

CHAN 3076



David Parry

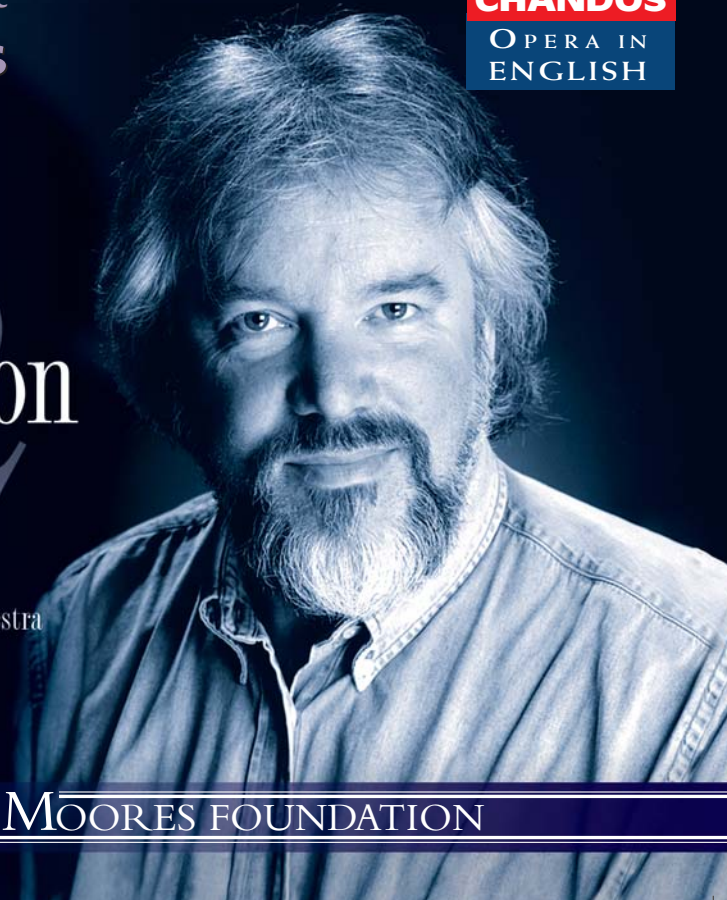
Great Operatic
ARIAS

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

John
Tomlinson
bass

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Philharmonia Orchestra

David Parry



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

Bill Cooper

John Tomlinson during
the recording sessions



Great Operatic Arias

with

John Tomlinson

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London Philharmonic Orchestra
Philharmonia Orchestra (tracks 4, 9 & 11)
Simon Over assistant conductor
David Parry



Clive Barba/PAL

John Tomlinson
 as Hans Sachs in
 The Royal Opera's
 production of
 Wagner's *The
 Mastersingers of
 Nuremberg*

Great Operatic Arias

'You,' said the great bass Pol Plançon to his friend and colleague Edouard de Reszke, 'are not a singer – you are a horse'. 'Le cheval' (so it is said) became De Reszke's nickname from then on, and the two remained friends. This was at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in the so-called golden age of the 1890s, when both were leading members of the company, sometimes even singing in the same performance. Plançon, however, was the lyric bass, the *basso cantante*; De Reszke, the heavyweight. His reputation was enormous, and he sang night after night. The two types were not always mutually exclusive in the roles that came their way; but when the later Wagnerian operas entered the repertoire it was De Reszke who habitually sang King Marke in *Tristan*, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods) – and Wotan and Hans Sachs. *Der Rosenkavalier* apart (it having yet to be written), an Edouard de Reszke programme of those days might have been very like John Tomlinson's of today.

And of course the sheer work-load is daunting (doubly so if one adds the roles represented in the previous volume, also part of

the Chandos Opera in English series, CHAN 3044). The dramatic, or heavy, bass is, of all voice-types, the singer-with-stamina. When sopranos and tenors may call for a rest and even mezzos and baritones be seen to wilt, the bass is supposed to go on for ever. He must be versatile too. This present recital, for instance, opens with comedy, and its second item, though by the same composer, requires a change in dramatic and musical character, from Keeper of the Harem (or seraglio) to the High Priest of Isis and Osiris. If the great Wagnerian roles are added – the Dutchman, Sachs and Wotan – then the voice itself has to adjust its centre and placing sufficiently to encompass music written, not for the *basso profondo* (as is Mozart's), but for the bass-baritone.

