opéra national. L’opéra fut traduit en français pour les besoins de sa triomphante première, donnée en 1880 à l’Opéra de Paris sous la baguette de Verdi. Et il en fut de même pour les premières parisiennes de *Falstaff* à l’Opéra-Comique, et d’*Otello* à l’Opéra, qui eurent toutes les deux lieu en 1894. Bien naturellement les premières allemandes de *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* et *La traviata*, *Aida* et *Otello* furent données en allemand. Et ainsi de suite. L’“engouement pour les langues étrangères” est un phénomène moderne. Les grands chanteurs internationaux étaient fiers de pouvoir incarner leurs rôles en plusieurs langues.

Les débats sur le pour et le contre des opéras en langue originale par rapport aux opéras traduits dans la langue des auditeurs ne cesseront jamais, et je ne m’étendrai pas sur la question. Les deux côtés présentent des avantages et des inconvénients. Les grands compositeurs ont dans l’ensemble favorisé les traductions, voulant que les chanteurs communiquent directement avec leur public.

Mais après avoir traduit huit opéras de Verdi pour qu’ils soient interprétés en anglais, je n’ai toujours pas d’opinion tranchée. Tout dépend de la compagnie qui a été engagée, du théâtre en question, des circonstances (s’il s’agit d’un festival ou d’une représentation de répertoire) et si l’on dispose d’une traduction qui puisse être chantée de façon convaincante. Sur ce disque, nous entendons le résultat du travail fourni par huit traducteurs de Verdi, qui se sont efforcés d’associer aux lignes mélodiques de Verdi des sons qui vont avec la musique et transmettent la signification, reflétant autant que possible la nature des voyelles, longues ou brèves, ouvertes ou fermées; et celle des consonnes, liquides ou occlusives; les petites “articulations” pouvant faire toute la différence entre un chant qui paraît guindé et un chant qui coule avec une aisance naturelle. Quelques points de traduction spécifiques se trouvent d’ailleurs abordés dans les commentaires qui suivent.

□ **Nabucco** (1842): Chœur des esclaves hébreux. *Nabucco*, le troisième opéra de Verdi, fut son premier grand succès qui le rendit célèbre dans toute l’Italie et sous peu dans le monde entier, de Vienne à Valparaíso, de Santiago à Sydney. Son célèbre chœur est une

paraphrase du psaume 137, de la main de Solera, “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, o Zion” (Près des fleuves de Babel, nous étions assis et nous pleurions en nous souvenant de toi, ô Sion). Ce fut le premier des grands chœurs de patriotes exilés de Verdi; vinrent ensuite “O Signore, dal tetto natio” dans *I Lombardi* et “Patria oppressa” dans la première version de *Macbeth*. Le “Speed your journey” de Tom Hammond et Norman Tucker correspond mieux à “Va, pensiero [pause] sull’ali dorate” que le “Let our thoughts fly” (avec l’accentuation de “horsefly”) trouvé dans une traduction ultérieure. Dans ma version, je suis revenu au psalmiste: “By the waters, the waters of Babylon”.

[2] **Luisa Miller** (1849): l’air de Rodolfo. Rodolfo a reçu une lettre de Luisa lui disant qu’elle ne l’aime pas (fausse confession qui lui a été soutirée par l’infâme Wurm qui doit en contrepartie sauver son père). Le livret de Cammarano s’appuie sur *Kabale und Liebe* de Schiller, mais comme le fait remarquer Julian Budden: “rien chez Schiller ne saurait égaler la beauté de l’*andante* où Rodolfo se remémore des heures plus heureuses, passées en compagnie de celle-ci.” De nombreux

commentateurs notèrent la présence d’une intimité et d’une délicatesse nouvelles dans *Luisa Miller*. “Oft in the quiet evening hour” (souvent dans le calme du soir) est écrit pour violoncelle solo, avec des arpèges à la clarinette exécutés en-dessous et autour de la voix. Pendant douze mesures, la mélodie ne progresse que par degrés jusqu’à ce qu’elle approche du paroxysme désespéré – “She betrayed me!” (Elle m’a trahi!). Le début est marqué *piano*, *appassionatissimo*, et le paroxysme *con disperazione*, avec la juxtaposition de *ff* et *pp* dans la dernière mesure.

[3] – [4] **Ernani** (1844): la cavatine d’Elvira. Après *Nabucco*, Verdi composa *I Lombardi*, autre opéra épique, pour la scène de la Scala; Puis il attaqua un sujet d’un type bien différent à l’intention de Venise, le très controversé *Hernani* de Victor Hugo (1830), drame hautement romantique montrant trois hommes amoureux de la même femme. Le rôle d’Elvira fut composé à l’intention de Sophia Loewe, soprano fougueuse mais délicate (qui fut plus tard l’héroïne d’*Attila*, et le premier choix de Verdi pour Lady Macbeth). C’est ici son aria d’entrée. Elle attend l’arrivée de son amant, Ernani, pour

qu’il vienne l’arracher à un mariage arrangé avec son vieux tuteur. La ligne vocale qui comporte de grands bonds, de brusques descentes et de nombreux contre-ut, exige une puissante coloratur, des arpèges fendant les registres, des roulades rapides et des contrastes de dynamique soudains.

[5] **Les Vêpres siciliennes** (1855): l’aria de Procida. Le premier opéra qui fut écrit par Verdi pour la scène de Paris fut *Jérusalem* (1847), un remaniement amplifié de *I Lombardi*. Pour la composition de son premier opéra entièrement nouveau destiné à l’Opéra de Paris, il tint à travailler avec Scribe, qui avait collaboré aux grands succès de Meyerbeer montés à l’Opéra de Paris. Scribe proposa deux sujets qui furent rejetés par Verdi, puis un libretto, *Le Duc d’Albe*, qui avait été écrit à l’intention de Donizetti (qui le laissa inachevé), mais dont l’action avait été transférée de Bruxelles à Palerme. (L’opéra de Donizetti fut ultérieurement achevé par son élève Matteo Salvi, et fit son apparition à Rome en 1882.) Verdi accepta ce matériel de seconde main, mais exigea que de nombreux changements lui soient apportés au niveau des paroles et de la structure. Il se plaignit des endroits où l’on semblait manquer d’égards

envers les Italiens. Toutefois, l’aria de Procida, le salut du patriote sicilien à sa patrie, lui parut procéder d’un sentiment acceptable. Verdi la composa deux fois; la première version, non orchestrée, se trouve à la bibliothèque de l’opéra de Paris.

[6] **Rigoletto** (1851): la canzone du duc. Dans les mesures à trois temps Verdi aimait particulièrement mettre la syllabe accentuée sur le second temps (produisant un effet syncopé de type un-DEUX-trois ou UN-DEUX-trois, et non un simple UN-deux-trois), ce qui pose des problèmes à ceux qui traduisent dans des langues ayant un accent tonique fortement marqué. Citons en exemple “PaRÍgi, o cara” dans *La traviata*, ou “La DONna è mobile” que chante joyeusement le Duc de Mantoue dans le dernier acte de *Rigoletto*, en arrivant à son rendez-vous avec Maddalena. L’italien peut être prononcé avec plus de souplesse. Au nombre des versions anglaises antérieures, on citera “Woman is fickle and” (John Oxenford), “Plume in the summer wind” (Natalia Macfarren), “Wayward as thistledown” (E.J. Dent), “Woman’s fidelity” (Ruth et Thomas Martin), “Women are light as air” (Mary Jane Matz), “Woman is changeable” (A.P.). Il est impossible

d'accentuer et de chanter ces versions avec autant d'aisance qu'un ténor italien le fera naturellement de "La donna è mobile". La traduction de James Fenton qui fut réalisée pour la mise en scène maffieuse de l'opéra montée par l'English National Opera (1982), sous la direction de Jonathan Miller et transplantée dans la "Petite Italie" de New York, dans laquelle le "Dook" met une pièce dans un juke-box et chante sur cet accompagnement. *Rigoletto* qui comme *Ernani* fut écrit pour la scène de Venise, était basé sur *Le Roi s'amuse* (1832) et était le second opéra de Verdi tiré d'une pièce de Victor Hugo. Le compositeur choisit un sujet qui sortait de l'ordinaire – un héros bossu – et composa une oeuvre, comme il n'en existe que très peu, qui de sa création à ce jour n'a jamais quitté le répertoire.

[7] **Il trovatore** (1853): Miserere. Verdi était un compositeur qui cherchait à rompre le carcan infligé par ses "années de galère" au sein de l'opéra italien. Dans sa correspondance avec Salvatore Cammarano, le librettiste de *Il trovatore*, il mentionna que les successions habituelles de chœurs, arias, duos etc. pour lui tenaient du concert et non du drame: "si seulement les opéras pouvaient être, pour ainsi

dire, entièrement en un seul numéro!" Et dans la même veine annonciatrice de Wagner, Cammarano lui écrivit que, dans un monde idéal, ce serait le même esprit qui créerait le libretto et la partition de l'opéra. *Il trovatore*, que l'on a souvent qualifié d'œuvre traditionnelle, est en fait innovatrice sur le plan de la structure. Le Miserere constitue un développement étonnant du *tempo di mezzo* traditionnel, court passage de transition venant après le premier mouvement d'une aria (ici "D'amor sull'ali rosee" de Leonora) qui fournit l'information suscitant sa cabalette ("Tu vedrai che amore in terra"). Le Miserere est un *tempo di mezzo* qui, issu des quelques mesures imposées par les conventions traditionnelles, a cru pour devenir un épisode dramatique à trois niveaux: le glas sonne et dans les coulisses des moines entonnent un chant funéraire; la voix de Manrico, appelant la venue rapide de la mort, s'élève de la tour dans laquelle il est emprisonné; sur scène la prima donna l'entendant émet des propos passionnés, accompagnée par le "motif de la mort" (*di-di-dom*). Puis Verdi réunit les trois éléments.

[8] **Falstaff** (1893): Le sonnet de Fenton. Le libretto qu'Arrigo Boito écrivit pour *Falstaff* est, entre autres choses, d'une subtilité

métrique merveilleuse, et le dernier opéra de Verdi est un miracle de raffinement et de délicatesse du point de vue de la composition. La scène finale s'ouvre sur la forêt de Windsor: des appels de cor filtrent à travers la magie du clair de lune et Fenton entre en chantant un sonnet d'amour. Une épreuve corrigée de *Falstaff* survit pour attester de la subtilité des recompositions des longues lignes mélodiques. Elles amènent au refrain "Bocca baciata" dont les jeunes amants Nannetta et Fenton ont fait leur motif privé. (Boito l'emprunta au *Decameron* de Boccaccio, où il avait des connotations plus paillardes). Lors des représentations, la voix de Nannetta répond enfin à celle de Fenton avec cette phrase qui revient "sans cesse", tandis qu'en dessous Fenton achève le sonnet avec "The singing dies when lips can be united" (le chant meurt quand les lèvres peuvent s'unir) – c'est alors que Mistress Alice coupe court à la cadence extasiée des amants qui s'achève sur un baiser.

[9] **Rigoletto**: Quatuor. Le célèbre quatuor de *Rigoletto* (comme le quatuor "A te, o cara" dans *I Puritani* de Bellini) semble être au début un solo de ténor. La traduction de Lady Macfarren "Fairest daughter of the graces"

(entendue à Covent Garden pendant les années 1950, avec entre autres Erna Berger, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf et Joan Sutherland en Gildas) et celle de Dent "Lovely daughter thou of pleasure" (utilisée par le Sadler's Wells/English National Opera pendant trente années, puis remplacée par la mienne) rend bien les avances ampoulées du Duc à Maddalena. (Dent ajoute l'indication: avec une galanterie outrée au point d'être comique). La version anglaise de James Fenton fut réalisée – voir [6] ci-dessus – pour la mise en scène actualisée de l'English National Opera. Après le solo du Duc, les autres voix entrent: Maddalena avec des doubles croches staccato moqueuses; Gilda au désespoir avec des exclamations, des phrases coupées et de longues notes aiguës (sur les voyelles *i, a* et *o*) qui parfois enflent du *pianissimo* au *fortissimo*, parfois débute avec force pour se réduire ensuite; Rigoletto d'humeur sombre, furieux de voir ses prédictions se réaliser, proférant de farouches menaces de vengeance. Les strophes de six vers données à chaque personnage sont identiques sur le plan métrique, mais Verdi les met en musique avec des mouvements (et des émotions) bien différents, se recoupant avec soin de façon à permettre à chaque phrase importante d'être entendue.

^[10] **La forza del destino** (1862): le premier duo de Don Alvaro et Don Carlo. La nouvelle “musicologie gay”, parfois ridicule mais en plein essor, a mis longtemps à s’attaquer à l’écriture pour baryton et ténor exprimant les liens affectifs masculins trouvés chez Verdi dans *Un ballo in maschera*, *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlos* et *Otello*. Bien qu’il n’y ait pas de duo pour baryton et ténor dans *Un ballo in maschera*, les arias du baryton s’adressent – l’un avec tendre sollicitude et l’autre avec colère face à une trahison supposée – à un ténor jusqu’alors profondément aimé. Le triangle formé par deux hommes et une femme, soit courtisée par les deux (comme dans *Il trovatore*), soit la femme (comme dans *Un ballo*) ou la sœur (comme dans *La forza*) de l’un d’entre eux, peut s’avérer convaincant des trois côtés. Mary Jane Matz fit vibrer d’indignation les Italiens lorsqu’elle déclara sans ambages au cours d’un congrès consacré à *Don Carlos* en 1969 (avec lettres à l’appui) que Verdi était tombé amoureux du chef d’orchestre Angelo Mariani (Rossini le qualifiait d’“ange aux yeux sombres”), et que tous deux étaient aussi amoureux de la même femme, la soprano Teresa Stoltz. Quoiqu’il en soit, dans *La forza del destino*, la première rencontre entre Don Alvaro et Don Carlo est

présentée comme un véritable coup de foudre. “In death’s awful shadow” (Dans l’ombre affreuse de la mort), le premier de leurs trois longs duos passionnés, est un duo d’amour entre ténor et baryton. Alvaro grièvement blessé enjoint son ami de détruire un secret enfermé dans son sac, secret qu’il doit emporter dans la tombe. (En fait, Don Carlo fouille le sac, y trouve un portrait et découvre ainsi le secret de son ami, qui est l’amant de sa sœur, le métis (encore que membre de la famille royale incas) qu’il a juré de tuer. Dans un célèbre enregistrement du duo chanté par Caruso et Antonio Scotti, leurs voix étaient si merveilleusement assorties que les acheteurs étaient mis au défi de savoir exactement où l’une prenait la relève de l’autre.

^[11] – ^[12] **Il trovatore**: l’aria du Comte. Voir en ^[7], ci-dessus, les commentaires sur les innovations de structure auxquelles Verdi aspirait dans *Il trovatore*. L’aria du baryton devait à l’origine faire partie de la scène du camp de l’Acte III, mais Verdi décida de la mettre dans la deuxième scène de l’Acte II – gardant dans la scène du camp un récitatif qui semble vouloir mener à une aria, mais se trouve brusquement interrompu par la capture d’Azucena. L’aria de l’Acte II est empreinte

d’une douce ferveur. Son accompagnement – altos soutenus, arpèges à la clarinette – reste dans les profondeurs, tandis que la voix monte à l’aigu, atteignant plusieurs fois le fa et même un contre-sol. La cabalette (qui insiste sur les contre-fa et emploie à l’occasion les sol bémols) combine avec ingéniosité le solo du Comte avec un petit chœur chanté par sa suite.

^[11] **I Lombardi alla prima crociata** (1843): La cavatine d’Oronte. *I Lombardi*, l’opéra que Verdi écrivit après *Nabucco*, est si extravagant du point de vue de l’action que l’on en a élogieusement fait l’archétype de l’excitant “théâtre de l’absurde” d’Artaud. La deuxième aria du ténor est chantée du ciel, accompagnée à la harpe, alors que ce dernier (qui a été converti au christianisme et baptisé sur son lit de mort) apparaît à l’héroïne au cours d’une scène de vision. Oronte est le fils du tyran d’Antioche. Dans sa première aria, enregistrée ici, il dit à sa mère, (secrètement convertie au christianisme) qu’il est tombé amoureux de la ravissante captive chrétienne de son père.

^[14] **La traviata** (1853): l’aria de Violetta à l’acte III. *La traviata* fut une autre commande de Venise, cité pour laquelle Verdi choisissait

des sujets audacieux: *Ernani*, un protagoniste bossu dans *Rigoletto* et une prostituée pour héroïne dans *La traviata*. C’était aussi un sujet contemporain: Alphonsine Plessis – Marie Duplessis, ou la comtesse Edouard de Perrigaux après son mariage au bureau de l’état civil de Kensington – l’original de la Marguerite Gauthier d’Alexandre Dumas fils et de la Violetta Valery de Verdi – était morte à Paris en 1847. Verdi aurait pu facilement la rencontrer. La tradition veut qu’il assistât à la première de la pièce de Dumas qu’elle avait inspirée, *La Dame aux camélias* (1852). Il vivait d’ailleurs aussi avec une “femme perdue”, Giuseppina Strepponi, qu’il n’épousa qu’en 1859. La première mise en scène de *La traviata* ne fut pas un succès, mais après la deuxième, l’opéra rejoignit *Rigoletto* et *Il trovatore* parmi les rares opéras qui n’ont jamais été retirés du répertoire. Mourante, Violetta commence en mineur et, tout en maintenant le même motif rythmique syncopé, passe au majeur à “della traviata sorridi al desio” (“smile on the poor creature”).