The most renowned of the basses associated with Mozart in his lifetime was Ludwig Fischer (1745–1825). More than most singers before the advent of sound-recording, he survives audibly. We have some unusually vivid descriptions by contemporaries, and, more especially, can at least partly reconstruct the voice and style through the music written for him. Some of this was his own: 'Im tiefen

Keller' is still a favourite among those (not so numerous nowadays) who consider themselves 'real' basses, teasing their listeners with a sense of adventure as they prolong the last steps of the descent to the depths in the final 'D-R-I-N-K-I-N-G'. Mozart wrote the role of Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 1792) for Fischer, who sang it at the premiere in Vienna. The solo which opens John Tomlinson's recital [1] begins on a high D and takes the singer to a sustained note two octaves below (still more extraordinary as far as the downward range is concerned if one thinks that pitch in Mozart's time was probably about a semitone lower than today's). But more than range is involved. Mozart writes, in at least one long run, as he might for a coloratura soprano, moving rapidly with the voice singing triplets: his *basso profondo* must be a 'coloratura' too. The assumption has to be that Fischer, a highly-trained, technically accomplished singer, could cope – though in some respects it makes it funnier if we have the feeling (rightly or wrongly) that the bass in question can only just cope. Osmin, we remember, is a mighty fellow, none too bright at the best of times and easily outwitted when drunk. Here he looks forward to vengeance on

the two young men (tenors both) who think to have got the better of him. Mozart depicts him in a series of vocal caricatures, a Hogarth or Rowlandson in music. The effect is richly comical – but the singer needs all the skills of a true virtuoso none the less.

And now to the sublime. The role of Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) could hardly be more different in both dramatic and musical character. The High Priest here is dignified and serious, wise and benevolent. His first aria [2] is sung in broad phrases and is usually reckoned one of the great tests of a bass's *legato*, the art of binding the notes evenly and using the voice instrumentally, like a cello. It resembles Osmin's at least in the fact of calling upon ample power in the low register, ending on a bottom F. In it, Sarastro invokes the gods of his mystic order to bless the young lovers, Pamina and Tamino, who are to undergo ritualistic trials of fidelity and endurance. The priests in attendance repeat the last phrases of each verse, forming a community of prayer and support. The original Sarastro, Franz Gerl, (1764–1827) was an accomplished composer himself, and one of the three singers believed to have been called to Mozart's sick-room to read through the new *Requiem* a day before his death.

In Beethoven's **Fidelio** (1805, revised 1806, 1814) the deep bass role is that of Rocco, head gaoler of a Spanish prison, the Governor of which is Don Pizarro, bass-baritone. It is Pizarro we meet first in this recital [3], with a solo of concentrated malevolence introducing the villain of the piece. Deep in the dungeons and in solitary confinement lies Florestan, a political prisoner and enemy of the Governor, who now has him at his non-existent mercy. The chorus of guards are not particularly happy at what they overhear but prefer a quiet life and make themselves scarce. Rocco would like to do the same but at least goes so far as to refuse to commit murder himself; his character is somewhat like the Common Man in Robert Bolt's *A Man for all Seasons*, going with the tide and keeping his head above water. It is not a comic role (though sometimes played as such), yet his solo [4], which comes early in the First Act, seems to belong more to comic than to serious opera. To his young assistant and would-be son-in-law he gives what he considers sound practical advice. In the words of Shakespeare's most persuasive moralist: 'Put money in thy purse'.

As a singing-role, Caspar, the villain of Weber's **Der Freischütz** (*The Free-shooter*) (1821), has in it something of both Rocco and

Pizarro. His drinking-song [5] has on the face of it the cheerful plebeian gusto of the gaoler's song about money, while the sinister monologue [6] shares Pizarro's bare-faced identification with evil, ending, like him, with premature cries of triumph. There are differences also. Rocco's gold has almost an honest ring to it, with something like the straightforwardness of folksong. Caspar's celebration of God Bacchus has all the boisterousness of 'honest' tavern roistering, but its shifts of tonality and touches of grotesquery in the orchestration render it more equivocal and the textual allusions to one-and-three smack of blasphemy. Caspar is in fact a tempter, working now on the weak-willed hero Max, who rejects the drink but joins in the more deadly business of cheating supernaturally in the local shooting competition.

To take allusive blasphemy a stage further, it must surely have been urged before now that Weber might be seen as Wagner's John the Baptist. Perhaps not, but certainly there is a line from *Der Freischütz* (literally *The Free-shooter*) to **The Flying Dutchman** (*Der fliegende Holländer*, 1843). Blasphemy was the Dutchman's original sin; his fate, to sail the seas till a faithful woman can be found to redeem him. Every seven years he may put to

shore in this, up to now, vain search, and the opera tells of his eventual costly success. The Dutchman's first solo is the first of the excerpts included here [8], a long and powerful monologue, at first desolate in mood but soon gaining in a passion of desperation. When it is over, standing on the Norwegian shore he meets Daland, captain of another ship moored in the harbour, and he, another plain man with an eye to the main chance, sees in this impressively wealthy stranger a heaven-sent match for his daughter, Senta. In his own song [9], Daland later introduces them, explaining first that the Dutchman is homeless, and secondly that he is rich and offering his hand in marriage. The melody, buoyant and forthright, contrasts with the Dutchman's tormented harmonies and the compulsive yearning of his vocal line in the monologue. His song over, the Captain withdraws, and the girl and the stranger face each other with an almost mystical sense that something long awaited is about to be fulfilled.