^[15] **Un ballo in maschera** (1859): Duo d’amour. *Un ballo* fut la dernière commande italienne menée à bien par Verdi. Il avait

transformé en succès infaillible le libretto de Scribe, adaptation de *Gustave III* (1833), le succès international d'Auber. Mais l'opéra de Verdi, qui se terminait par un régicide, s'attira des ennuis avec la censure de Naples et ne fut pas joué. Puis il composa *La forza* pour la scène de Saint-Petersbourg, *Don Carlos* pour Paris, *Aida* pour Le Caire, ainsi qu'*Otello* et *Falstaff*, insista-t-il, pour son propre plaisir. Le cadre du *Ballo* fut transporté de Stockholm (le cadre original de Scribe) en Poméranie, à Florence, puis à Boston (pour sa première qui fut finalement donnée à Rome), à Naples (pour Paris et Londres) et, dans les temps modernes, de nouveau en Suède. Les véritables grands duos d'amour pour soprano et ténor sont comparativement rares chez Verdi. En général ce sont des duos qui expriment un conflit ou un malentendu. Toutefois le duo d'amour du *Ballo* est l'épanchement retentissant et sincère, bien que loin d'être serein, d'un amour que les amants déclarent interdit – Gustave est le roi et Amelia la femme de son meilleur ami – mais délicieux. *Un Ballo* – comme *I due Foscari*, *Simon Boccanegra* et *Don Carlos* – est un opéra qui traite du devoir, des responsabilités et des moments où les passions humaines obscurcissent le jugement.

^[16] **Simon Boccanegra** (1857): l'aria de Fiesco. Un autre opéra composé pour la scène de Venise. J'en donne la première date, 1857, parce que, durant sa révision radicale de *Simon Boccanegra* en 1881, Verdi ne toucha pas à l'aria de Fiesco, sauf pour transformer un triolet décoratif (à "Pray now, Maria, for me") en descente directe. Il fallait, disait Verdi, que Fiesco ait "une voix d'acier". Il pleure la mort de sa fille, maudit son amant, Boccanegra, et reproche à la Vierge d'avoir laissé mourir sa fille. Il y a chez lui une inflexibilité mêlée de tendresse.

^[17] – ^[18] **Otello** (1887): Duo d'amour. Boito créa le finale du premier acte d'*Otello*, le duo d'amour, en assemblant et en façonnant des passages empruntés à différentes scènes de la pièce de Shakespeare. Il prit une certaine liberté, donnant le texte d'Othello à Desdémone, "O my fair warrior" (O ma belle guerrière) devenant "Mio superbo guerrier" ("O my warrior so proud/O mon superbe guerrier") et faisant venir ensuite des vers empruntés à une scène antérieure, les déclarations de Desdémone, qui étaient rapportées par Othello, étant maintenant chantées par Desdémone elle-même. Les commentaires d'Iago, l'observateur sarcastique

de Shakespeare, ne furent écartés du duo qu'au cours des révisions soigneuses et répétées que Verdi apporta au finale. Le "défaut fatal" d'Othello et la calme fermeté de Desdémone sont clairement exprimés dans les instructions scéniques détaillées fournies pour la fin du duo: "Au comble de l'émotion, Othello se sent défaillir... Tandis qu'il fait un pas en arrière, elle le suit en le soutenant. Aux paroles 'I tremble' (je tremble), Othello s'assoit, s'évanouissant presque. Desdémone se penche sur lui. Reprenant ses esprits, Othello se tourne vers Desdémone et dit 'un bacio'. [Ma traduction, "I kiss you" (je t'embrasse), ne transmet pas l'idée de supplication, je comptai

sur le ténor pour l'exprimer, et c'est ce que fit Charles Craig.] Se penchant encore davantage, elle s'exclame 'Othello' avec une inflexion douce, chargée d'émotion." Puis les quatre violoncelles solos de Verdi, sous un trille aigu au violon, lancent leur voluptueuse incantation.

^[19] **La traviata**: Brindisi. Violetta invite le nouveau venu à son salon à proposer un toast, *un brindisi*. Alfred "improvise", et Violetta répond. Cependant sous l'étincelante gaieté, ce sont les thèmes plus sérieux de l'œuvre qui sont exprimés dans les échanges de Violetta et d'Alfred.

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Traduction: Marianne Fernée



Andrew March

Valerie Masterson as Violetta
Valéry in the English
National Opera production
of *La traviata*



Andrew March

John Brecknock as
Alfredo Germont in the
English National Opera
production of *La traviata*

Giuseppe Verdi

In quasi tutte le opere di Giuseppe Verdi, alla firma del librettista si potrebbe aggiungere “e il compositore”. Verdi curò in maniera particolare le parole che musicava. Dall’inizio alla fine tempestò i suoi poeti di richieste, suggerimenti, pretese. Le sue preoccupazioni verbali andavano dalla forma delle grandi strutture alla scelta delle singole parole, e soprattutto della *parola scenica*, la parola che “definisce, racchiude, anima” una situazione drammatica. Nel *Nabucco*, il primo grande successo di Verdi, Temistocle Solera fu costretto a sostituire un duetto d’amore con l’ardente, solenne profezia di Zaccaria. Durante la revisione del *Don Carlos*, a Camille du Locle fu imposto (in francese) esattamente cosa doveva dire la Regina durante il suo sfogo d’indignazione. Per il *Falstaff*, Boito dovette aggiungere il racconto di Mistress Quickly. Verdi inviò lettere rispettose al grande Salvatore Cammarano, librettista di quattro delle sue opere. Inviò lettere piene di tatto al famoso e permaloso Scribe, librettista di *Les Vêpres siciliennes*. Al povero e fedele Francesco Maria Piave, librettista di undici delle sue opere, il compositore inviò missive

senza peli sulla lingua, addirittura brutali, in alcuni casi. Ma tutte le lettere ai librettisti sono scritte con grande fermezza.

Il compositore apprezzava i cantanti che pronunciavano con chiarezza e con espressione le parole, le sue parole studiate con estrema cura. Voleva che queste parole fossero comprese dagli ascoltatori. A quei tempi, la traduzione nella lingua del pubblico era la norma. Ci furono delle eccezioni, delle anomalie: alla Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden, regnava sovrano l’italiano. Qui furono rappresentati *Il flauto magico*, *I maestri cantori*, *Gli Ugonotti* e *I pescatori di perle*; persino le opere inglesi, come *The Veiled Prophet* di Stanford, furono eseguite in traduzione italiana. Durante la stagione inaugurale della Metropolitan Opera di New York (1883–84), tutto venne cantato in italiano (compresi *Faust*, *Lohengrin* e *Carmen*); e poi, dal 1884 al 1891, in tedesco (compresi *Faust*, *Aida* e *Carmen*). Durante la stagione 1891–92 alcune opere francesi furono eseguite nella lingua originale, ma per le opere tedesche si fece ritorno alla traduzione italiana. Parigi aveva il proprio Théâtre-Italien, ma quando

l’Opéra suggerì di allestire *Aida* in italiano, Verdi rifiutò. In un teatro nazionale questo sarebbe stato assurdo; l’opera venne tradotta in francese per la trionfante prima dell’Opéra, diretta dal compositore in persona nel 1880. Lo stesso si verificò per la prima parigina del *Falstaff*, all’Opéra-Comique, e per *Otello* all’Opéra, entrambe nel 1894. Le prime tedesche di *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* e *La traviata*, *Aida* e *Otello* furono naturalmente in tedesco e così via. La predilezione per la lingua originale è un vezzo moderno. I grandi cantanti internazionali una volta si vantavano di saper interpretare i loro ruoli in diverse lingue.

Il dibattito sui pregi e sui difetti dell’opera in lingua originale rispetto a quella del pubblico non si esaurirà mai e non intendo dilungarmi ulteriormente su questo. Entrambe le tesi hanno argomenti validi a loro favore. In generale, i grandi compositori preferivano la traduzione; volevano che i cantanti comunicassero direttamente con il pubblico. Ma dopo aver tradotto otto opere verdiane per gli allestimenti in inglese, io sono ancora convinto che tutto dipenda dai casi: dalla compagnia impegnata, dal teatro in questione, dalle circostanze (festival o allestimenti da repertorio) e dalla disponibilità di una

traduzione convincente e cantabile. In questo disco ascoltiamo il lavoro di otto diversi traduttori verdiani che tentano di “accoppiare” ai versi verdiani suoni che si adattino alla musica e che comunichino il senso, rispecchiando il più possibile le vocali lunghe o brevi, aperte o chiuse; le consonanti liquide o dure, le piccole “articolazioni” che possono determinare la differenza tra brani che suonano artificiali e brani che scorrono con naturalezza. Nelle note seguenti vengono esaminate alcuni particolari problemi di traduzione.

□ **Nabucco** (1842): Coro della prigionia. *Nabucco*, terza opera di Verdi, fu il primo grande successo e rese famoso il compositore prima in tutta Italia e poi in tutto il mondo, da Vienna a Valparaíso, da Santiago a Sydney. Il famoso coro è una parafrasi del Salmo 137, “Là sui fiumi di Babel sostammo, piangendo al ricordo di Sion”, creata da Solera. A questo primo dei grandi cori verdiani di ispirazione patriottica seguirono “O Signore, dal tetto natio” nei *Lombardi* e “Patria oppressa” nella prima versione del *Macbeth*. La traduzione di Tom Hammond e Norman Tucker, “Speed your journey”, si adatta all’a musica di “Va, pensiero, [pausa] sull’ali dorate” meglio di “Let our thoughts fly” (senza accento su “fly”) di

una traduzione successiva. Nella mia versione ho fatto ricorso al testo inglese del Salmo: “By the waters, the waters of Babylon”.

[2] **Luisa Miller** (1849): aria di Rodolfo. Rodolfo riceve una lettera di Luisa in cui la fanciulla dice di non amarlo (si tratta di una falsa confessione, che le è stata strappata dal malvagio Wurm in cambio della vita di suo padre). Il libretto di Cammarano è ispirato a *Kabala und Liebe* di Schiller; ma, come dice Julian Budden, “nulla nel testo di Schiller può eguagliare la bellezza dell’andante di Rodolfo che ricorda i tempi felici trascorsi in compagnia di Luisa”. Molti commentatori hanno rilevato in *Luisa Miller* una delicatezza e intimità nuove. “Oft in the quiet evening hour” (Quando le sere al placido) è accompagnato da un violoncello e da avvolgenti arpeggi al clarinetto. La melodia si sviluppa per gradi congiunti in dodici battute, fino a raggiungere il culmine della disperazione “She betrayed me!” (Ah! Mi tradì!) L’indicazione dell’inizio è *piano*, *appassionatissimo*, e il culmine è *con disperazione*, con la giustapposizione di *ff* e *pp* nell’ultima battuta.

[3] – [4] **Ernani** (1844): cavatina di Elvira. Dopo *Nabucco*, Verdi compose *I Lombardi alla*

prima crociata, un’altra opera “epica”, per La Scala. Poi, per Venezia, affrontò un argomento di tipo molto diverso, un controverso dramma romantico: *Hernani* di Victor Hugo (1830), che vede protagonisti tre uomini innamorati della stessa donna. Il ruolo di Elvira fu composto per Sophia Loewe, un soprano vivace, ma delicato (protagonista poi di *Attila* e prima interprete immaginata da Verdi per Lady Macbeth), e questa è la sua aria di esordio. Nell’attesa dell’arrivo del suo innamorato, Ernani, Elvira si augura di essere salvata da un matrimonio di convenienza con il suo anziano tutore. La linea vocale ha grandi salti, discese precipitose, molti do alti e richiede una potente coloratura, arpeggi attraverso i registri, rapide volate e improvvisi contrasti dinamici.

[5] **I vespri siciliani** (1855): aria di Procida. La prima opera composta da Verdi per Parigi fu *Jérusalem* (1847), versione ampliata dei *Lombardi*. Per questo il compositore volle lavorare con Scribe, che aveva collaborato con Meyerbeer ad alcuni successi dell’Opéra. Scribe propose due soggetti che Verdi respinse e poi un libretto, *Le Duc d’Albe*, scritto per Donizetti, ma mai terminato, trasferendo la vicenda da Bruxelles a Palermo. (L’opera di

Donizetti fu poi terminata dal suo allievo Matteo Salvi e rappresentata a Roma nel 1882.) Verdi accettò il testo di seconda mano, insistendo però su molte modifiche al testo e alla struttura. Si lamentò quando gli sembrava che il testo offendesse gli italiani, ma trovò accettabile l’aria di Procida, il saluto del patriota siciliano alla sua patria. Verdi compose l’aria due volte. La prima versione, non orchestrata, si conserva nella biblioteca dell’Opéra.

[6] **Rigoletto** (1851): canzone del Duca. Verdi amava collocare la sillaba accentata sul secondo movimento del tempo ternario (“uno-DUE-tre” oppure “UNO-DUE-tre”, anziché “UNO-due-tre”). Questo crea dei problemi a chi traduce in una lingua con forti accenti tonici: come in “PaRlgi, o cara” nella *Traviata*, o nell’allegro motivo “La DONna è mobile” quando, nell’ultimo atto del *Rigoletto*, il Duca di Mantova arriva al suo convegno amoroso con Maddalena. L’italiano è molto più flessibile. Alcune delle prime versioni inglesi sono: “Woman is fickle and” (John Oxenford), “Plume in the summer wind” (Natalia Macfarren), “Wayward as thistledown” (E.J. Dent), “Woman’s fidelity” (Ruth and Thomas Martin), “Women are light as air”

(Mary Jane Matz), “Woman is changeable” (A.P.). Nessuna può essere accentata e cantata con la stessa spontaneità con cui un tenore italiano può pronunciare “La donna è mobile”. La traduzione di James Fenton fu realizzata per l’allestimento in chiave *mafiosa* proposto da English National Opera (1982), con la regia di Jonathan Miller e ambientato a New York, nel quartiere di Little Italy. Dopo aver lasciato cadere una moneta in un jukebox, il personaggio di Dook cantava con questo “accompagnamento”. *Rigoletto*, composto, come *Ernani*, per Venezia, rappresentò il secondo adattamento da Victor Hugo per Verdi su *Le Roi s’amuse* (1832). Il compositore scelse un protagonista “grossolano” – un gobbo – per creare un’opera che dall’epoca della sua prima non è mai uscita dal repertorio.

[7] **Il trovatore** (1853): Miserere. Verdi tentò di rompere le catene dei suoi “anni di galera” nell’opera italiana. Nella corrispondenza con Salvatore Cammarano, librettista del *Trovatore*, dichiarò che le normali sequenze di cori, arie, duetti e così via gli sembravano un “concerto”, non un’opera teatrale: “vorrei che un’opera potesse essere, per così dire, un solo brano”. Nella stessa vena, presaga delle teorie

wagneriane, Cammarano gli rispose che, idealmente, dovrebbe essere una sola mente a creare il libretto e la partitura di un'opera. *Il trovatore*, spesso definito un'opera all'antica, ha in realtà una struttura innovativa. Il miserere è uno straordinario ampliamento del tradizionale *tempo di mezzo*, il breve passaggio di collegamento dopo il primo movimento di un'aria (in questo caso, "D'amor sull'ali rosee" di Leonora) che fornisce l'informazione da cui nasce la cabaletta ("Tu vedrai che amore in terra"). Il Miserere è un *tempo di mezzo* derivato dalle misure tradizionali, che si trasforma in un episodio drammatico a tre livelli. suona una campana a morto e alcuni monaci fuori scena intonano un miserere; la voce di Manrico che invoca la morte, risuona dalla torre in cui è imprigionato; la primadonna, che la sente, pronuncia un commento appassionato, accompagnato dal ritmo del "motivo della morte". Quindi Verdi riunisce i tre elementi.