The fatalism that broods over the strife and passion, still more the waiting and watching, of the *Ring* cycle is less personal than the Dutchman's, more cosmic and philosophical. At the end of **The Rhinegold** (*Das Rheingold*, 1869), the first of the four operas, the gods of

Norse mythology enter Valhalla, the fortress-city built through the power of the golden ring, won by deceit and kept at the owner's risk. To Wotan, chief among them, this is the moment of completion. A little earlier in the scene he had been plagued by his conscience, but the magnificence of the building glowing now in the light of the setting sun inspires him. The demi-god Froh points the way ahead, across a mighty bridge, and Wotan bids his wife Fricka to follow. The excerpt [7] ends there, but after it Loge, god of fire and the sharpest intelligence among them, foresees the end of these great ones. Wotan himself is deluded, though the combined warmth of voice and orchestra tells of a nobility inherent in his vision: modern productions which underline the folly and meanness reduce Wagner's subtle play of mixed emotions at this deeply-felt passage in the score.

Wotan and the Dutchman are two of the greatest roles for bass-baritone. Perhaps greatest of all is that of Hans Sachs, cobbler, poet and central character in **The Mastersingers of Nuremberg** (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, 1868). The human race, sad to say, flatters itself when (as often happens) it describes Sachs as 'most human' of operatic characters: he is simply

what a human-being *should* be. 'Mellow', 'warm-hearted' and 'generous' are the usual adjectives, but he is also (and this is less popular) keenly intelligent, realist enough to see the reasons for pessimism, disciplined and active enough to take himself beyond it. Moreover he is human in also having a few none-too-scrupulous tricks up his sleeve to play when the moment comes.

The opera is set in the mid-sixteenth century on Midsummer Day in Nuremberg. A song-competition is to be held, chief of the year's prizes being the hand of Eva, daughter of one of the leading citizens, Veit Pogner, who announces his offer in Act I [10]. The first of Sachs's solos [11] is sung in the Second Act as the cobbler enjoys the evening air and the scent of the elder blossom. He thinks of the song which earlier on has been given such an unsympathetic audition by the city's mastersingers' Guild; to him personally it is hauntingly beautiful, original and, in short, a winner (as is the young stranger to the town who sang it). The second monologue [12], from the opening of Act III, finds him low in spirits. There has been a riot in the city overnight; it all arose out of very little and no great damage was done, but the brief glimpse of anarchy in a civilised community makes a thoughtful man

wonder about the nature of human life, a kind of madness lying beneath its ordered surface, all reality questionable as an illusion. He shakes the mood off. This is the great day, and Sachs, as an individual and a civic leader, will rise greatly to the occasion when it calls. But the blaze of joy which envelops all at the end of the Act does not cancel out the more sombre reflections of its opening.

No such blank misgivings trouble Baron Ochs of Lerchenau in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (*The Knight of the Rose*, 1911). A jovial enough character, but not one to be wished as the husband of a refined girl of eighteen or thereabouts, he has just now been repulsed in his advances to the young and beautiful Sophie. Smarting from this untoward development, he cheers up [13] when a letter arrives, delivered by a professional mistress of court-intrigue, one Annina, purporting to have been sent by another young girl of more accommodating disposition. He is to be disappointed in this too, but for the present, at the end of Act II, leaves the stage in high spirits, his bulky frame swaying to the lilt of a Viennese waltz.

The remaining item is best regarded as an encore, accepted gratefully and no questions asked. In fact it comes from a comic opera

once well-liked in Germany, *The Armourer* (*Der Waffenschmied*, 1846). Its once-popular composer, Albert Lortzing, was probably too comfortably suited to his own time and place to arouse comparable enthusiasm outside it. The opera, composed to his own libretto, tells of a master-armourer, Hans Stadlinger, who has a pretty daughter, from which all else follows. The pace is gentle enough to allow room for a tuneful song by the old man [14] looking back over the golden age of his youth. There are still plenty of opera-goers of today who will sympathise with that.

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John Tomlinson was born in Lancashire. He gained a degree in Civil Engineering at Manchester University before winning a scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music.

John Tomlinson has sung regularly with English National Opera since 1974 and with The Royal Opera since 1976, and has also appeared with Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas and Kent Opera. Since 1988 he has sung at the Bayreuth Festival every year, where he has been heard as Wotan (*Das Rheingold* and

Die Walküre), the Wanderer (*Siegfried*), Titirel and Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*), King Marke (*Tristan and Isolde*) and Heinrich (*Lohengrin*). He has also sung in Geneva, Lisbon, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin (Deutsche Oper and Deutsche Staatsoper), Munich and Vienna, and at the Festivals of Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Salzburg, Edinburgh and the Maggio Musicale, Florence. His repertoire further includes Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*), Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Green Knight in the world premiere of *Gawain*, Rocco (*Fidelio*), King Philip (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), the four bass roles in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Boromeo (*Palestrina*) and title roles in *Boris Godunov*, *Oberto* and *Attila*.

Recordings for Chandos include *Billy Budd* and, in association with the Peter Moores Foundation, *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Werther*, *Rigoletto*, Highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Boris Godunov*, and a previous disc of Great Operatic Arias (CHAN 3044). John Tomlinson was awarded a CBE in the 1997 New Year's Honours List.

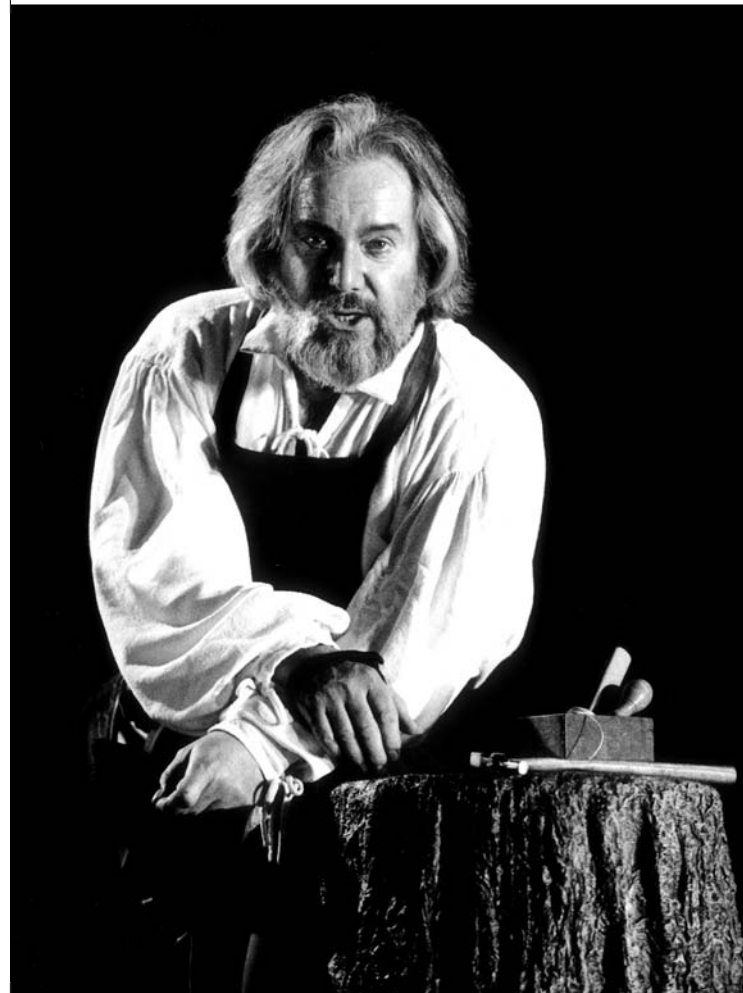
David Parry studied with Sergiu Celibidache and began his career as Sir John Pritchard's assistant. He made his debut with English Music Theatre, then became a staff conductor at Städtische Bühnen Dortmund and at Opera North. He was Music Director of Opera 80 from 1983 to 1987 and since 1992 has been the founding Music Director of Almeida Opera.

He works extensively in both opera and concert, nationally and internationally. He has conducted several productions at English National Opera and appears regularly with the Philharmonia Orchestra. In 1996 he made his debut at the Glyndebourne Festival with *Così fan tutte*, where in 1998 he conducted the world premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Flight*.

He is a frequent visitor to Spain where he has given concerts with most of the major Spanish orchestras. He conducted the Spanish premiere of *Peter Grimes* in Madrid and in 1996 the first Spanish production of *The Rake's Progress*. He has appeared in Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, at the Pesaro Festival in Italy, the Hong Kong International

Festival, in Japan with a tour of *Carmen* and in Mexico with the UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recent new productions he has conducted include *Fidelio* at the New Zealand Festival, *Maria Stuarda* at Theater Basel and *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New Israeli Opera.

His work in the recording studio includes the BBC Television production of Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and twenty-one complete opera recordings under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation. Among these are numerous discs for the Opera Rara label which have won several awards, including the Belgian Prix Cecilia for Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. For Chandos he has conducted seven recordings of operatic arias (with Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson and Della Jones), as well as *Aida*, *Faust*, *Don Giovanni*, *Ernani*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Il trovatore* the award-winning *Tosca* and highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier*, all in association with the Peter Moores Foundation.



Catherine Ashmore

John Tomlinson
as Hans Sachs in
The Royal Opera's
production of
Wagner's *The
Mastersingers of
Nuremberg*

Clive Barda/PAL

John Tomlinson as Wotan in
The Royal Opera's production
of Wagner's *The Ringgold*

Catherine Ashmore

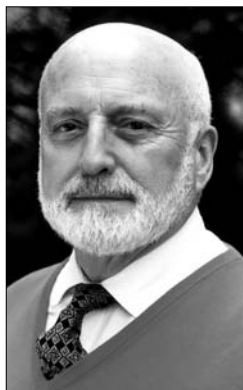
John Tomlinson as
Gurnemanz in
The Royal Opera's
production of Wagner's
Parsifal

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.