[8] **Falstaff** (1893): sonetto di Fenton. Il libretto di Arrigo Boito per *Falstaff* è, tra l'altro, una meraviglia di sottigliezze metriche e l'ultima opera di Verdi è un miracolo di raffinatezza e delicatezza. La scena finale inizia nella foresta di Windsor; in lontananza, tra i

richiami dei corni nell'incanto della luce lunare entra Fenton, cantando un sonetto d'amore. Esiste ancora una bozza corretta di *Falstaff* che dimostra i minuziosi rifacimenti verdiani dei versi lunghi. Questi conducono al ritornello "Bocca baciata non perde ventura" che in tutta l'opera i due innamorati, Nannetta e Fenton, hanno adottato come "motto" privato. (Boito lo prese a prestito dal *Decameron* di Boccaccio, dove ha una connotazione più sboccata.) Sulla scena, la voce di Nannetta risponde finalmente a Fenton, con il verso "Ever returning" (Anzi rinnova come fa la luna), dopo di che Fenton chiude il sonetto con "The singing dies when lips can be united" (Ma il canto muor nel bacio che lo tocca) – e Alice quindi interrompe la cadenza rapita degli innamorati che termina con un bacio.

[9] **Rigoletto**: Quartetto. Il famoso quartetto di *Rigoletto* (come "A te, o cara" dei *Puritani* di Bellini) è intonato inizialmente dal tenore solo. La traduzione di lady Macfarren "Fairest daughter of the graces" (utilizzata al Covent Garden negli anni 50 da numerose Gilde, tra cui Erna Berger, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf e Joan Sutherland), e "Lovely daughter thou of pleasure" di Dent (utilizzata da Sadler's

Wells/English National Opera per trent'anni e poi sostituita con la mia) cattura il tono del complimento ampolloso rivolto dal Duca a Maddalena. (Dent aggiunge l'indicazione "con galanteria comicamente esagerata".) La versione inglese di James Fenton fu realizzata – v. [6] sopra – per l'allestimento aggiornato di English National Opera. Dopo l'assolo del Duca, entrano le altre voci: Maddalena con beffarde semicrome staccate; Gilda con dolorose esclamazioni, frasi rotte, e lunghi acuti (sulle *i*, *a* e *o*) che talvolta si gonfiano da *pianissimo* a *fortissimo*, talvolta iniziano forte e vengono ridotte; Rigoletto, nella cupa vena del "te l'avevo detto" e con cupe minacce di vendetta. I sei versi delle strofe per ciascun personaggio sono identici dal punto di vista metrico, ma Verdi li sottolinea con movimenti (e sentimenti) molto diversi, sovrapposti attentamente in modo che sia possibile sentire tutte le frasi importanti.

[10] **La forza del destino** (1862): primo duetto di Don Alvaro e Don Carlo. La nuova e talvolta "musicologia gay" rampante, non ha ancora "scoperto" la scrittura verdiana dell'amicizia maschile tra tenore e baritono in *Un ballo in maschera*, *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello*. Sebbene non esista un

duetto tra tenore e baritono in *Un ballo in maschera*, le arie del baritono sono rivolte – una con tenera sollecitudine, l'altra con la rabbia suscitata da un apparente tradimento – a un tenore molto amato. Un triangolo di cui siano protagonisti due uomini che si contendono una donna è una situazione molto particolare. La donna può essere corteggiata da entrambi (*Trovatore*), moglie di uno di loro (*Un ballo in maschera*), o sorella (*La forza del destino*). Mary Jane Matz fece rizzare i capelli in testa agli italiani quando, durante un congresso del 1969 su *Don Carlos*, dichiarò apertamente, citando alcune lettere come prove, che Verdi si era innamorato del direttore d'orchestra Angelo Mariani ("angelo dagli occhi scuri", l'aveva definito Rossini) – ed entrambi si erano innamorati della stessa donna, il soprano Teresa Stoltz. Comunque, nella *Forza del destino* il primo incontro tra Don Alvaro e Don Carlo viene presentato come un episodio affine all'amore a prima vista. Il primo dei tre lunghi, appassionati duetti tra tenore e baritono, è un vero e proprio duetto d'amore. Alvaro, gravemente ferito, comanda all'amico di distruggere un segreto, nascosto nella sua valigia, perché muoia con lui. (In realtà, nella valigia Carlo scopre il segreto: il suo amico è l'innamorato

di sua sorella, la meticcina, anche se di famiglia reale Inca, che egli ha giurato di uccidere.) In una famosa registrazione del duetto tra Caruso e Antonio Scotti, le due voci erano così ben accoppiate che gli ascoltatori ebbero difficoltà a decidere dove finiva una e dove iniziava l'altra.

^[11] – ^[12] **Il trovatore**: aria del Conte. V. il punto ^[7] sopra a proposito delle innovazioni strutturali a cui Verdi mirò con *Il trovatore*. L'aria del baritono era originariamente prevista per la scena dell'accampamento nell'Atto III, ma Verdi decise di spostarla alla seconda scena dell'Atto II, conservando nell'episodio dell'accampamento un recitativo che sembra portare a un'aria, ma viene improvvisamente interrotto dalla cattura di Azucena. L'aria del secondo atto è armoniosa e ardente. L'accompagnamento – viole sostenute, arpeggi al clarinetto – è delicato, ma la voce raggiunge spesso il fa e un sol alto. La cabaletta (che insiste sempre sul fa alto, con qualche sol bemolle) sottolinea ingegnosamente l'assolo del conte e il piccolo coro dei suoi seguaci.

^[13] **I lombardi alla prima crociata** (1843): cavatina di Oronte. Le vicende dei *Lombardi*, l'opera Verdi compose dopo *Nabucco*, sono

talmente esagerate da farla paragonare a un esemplare del "teatro dell'assurdo" di Artaud. Il tenore esegue la seconda aria dal paradiso, con un accompagnamento d'arpa, quando compare all'eroina in una visione (dopo la sua conversione al cristianesimo e il battesimo in punto di morte). Oronte è figlio del tiranno di Antiochia. Nella sua prima aria registrata qui, rivela a sua madre (convertitasi in segreto al cristianesimo) di essersi innamorato della bella prigioniera cristiana di suo padre.

^[14] **La traviata** (1853): aria di Violetta, Atto III. *La traviata* fu un'altra opera commissionata della città di Venezia per cui Verdi scelse soggetti audaci: *Ernani*, *Rigoletto*, con un gobbo nel ruolo di protagonista, e *La traviata*, con una prostituta nel ruolo dell'eroina. Anche l'argomento era attuale. Alphonsine Plessis, alias Marie Duplessis, (Comtesse Eduard de Perrigaux dopo le sue nozze civili in Inghilterra) era il vero nome della Marguerite Gautier creata da Alexandre Dumas figlio e della Violetta Valéry verdiana. La donna morì a Parigi nel 1847. Verdi potrebbe averla incontrata. Secondo la tradizione, Verdi avrebbe assistito alla prima del dramma *La Dame aux camélias* (1852) di Dumas. All'epoca anche il compositore aveva

una relazione con una "donna perduta", Giuseppina Strepponi, che sposò soltanto nel 1859. La prima rappresentazione della *Traviata* non fu un successo, ma in seguito anche questa si aggiunse al gruppetto di opere sempre in repertorio, come *Rigoletto* e *Trovatore*. Sul punto di morire, Violetta dà l'addio al suo passato inizialmente in tonalità minore e, mantenendo lo stesso motivo ritmico sincopato, passa in quella maggiore con le parole "della traviata sorridi al desio".

^[15] **Un ballo in maschera** (1859): Duetto d'amore. Questa fu l'ultima commissione italiana per Verdi. Il compositore aveva scelto un libretto "sicuro" di Scribe, un adattamento del successo internazionale di Auber, *Gustave III* (1833). Ma l'opera di Verdi, che si concludeva con un regicidio, incontrò difficoltà con la censura a Napoli e non fu rappresentata. In seguito Verdi compose la *Forza del destino* per San Pietroburgo, *Don Carlos* per Parigi, *Aida* per Il Cairo, *Otello* e *Falstaff* per proprio divertimento – così disse. *Un ballo in maschera*, che si svolge a Stoccolma nel libretto di Scribe, fu ambientato via via in Pomerania, a Firenze, quindi a Boston (per la prima che infine si svolse a Roma), a Napoli

(a Parigi e Londra) e, in epoca moderna, spesso ancora in Svezia. Nel repertorio verdiano i duetti completi tra soprano e tenore sono relativamente rari. In genere si tratta di momenti di conflitto o malinteso. Ma il duetto d'amore di *Un ballo in maschera* è un'espressione d'amore a piena gola, a cuore aperto, per quanto problematica, perché si tratta pur sempre di un amore proibito: Gustavo è il re ed Amelia è la moglie del suo migliore amico. Rimane comunque un momento di estasi. Come *I due Foscari*, *Simon Boccanegra* e *Don Carlos* questa è un'opera sul dovere, la responsabilità e i momenti in cui le passioni umane anebbian la percezione del giusto.