Bill Cooper/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

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

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

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

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

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

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

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

Große Opernarien

“Du”, sagte der große Baß Pol Plançon zu seinem Freund und Kollegen Edouard de Reszke, “bist kein Sänger – du bist ein Pferd”. “Le cheval” (so erzählt man sich) war von da an De Reszke Spitzname, doch die beiden blieben weiterhin Freunde. All dies passierte in dem sogenannten goldenen Zeitalter der 1890er Jahre an der New Yorker Metropolitan Opera, wo die beiden zu den führenden Mitgliedern der Truppe gehörten und gelegentlich auch in derselben Aufführung sangen. Allerdings war Plançon der lyrische Baß, der *basso cantante*, De Reszke hingegen das Schwergewicht. Sein Ruf war enorm, und er sang fast jeden Abend. Die beiden Stimmtypen schlossen sich bei der Besetzung der angebotenen Rollen nicht grundsätzlich aus; doch als die späten Wagner-Opern ins Repertoire aufgenommen wurden, war es gewöhnlich De Reszke, der König Marke in *Tristan*, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*, Wotan und Hans Sachs sang. Abgesehen vom *Rosenkavalier* (der noch komponiert werden mußte) dürfte ein Edouard-de-Reszke-Programm jener Tage einem heutigen Querschnitt des Repertoires von John Tomlinson sehr ähnlich gewesen sein.

Natürlich ist auch schon allein die reine Arbeitsleistung beeindruckend (vor allem, wenn man noch die Rollen des vorangehenden Teils der Serie “Chandos Opera in English” hinzuzählt; siehe CHAN 3044). Der dramatische oder schwere Baß ist unter allen Stimmtypen der Sänger mit der größten Ausdauer. Wo Soprane und Tenöre eine Pause verlangen können und sogar Mezzos und Baritone schlappmachen, muß der Baß immer noch weitersingen. Auch erwartet man von ihm, daß er vielseitig sei. Das vorliegende Recital zum Beispiel beginnt komödiantisch, während das zweite Stück, obschon vom selben Komponisten, einen Wechsel im dramatischen und musikalischen Charakter fordert, vom Haremswächter zum Hohenpriester von Isis und Osiris. Fügt man dem noch die großen Wagnerschen Rollen hinzu – der Holländer, Sachs und Wotan –, so muß auch die Stimme selbst ihr Zentrum und ihre Lage hinreichend angleichen, um Musik nicht nur für den *basso profondo* (wie bei Mozart) sondern auch für den Baßbariton zu umspannen.

Der bekannteste mit Mozart zu dessen Lebzeiten verbundene Baß war Ludwig Fischer

(1745–1825). Mehr als die meisten Sänger der Zeit vor der Entwicklung der Schallaufzeichnung ist seine Stimme bis heute “hörbar” geblieben. Es gibt einige ungewöhnlich lebhafte Beschreibungen von Zeitgenossen und, wichtiger noch, seine Stimme und sein Stil können aufgrund der für ihn geschriebenen Musik zumindest teilweise rekonstruiert werden. Einiges davon war ihm eigen: “Im tiefen Keller” ist noch immer ein Favorit unter den (heutzutage nicht sehr zahlreichen) Sängern, die sich für “echte” Bässe halten und ihre Zuhörer in Erstaunen versetzen, wenn sie die letzten Stufen des Abstiegs in die Tiefen des abschließenden “T-R-I-N-K-E-N” hinauszögern. Mozart schrieb die Rolle des Osmín in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) (1792) für Fischer, der sie bei der Erstaufführung in Wien sang. Das Solo, das John Tomlinsons Recital eröffnet □, beginnt auf dem hohen D und führt den Sänger zu einem ausgehaltenen Ton zwei Oktaven tiefer (dies ist bezüglich des Stimmumfangs in der Tiefe umso außergewöhnlicher, wenn man bedenkt, daß der Stimmton in Mozarts Zeit vermutlich etwa einen Halbton tiefer lag als heute). Es geht jedoch um mehr als bloßen Stimmumfang.

In wenigstens einem langen Lauf schreibt Mozart wie für einen Koloratursopran eine Serie von schnellen Triolen – sein *basso profondo* muß also auch Koloratur singen können. Es ist anzunehmen, daß Fischer – ein gründlich ausgebildeter, technisch versierter Sänger – die Partie beherrschte, wobei es in mancher Hinsicht noch amüsanter wäre, wenn (zu Recht oder zu Unrecht) der Eindruck entstünde, daß er sie nur *gerade ben noch* beherrschte. Osmín, wir erinnern uns, ist ein mächtiger Kerl, nicht übermäßig gescheit im besten Falle und leicht zu übertölpeln, wenn er betrunken ist. Hier freut er sich auf seine Rache an den beiden jungen Männern (beides Tenöre), die glauben, ihn ausgetrickst zu haben. Mozart zeigt ihn in einer Reihe vokaler Karikaturen, ein Hogarth oder Rowlandson der Musik. Der Effekt ist überaus komisch – trotzdem aber muß der Sänger alle Fähigkeiten eines echten Virtuosen meistern.

Und nun zum Sublimen. Die Rolle des Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) könnte in ihrem dramatischen und musikalischen Charakter kaum verschiedener sein. Der Hohepriester ist hier würdevoll und ernst, weise und gütig. Seine erste Arie □ wird in breiten Phrasen gesungen und gilt gewöhnlich als einer der großen Prüfsteine für

das *legato* eines Basses, das heißt die Kunst, die Noten gleichmäßig zu verbinden und die Stimme instrumental wie ein Cello einzusetzen. Die Arie ähnelt der Osmins zumindest in der Hinsicht, daß sie im tiefen Register große Kraft verlangt – sie endet auf dem tiefen F. In diesem Stück ruft Sarastro die Götter seines mystischen Ordens an, die jungen Liebenden Pamina und Tamino zu segnen, die rituelle Prüfungen der Treue und Standhaftigkeit bestehen müssen. Die anwesenden Priester wiederholen die letzten Phrasen eines jeden Verses und bilden so eine Gemeinschaft des Gebets und der Unterstützung. Der erste Sarastro, Franz Gerl (1764–1827) war selbst ein versierter Komponist und soll einer der drei Sänger gewesen sein, die einen Tag vor seinem Tod an Mozarts Krankenbett gerufen wurden, um das neue *Requiem* durchzugehen.

In Beethovens *Fidelio* (1805, überarbeitet 1806 und 1814) fällt die tiefe Baßrolle dem Rocco zu, dem Hauptwächter eines spanischen Gefängnisses, dessen Gouverneur der Baßbariton Don Pizarro ist. In diesem Recital hören wir zuerst Pizarro [3], der mit einem Solo konzentrierter Schlechtigkeit als der Bösewicht dieses Stücks vorgestellt wird. Tief im Kerker liegt in Einzelhaft Florestan, ein politischer Gefangener und Feind des Gouverneurs,

dessen nicht-existenter Gnade er ausgeliefert ist. Der Chor der Wächter ist nicht sonderlich glücklich über das, was er mitanhört, zieht jedoch ein ungestörtes Leben vor und hält sich im Hintergrund. Rocco würde gerne ein gleiches tun, geht jedoch wenigstens so weit, sich zu weigern, selbst einen Mord zu begehen; sein Charakter gleicht in gewissem Sinne dem des Gemeinen Mannes in Robert Bolts *A Man for all Seasons*, der mit dem Strom schwimmt und nur bemüht ist, seinen Kopf über Wasser zu halten. Die Partie des Rocco ist keine komische Rolle (obwohl sie gelegentlich so gespielt wird), doch sein Solo [4], das ziemlich am Anfang des Ersten Akts steht, scheint eher in die komische als die ernste Oper zu gehören. Seinem jungen Gehilfen und potentiellen Schwiegersohn gibt er, was er für einen vernünftigen praktischen Ratschlag hält. In den Worten von Shakespeares überzeugendstem Moralisten: "Füll Deinen Beutel mit Geld".

Die Gesangspartie Kaspars, des Bösewichts in Webers *Der Freischütz* (1821), enthält Elemente sowohl von Rocco als auch von Pizarro. Sein Trinklied [5] hat, oberflächlich gesehen, etwas von dem fröhlichen plebejischen Gusto des Gefängniswärter-Lieds über das Geld, während sein finsterner Monolog [6] Pizarros offene Identifizierung mit

dem Bösen teilt und wie dieser in vorzeitigen Triumphrufen endet. Doch es gibt auch Unterschiede. Roccas Gold entbehrt nicht einer gewissen Ehrlichkeit und volksliedhaften Geradlinigkeit. Kaspars Loblied auf den Gott Bacchus hat all die Ausgelassenheit einer "ehrenwerten" Kneipenprahlerei, doch die Tonartenwechsel und Anflüge von grotesker Orchestrierung verleihen ihm eine gewisse Doppeldeutigkeit, und die textlichen Anspielungen auf "eins-und-drei" schmecken nach Blasphemie. Tatsächlich ist Kaspar ein Verführer, der hier den willensschwachen Helden Max bearbeitet; dieser lehnt zwar das Trinken ab, macht aber bei dem gefährlicheren Geschäft mit, auf dem lokalen Wetschießen mit Hilfe übernatürlicher Kräfte zu betrügen.