^[16] **Simon Boccanegra** (1857): aria di Fiesco. Un'altra opera composta per Venezia. Io indico la prima data, 1857, in quanto nella sua radicale revisione del 1881 Verdi lasciò immutata l'aria di Fiesco, tranne per un abbellimento (una terzina in "Pray now, Maria, for me"/Prega, Maria, per me) in una semplice discesa. Fiesco, disse Verdi, deve avere "una voce d'acciaio". Piange per la figlia morta, maledice il suo amante, Boccanegra; e rimprovera la Vergine che ha lasciato morire la donna. L'inflessibilità si mischia con l'amore.

¹⁵ **Otello** (1887): duetto d'amore. Boito creò il finale del primo atto di *Otello*, il duetto d'amore, riunendo e limando versi da scene diverse della tragedia di Shakespeare. Lavorò liberamente, trasferendo la battuta di Otello a Desdemona, "O my fair warrior" e trasformandola in "Mio superbo guerrier" ("O my warrior so proud"); seguono i versi di una scena precedente, in cui le dichiarazioni di Desdemona riferite da Otello adesso vengono cantate dalla stessa Desdemona. Iago, lo spettatore sprezzante di Shakespeare che commenta sull'incontro, fu eliminato dal duetto solo durante le attente e ripetute revisioni del finale da parte di Verdi. Il "fatale difetto" di Otello e la forza di Desdemona vengono dichiarati nelle dettagliate indicazioni di scena per la conclusione del duetto: "Al colmo dell'emozione, Otello è costretto ad appoggiarsi a un rialzo degli spalti. Mentre

indietreggia, lei lo segue, sorreggendolo. Alle parole 'I tremble', Otello si siede, quasi perdendo i sensi. Desdemona si china su di lui. Riprendendosi, Otello si rivolge a Desdemona e dice 'un bacio'. [Nella mia traduzione, "I kiss you", si perde il senso di preghiera; io ho lasciato che la fornisca il tenore; Charles Craig ci è riuscito.] Chinandosi ancora di più, lei esclama 'Otello!' con un'inflessione emotiva, dolce." E i quattro violoncelli solisti, sotto un alto trillo del violino, creano un incantesimo sensuale.

¹⁶ **La traviata**: Brindisi. Violetta invita il nuovo arrivato nel salone per proporre un brindisi. Alfredo "ribatte" e Violetta risponde. Ma sotto la scintillante allegria, i temi più importanti del dramma emergono nelle battute che si scambiano Violetta e Alfredo.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella



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Rosalind Plowright as
Desdemona and
Charles Craig as Otello
in English National
Opera's 1982
production of *Otello*

Philip Birmingham



Susan Patterson

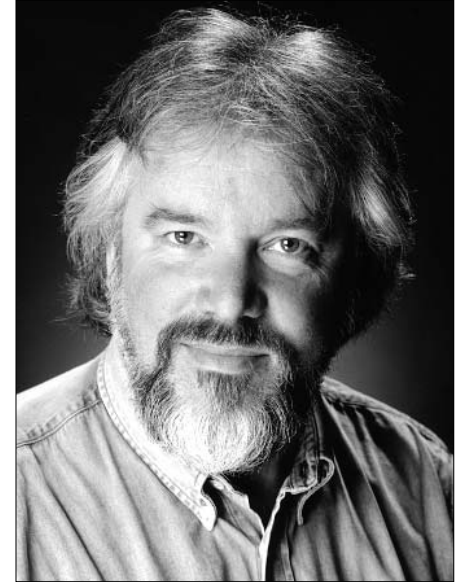


Helen Williams

Catherine Ashmore



Bruce Ford



John Tomlinson

Robert Workman

from Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar)

On the banks of the Euphrates

Chorus

- [1] Speed your journey, my thoughts and my longings,
speed your journey to mountain and valley,
where the sweet-scented air breathes a fragrance
o'er the homes that we knew long ago!
To the waters of Jordan bear greeting,
to the downfallen temples of Sion.
Oh, my country so fair and so wretched,
oh, remembrance of joy and of woe!
Golden harps of the Prophets, oh, tell me,
why so silent ye hang from the willow?
Once again sing the songs of our homeland,
sing again of the days that are past.
We have drunk from the cup of affliction
and have shed bitter tears of repentance,
oh, inspire us, Jehovah, with courage,
so that we may endure to the last.

T. Solera, translated by Norman Tucker and
Tom Hammond, reproduced by permission of
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from Luisa Miller

Rodolfo

- [2] Oft in the quiet evening hour,
under the stars of heaven,
my love and I would wander,
forgetting all save each other.

Then she would take my hand in hers,
give me a look so loving.
Ah! She has betrayed me.

And as I stood enraptured,
gazing upon her beauty,
my love would say so tenderly,
'I love you, and you alone, for ever.'
Ah, then it seemed that heav'n above
opened in all its glory.
She said so tenderly,
"Tis you I love, and you alone.'
Ah! She has betrayed me.

S. Cammarano, translation by Norman Tucker
and Tom Hammond, reproduced by permission
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from Ernani

Elvira

- [3] Darkness has fallen, and Silva's not returned yet!
God make him stay away!... That old man
disgusts me,
he's like a dreadful phantom, haunting me always,
and always saye he loves me.
He forces Ernani still more deeply in my heart.

- [4] Ernani! Ernani, rescue me,
from Silva's vile embraces.
Please take me... If I can live with you,
if that's what love allows me,
I'll follow you through wilderness
and dark caves... yes, I shall.
A haven forever,
those caves will seem to me.

I despise all that I'm offered,
because it does not come from Ernani.
There's no jewel that can make a lover
of that man whom I detest.
Hurry, time, and bring it sooner,
that great moment when we shall escape it;
hurry, time, for a heart that's loving
lives in pain when made to wait.

Ladies-in-waiting

(If this occasion leaves her cold.)

F.M. Piave,
translation © 1999 Antony Peattie

from The Sicilian Vespers

Procida

- [5] Oh, my Palermo, my one beloved,
land I have treasured deep in my heart, ah!
Lift up your head so weary and bloodied:
reclaim the splendour that once was yours!
I have wandered from country to country,
I have begged them for aid in our cause.
My pleas are urgent but no one will help us;
they say instead:
'Where is Sicilian bravery gone?
Fight with courage!
Fight with vigour!
Fight for honour!
Fight to win!'.
Oh, my Palermo, etc.

E. Scribe and C. Duveyrier,
translation © 2000 David Parry

from Rigoletto

'Duke'

- [6] Women abandon us.
Why should it hurt them
if we desert them...
when it's all over?
Women make fools of us,
laugh in our faces,
cover their traces...
take a new lover.
Women are liars,
cunning little demons –
What is a woman?
Why should men care?

Think of your liberty.
Those who forget it,
live to regret it
and very badly.
Though we have need of them,
those who confide in them
lose all their pride in them,
finish up sadly.
Women are liars,
cunning little demons –
What is a woman?
Why should men care?

F.M. Piave,
translation © 1982 James Fenton

from Il trovatore

Chorus

- [7] Lord, have mercy upon a soul departing
for that abode from which there's no returning;
Lord, have mercy and with Thy love sustain him,
grant that the fires of hell may never claim him.

Leonora

That sound and those voices,
that hymn for the dying
re-echoes around these walls
and chills me with fear!
It stifles my breathing,
my courage is failing,
I know that his last hour
on earth now is near.

Manrico

Ah!
When will death console me,
when will he set me free?
Life holds no pleasure for me!
Farewell my love, my Leonora, farewell.

Leonora

Oh heav'n! How can I bear it?

Chorus

Lord, have mercy upon a soul departing *etc.*

Leonora

Now death is approaching
that horrible tower,
the sound of his beating wings
is over my head,

and for my beloved
the gates of the prison
will never be opened
until he is dead.

Chorus

Miserere! Miserere!

Manrico

Faithful to vows we plighted
I meet my death today,
never forget me, pray,
farewell my love, my Leonora, farewell!

Leonora

Can I forget you? Can I forget you?

Manrico

Faithful to vows we plighted,
I meet my death today.
Never forget me.

Chorus

Miserer! Miserer!

Leonora

Oh God, have mercy. Can I forget you?

S. Cammarano, translation by Tom Hammond,
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from Falstaff

Fenton

- [8] From these true lovers' lips a song is flying,
through the still of the night it glides to heaven.
And from another's lips that song re-echoes,

responding with the same ecstatic sighing.
And then the song, which is alone no longer,
vibrates with joy in secret celebration,
filling the scented air with sweetest passion,
returning faithful to its first inspiration.
So it begins once more, but its sole purpose
is to ever unite all that's discordant.
Thus have I drowned that lovely mouth in kisses!
Kisses may fade but the memory lingers
ever returning as the moon in heaven.