Um angedeutete Blasphemie einen Schritt weiterzutreiben – sicherlich ist schon einmal bemerkt worden, daß Weber als Wagners Johannes der Täufer gesehen werden könnte. Vielleicht auch nicht, gewiß aber besteht eine Verbindungslinie zwischen dem *Freischütz* und dem *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*, 1843). Blasphemie war die ursprüngliche Sünde des Holländers, und es war sein Schicksal, über die Meere zu segeln, bis sich eine treue Frau finden würde, ihn zu erlösen. Alle sieben Jahre durfte er in seinem

bislang vergeblichen Suchen an Land gehen, und die Oper handelt von seinem schließlichen kostspieligen Erfolg. Das erste Solo des Holländers ist der erste der hier eingespielten Ausschnitte [7], ein langer, kraftvoller Monolog in zunächst gedrückter Stimmung, die bald jedoch zu leidenschaftlicher Verzweiflung anwächst. Nachdem dieser vorüber ist, trifft er an der norwegischen Küste stehend Daland, den Kapitän eines weiteren im Hafen ankernden Schiffes, und dieser, ebenfalls ein einfacher Mann auf der Suche nach dem großen Glück, sieht in dem beeindruckend reichen Fremden einen vom Himmel gesandten Ehemann für seine Tochter Senta. In seinem eigenen Lied [8] stellt Daland sie später einander vor und erklärt erstens, daß der Holländer heimatlos sei, und zweitens, daß er reich sei und seine Hand zur Ehe anbiete. Die lebhafte und geradlinige Melodie kontrastiert mit den gequälten Harmonien des Holländers und der in der Gesangspartie seines Monologs ausgedrückten zwanghaften Sehnsucht. Anschließend zieht sich der Kapitän zurück, und das Mädchen und der Fremde stehen einander gegenüber mit dem fast mystischen Gefühl, daß etwas lange Erwartetes nun kurz vor der Erfüllung steht.

Der Fatalismus, der über dem Hader und der Leidenschaft, ja mehr noch über dem Warten und Wachen des *Ring*-Zyklus brütet, ist weniger persönlich als im *Fliegenden Holländer*, eher kosmisch und philosophisch. Am Ende von **The Rhinegold** (1869), der ersten der vier Opern, betreten die Götter der nordischen Mythologie die Festungsstadt Walhalla, erbaut durch die Macht des Rings, der durch Täuschung erworben wurde und der seinem Besitzer Gefahr bringt. Wotan, ihrem Oberhaupt, erscheint dies als der Moment der Erfüllung. Etwas früher in der Szene hatte ihn sein Gewissen geplagt, doch die Großartigkeit der Bauwerke, die nun im Licht der sinkenden Sonne erglänzen, inspiriert ihn. Der Halbgott Froh weist den Weg voraus, über eine mächtige Brücke, und Wotan bittet seine Gattin Fricka, ihm zu folgen. Der Ausschnitt [7] endet hier, doch dann prophezeit Loge, Gott des Feuers und der intelligenteste in dieser Gruppe, das Ende der großen Gestalten. Wotan selbst ist verblendet, die vereinte Wärme von Stimme und Orchester verrät jedoch eine seiner Vision innewohnende Würde; moderne Inszenierungen, die die Torheit und Niederträchtigkeit dieser Szene betonen, reduzieren an dieser tief empfundenen Stelle der Partitur Wagners

subtiles Spiel mit den verschiedenen Emotionen.

Wotan und der Holländer sind zwei der größten Rollen für Baßbariton. Doch die vielleicht größte von allen ist die des Hans Sachs, Schuster, Dichter und Hauptfigur in **The Mastersingers of Nuremberg** (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, 1868). Das menschliche Geschlecht sieht sich leider in zu gutem Licht, wenn (wie oft geschieht) es Sachs als die "menschlichste" aller Opernfiguren beschreibt; eigentlich ist er nur, was ein menschliches Wesen sein *sollte*. "Milde", "warmherzig" und "großzügig" sind die üblichen Attribute, doch er ist auch (und dies ist weniger beliebt) hochintelligent, realistisch genug, um Grund für Pessimismus zu sehen, diszipliniert und aktiv genug, um diesen zu überwinden. Außerdem ist er menschlich, denn er hält einige recht skrupellose Tricks bereit, die er im richtigen Moment ausspielen wird.