A. Boito after Shakespeare,
translation © 1987 Amanda Holden

from Rigoletto

'Duke'

- [9] If you want a faithful lover,
I am waiting to embrace you.
Just a word is all I ask
and I promise to be true.
Have some pity. You'll discover
how my heart beats so fast.

Maddalena

You're a lying sort of lover,
all these compliments are easy.

Gilda

How could I believe your lying.

Maddalena

If you think you can deceive me
I must tell you I'm no fool.

Gilda

Oh! I thought you were my lover.

Rigoletto

Softly! You see he is no lover.

Gilda

All my sorrow and my sighing.

Maddalena

Men are easily discovered
when they do not tell the truth.

'Duke'

Have some pity, you'll discover how
my heart is beating fast.
If you want a faithful lover, *etc.*

Gilda

Ah, I believed you. Liar and traitor.
Now my heart will break.
All my sorrow, *etc.*

Maddalena

You're a lying sort of lover, *etc.*
Now tell the truth.

Rigoletto

Now you are certain he was lying.
There's no virtue now in crying.
I will strike the traitor down.
There's no virtue now in crying.
I will have revenge for you.
Yes, yes! Let it come.
Yes, yes! Let it come.
I myself will see it through.

F.M. Piave,
translation © 1982 James Fenton

from The Force of Destiny

Alvaro

- [10] In death's awful shadow
you must swear to honour
my final instruction.

Don Carlo

I promise, I promise.

Alvaro

Feel here where my heart beats...

Don Carlo

There's a key...

Alvaro

It opens that casket,
which I am entrusting
to you and your honour...
Inside lies a secret
I take to the grave.
Destroy what you find there...

Don Carlo

I'll do it, I swear.

Alvaro

My death can be peaceful...
Dear friend, I embrace you...

Don Carlo

Have faith in the mercy of heav'n.

Alvaro and Don Carlo

Farewell, my dear friend.

F. Piave, translation © 1998 David Parry

from Il trovatore

Count di Luna

- [11] In the stars that shine above me
there's not rival to her heav'nly radiance;
all her smiles, whose charms delight me,
give me new courage, give courage in her
presence.

Ah, the love that I bear her,
may it bid her fears all depart.
May the brightness of her glances
calm the tempest in my heart.

(A bell is heard.)

You hear that! Oh heav'n!

Ferrando

That bell means they're coming to the chapel.

Count di Luna

Before she reaches the altar we must seize her!

Ferrando

Be careful!

Count di Luna

Silence, I tell you! Obey me! Hide yourselves
and keep out of sight for now.
In a moment she will be mine! Oh, how that
thought inflames me.

Ferrando and Chorus of Retainers

- [12] The hour has come, no more delay,
we'll hide away, like shadows in the night.
The hour has come, be silent all.
My lord is here, be silent and obey!

Cabaletta

Count di Luna

My hour of joy approaches,
and how that thought elates me;
the bliss that here awaits me,
no mortal man has known,
no mortal man ever yet has known.
Though heav'n is now my rival,
the cloister shall not claim her,
not God himself shall gain her,
for she is mine alone.

Ferrando and Chorus of Retainers

The hour has come, *etc.*

Count di Luna

My hour of joy approaches, *etc.*

Ferrando and Chorus of Retainers

The hour has come and we obey! *etc.*

Count di Luna

Not even God in heav'n above me
can rob me now of all I prize, *etc.*
Now away, go hide yourselves, go hide among
the shadows and obey. Away!

S. Cammarano, translation by Tom Hammond,
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from I Lombardi

Oronte

- [13] My heart is full of happiness,
my one desire to share it,
to share this love so passionate

with her whose beauty inspired it.
I hear the ethereal harmonies
echo our sighs here below.
Ah! United we soar to paradise,
where mortal man may never go,
to where no man may go!

Dolera, translation © 1998 David Parry

from La traviata

Violetta

- [14] For ever I must leave thee, thou lone world of
sorrow.

The roses of my young days have faded for ever.
I've lost my Alfredo, I've lost my only treasure.
The one who sustained me has left me for ever.
All comfort is gone.

Ah! Smile on the poor creature
whose life has lost its savour.
Dear God, I now implore thee
to grant me this favour.
Ah, now all my life is done!

F.M. Piave, translation by Edmund Tracey,
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from A Masked Ball

Gustavus

- [15] You love me, love me...
Ah, from henceforth,
remorse and friendship shall be banished as it ought,
be gone for ever,
any thought except for love.

The sweetest glowing fire of love
is kindled here inside me:
to feel you close beside me
and hear the words you say!
Bright star in my dark universe,
accept this heart I offer,
and let your radiant passion ever banish
the light of day,
and let your radiant love forever banish
the light of day.

Amelia

I lay upon my bed of tears
and dreamt that I could conquer this,
but now it grows in power
and fills my heart with pain.
What stops me from revealing
this passion that torments me?
If only death would come to take
the pain of love away.
Ah yes, if only death would come,
to take the pain away.

Gustavus

Amelia! You love me, Amelia?
You love me?

Amelia

Yes. I love you.

Gustavus

Amelia, love will shine.

Amelia

But your noble mind
will protect me from my heart.

Gustavus

You love me!

Ah! The sweetest glowing fire of love
is kindled here inside me:
to feel you close beside me
and hear the words you say!
Bright star in my dark universe,
and let your radiant passion
forever ban the light of day.
Oh let your radiant love
forever banish the light of day.

Amelia

I lay upon my bed
and dreamt that I could conquer this,
but now it grows in power,
and fills my heart with pain!
What stops me from revealing
this passion that torments me?
If only death would come to take
the pain of love away.
Ah yes, if only death would come,
to take the pain away.

Somma, translation by Edmund Tracey,
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from Simon Boccanegra

Scena

Fiesco

¹⁶ A last farewell I bid you, my noble palace,
cold mausoleum for my daughter Maria.

Now she's dead, you'll protect her...

Oh, how I curse him, the cowardly seducer!

And you, Virgin of Heaven,

how could you suffer my daughter to be ravished?

Ah! To say that... is madness!

Grant me forgiveness!

My soul is torn with suffering,
burning with indignation.

I must endure the torment
of death and degradation.

Chorus

Maria! Miserere!

Fiesco

The blessed crown of martyrdom
is Heaven's gift to thee...

Risen to where the Angels are,
pray now, Maria, for me!

Chorus

The heavens now receive her!

But we shall never meet in this world!

We shall not meet again!

F.M. Piave (and G. Montanelli), after A.G. Gutiérrez,
English translation of the 1881 libretto
© 1985 James Fenton

from Otello

Otello

¹⁷ Now in the silent darkness
the strife is heard no more.
Now my heart that was raging is lulled in

sweetest calm as I embrace you.

Thunder and war may crack all the world
asunder when after boundless anger comes
such a boundless love!

Desdemona

O my warrior so proud!

So many torments and such sad tender
sighing, so many hopes have led our true
loving hearts to these embraces!

Oh! it was sweet

our murmuring together:

Do you remember?

¹⁸ Once when you told me of your life in exile, of
your adventures and your years of woe, and I
was seized with rapture as I heard you, I
shared those sorrows, my love began to glow.

Otello

I told you of the thrill of war, of battles when
we determined to conquer or die, bold
sorties, and climbing battlements, and trying
to scale the ramparts while arrows whistled by.

Desdemona

Then you would lead me far into the desert,
burning arenas that first you called your
home, when you described that shameful fate
you suffered, sold into slavery, chained by a
cruel hand.

Otello

But when you sighed so tenderly, that
suffering became my glory.

My sorrows then were light; for on my sombre history you poured a starry glory, and made my darkness bright.

Desdemona

And I saw gleaming on your dusky forehead all of the splendour that shines in your soul.

Otello

Ah, how you loved me
for those woes I'd suffered, and how I loved
you for your grief and care.

Desdemona

Ah, then I loved you for those woes you'd suffered, and how you loved me for my grief and care.

Otello

Death, you may claim me! Let me die in the ecstasy of this enchantment, this moment of rapture!

(The night sky is by now completely clear. A few stars are visible, on the rim of the horizon the sky-blue reflection of the rising moon.)

So sublime is my happiness I'm fearful that I shall never more be granted... Be granted such a moment in the dark hidden years that lie before me.

Desdemona

Let Heaven dispel your sorrows, our loving hearts will never be divided.

Otello

I pray that Heaven hears you, 'Amen' should answer from those spheres above me.

Desdemona

'Amen' they answer.

Otello *(leaning on the rampart)*

Ah! This joy that invades me
moves me so deeply that, breathless!
I tremble.
I kiss you...

Desdemona

Otello!...

Otello

I kiss you...
once more I kiss you.
(standing up and staring at the starry heavens)
Now the stars of the Plough have met the ocean.

Desdemona

Ah! It is late.

Otello

Come... Venus invites us!

Desdemona

Otello!

(They make their way, arms around each other, towards the castle.)

A. Boito after Shakespeare,
translation © Andrew Porter

from La traviata

Alfredo

¹⁹ Be happy, be happy and raise your glass with me,
here in the palace of beauty;
Each hour that passes we feel a duty
to drink and to taste every joy.
We yield to every ecstasy,
for love alone can fire us.
(pointing to Violetta)
Let those bright eyes inspire us.
She rules and we obey.
Be happy, be happy and raise your glass with me.
Kisses and love never cloy.

All

Ah, be happy and raise your glass.
Ah, for kisses and love never cloy.

Violetta *(rises)*

With you, yes, with you, my dear friends,
I laughingly
burn out my life in a fever.
Pleasure on pleasure is all I crave for.
No time for tears or sighs.
Enjoy the moment recklessly.
For love has no true power:

it blossoms like a flower,
then withers, fades and dies.
Enjoy, yes, enjoy life in feverish ecstasy.
What else can we prize?

All

Ah, we taste all the joys, all the joys of night
in our drinking and singing and laughter.
The dawn, yes, the dawn of the morning after
will find us in heaven here.

Violetta *(to Alfredo)*

The point of life is excitement...

Alfredo *(to Violetta)*

For one who has no true lover.

Violetta *(to Alfredo)*

Too late for me to discover.

Alfredo *(to Violetta)*

My destiny is clear...

All

Ah, we taste all the joys, all the joys of night
in our drinking and singing and laughter.
The dawn, yes, the dawn of the morning after
will find us in heaven here.

F.M. Piave, translation by Edmund Tracey,
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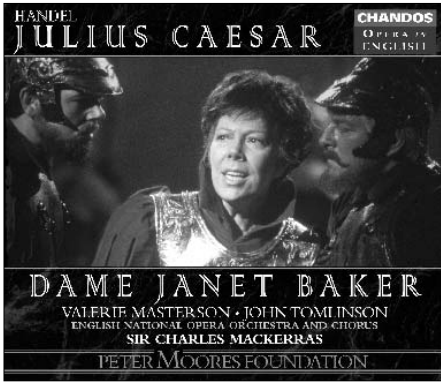


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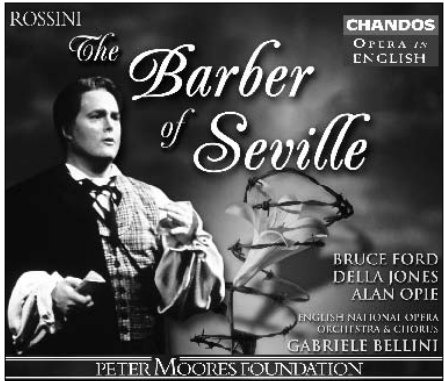


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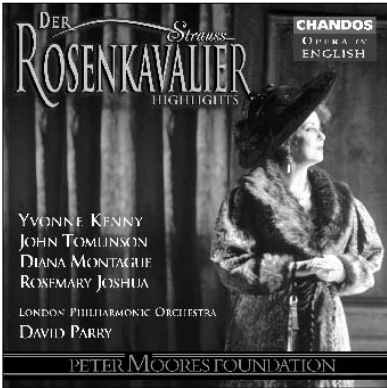
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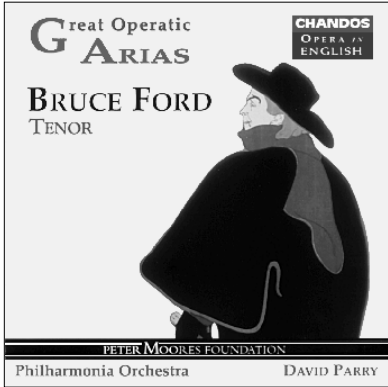
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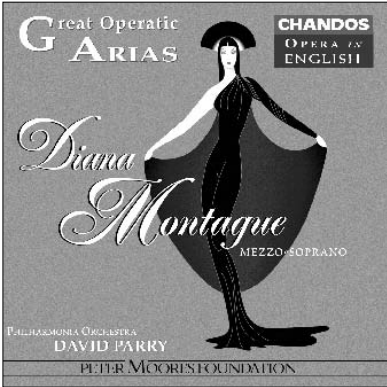
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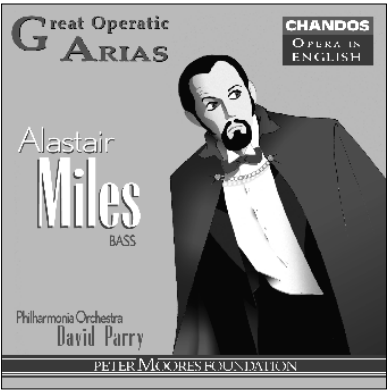
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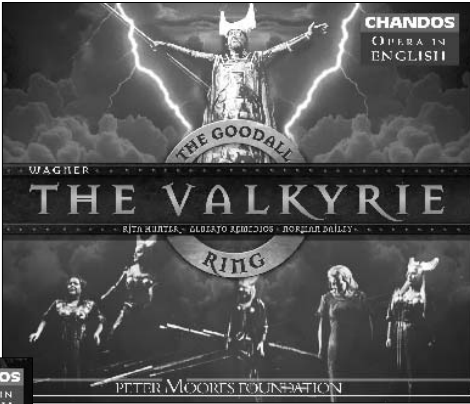
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Producers Brian Couzens, Suvi Raj Grubb & John Fraser

Sound engineers Ralph Couzens, Jonathan Cooper & Stuart Eltham

Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

Recording venues The Colosseum, Watford; Blackheath Halls, London; Abbey Road Studios, London & the London Coliseum

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Design Cass Cassidy

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Booklet editor Kara Reed

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| <p>1 <i>from Nabucco</i>
Chorus of Hebrew Slaves
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir 4:51</p> <p>2 <i>from Luisa Miller</i>
'Oft in the quiet evening hour'
Dennis O'Neill 4:19</p> <p>3 <i>from Ernani</i>
'Ernani, Ernani, rescue me'
Susan Patterson, Helen Williams 6:35</p> <p>5 <i>from The Sicilian Vespers</i>
'Oh, my Palermo'
Alastair Miles 4:50</p> <p>6 <i>from Rigoletto</i>
'Women abandon us' (La donna è mobile)
Arthur Davies 2:22</p> <p>7 <i>from Il trovatore</i> (The Troubador)
'Lord, have mercy upon a soul departing'
Sharon Sweet, Dennis O'Neill, Geoffrey Mitchell Choir 4:52</p> <p>8 <i>from Falstaff</i>
'From these true lovers' lips'
Bruce Ford 4:39</p> <p>9 <i>from Rigoletto</i>
'If you want a faithful lover'
Arthur Davies, Jean Rigby, Helen Field,
John Rawnsley 4:24</p> <p>10 <i>from The Force of Destiny</i>
'In death's awful shadow' (Solenne in quest'ora)
Dennis O'Neill, Anthony Michaels-Moore 4:37</p> | <p>11 <i>from Il trovatore</i>
'In the stars that shine above me' (Il balen)
Alan Opie, Clive Bayley, Geoffrey Mitchell Choir 7:21</p> <p><i>from I Lombardi</i>
(The Lombards at the First Crusade)
13 'My heart is full of happiness'
Dennis O'Neill 2:21</p> <p>14 <i>from La traviata</i>
'For ever I must leave thee' (Addio del pasato)
Valerie Masterson 2:55</p> <p>15 <i>from A Masked Ball</i>
'You love me, love me...'
Dennis O'Neill, Susan Bullock 4:24</p> <p>16 <i>from Simon Boccanegra</i>
'A last farewell I bid you' (Il lacerato spirito)
John Tomlinson 6:17</p> <p>17 <i>from Otello</i>
'Now in the silent darkness' (Già nella notte densa) 10:03
Rosalind Plowright, Charles Craig</p> <p>19 <i>from La traviata</i>
Brindisi
'Be happy, be happy and raise your glass with me'
(Libiamo) 3:07
John Brecknock, Valerie Masterson</p> |
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TT 79:05

with the Philharmonia Orchestra, English National
Opera Orchestra and Chorus and the London
Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David Parry,
Mark Elder and Sir Charles Mackerras

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