Die Oper spielt im mittleren 16. Jahrhundert am Mittsommertag in Nürnberg. Ein Sängewettstreit soll ausgetragen werden, dessen Hauptpreis in diesem Jahr die Hand Evas, der Tochter eines der ersten Bürger der Stadt ist; ihr Vater Veit Pogner verkündet dieses Angebot im Ersten Akt [10]. Das erste von Sachs' Solos [11] erklingt

im Zweiten Akt, als der Schuster die Abendluft und den Duft der Holunderblüte genießt. Er denkt an das Lied, das zuvor von der städtischen Gilde der Meistersinger so ungnädig aufgenommen wurde; ihm selbst erscheint es unvergeßlich schön, originell und, kurz gesagt, des Preises wert (genau wie der junge Fremde, der das Lied sang). Der zweite Monolog [12] zu Beginn von Akt III zeigt ihn in niedergeschlagener Stimmung. In der Nacht gab es in der Stadt einen Aufstand; der Anlaß war gering und es entstand kein großer Schaden, doch der kurze Moment der Anarchie in einer zivilisierten Gemeinschaft läßt einen nachdenklichen Mann über die Natur der menschlichen Existenz sinnieren, über eine Art von Wahnsinn, der unter der geordneten Oberfläche liegt und jegliche Realität als Illusion erscheinen läßt. Sachs schüttelt diese Stimmung ab. Dies ist der große Tag, und er wird sich als Individuum und als Anführer der Gemeinschaft bewähren, wenn die Situation es verlangt. Doch die überbordende Freude, die am Ende des Aktes alle erfaßt, vermag nicht die eher düsteren Reflektionen seines Anfangs auszulöschen.

Keine solch bösen Ahnungen bedrängen Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau in Richard Strauss'

Der Rosenkavalier (1911). Von jovialem Charakter, würde man ihn doch nicht einem etwa achtzehnjährigen wohlerzogenen Mädchen zum Gatten wünschen, und in der Tat ist er gerade in seinen Avancen gegenüber der schönen jungen Sophie zurückgewiesen worden. Gekränkt ob dieser unerwarteten Entwicklungen wird er wieder freundlicher gestimmt [13], als ein Brief eintrifft, überbracht von einer professionellen Meisterin der Hofintrige, Annina, die vorgibt, von einem anderen jungen Mädchen gesandt worden zu sein, das größere Bereitwilligkeit zeigt. Auch diesmal wird er enttäuscht werden, im Moment jedoch, am Ende des Zweiten Akts, verläßt er die Bühne in bester Stimmung, seinen mächtigen Körper zu den Takten eines Wiener Walzers wiegend.

Das letzte Stück faßt man am besten als Zugabe auf, ohne weitere Fragen zu stellen. Tatsächlich entstammt es einer in Deutschland einst sehr beliebten komischen Oper, **The Armourer** (*Der Waffenschmied*, 1846). Ihr damals überaus populärer Komponist, Albert Lortzing, paßte wahrscheinlich zu gut in sein Zeitalter, um später noch vergleichbare Begeisterung auszulösen. Die Oper nach seinem eigenen Libretto erzählt von einem Waffenschmiedemeister namens Hans

Stadlinger, der eine hübsche Tochter hat, woraus sich die übliche Geschichte ergibt. Die Handlung entwickelt sich gemächlich, und es bleibt Zeit für ein melodioses Lied, in dem der alte Mann auf das goldene Zeitalter seiner Jugend zurückblickt. Auch heute noch gibt es genügend Opernbesucher, die mit dieser Sicht der Dinge sympathisieren werden.

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Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Der in Lancashire geborene Bassbariton **John Tomlinson** studierte zunächst Bauwesen an der Universität Manchester, bevor er als Stipendiat das Royal Manchester College of Music (heute: Royal Northern College of Music) besuchte.

Seit 1974 singt er regelmäßig an der English National Opera, seit 1976 auch an der Royal Opera Covent Garden. Außerdem ist er an der Opera North, der Scottish Opera, in Glyndebourne und mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera sowie der Kent Opera aufgetreten. Seit 1988 gastiert er jedes Jahr bei den Bayreuther Festspielen, wo man ihn als Wotan (*Das Rheingold* und *Die Walküre*), Wanderer (*Siegfried*), Titirel und Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*), König Marke (*Tristan und Isolde*)

sowie Heinrich (*Lohengrin*) erlebt hat. Weitere Stationen waren Genf, Lissabon, New York, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin (Deutsche Oper und Deutsche Staatsoper), München und Wien, die Festspiele von Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Salzburg und Edinburgh sowie der Maggio musicale in Florenz. Sein Opernrepertoire umfasst auch die Rollen von Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*), Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Green Knight in der Welturaufführung von Sir Harrison Birtwistles *Gawain*, Rocco (*Fidelio*), Filippo II. (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), die vier Basspartien in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Boromeo (*Palestrina*) und die Titelrollen von *Boris Godunow*, *Oberto* und *Attila*.

Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen für Chandos gehören *Billy Budd* und (in Verbindung mit der Peter Moores Foundation) *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Werther*, *Rigoletto*, Auszüge aus *Der Rosenkavalier* und *Boris Godunow* und eine erste Auswahl großer Opernarien (CHAN 3044). John Tomlinson wurde 1997 der britische Verdienstorden CBE verliehen.

David Parry hat bei Sergiu Celibidache studiert und seine berufliche Laufbahn als Assistent von Sir John Pritchard begonnen. Er hat am English Music Theatre debütiert und wurde dann Dirigent mit Festvertrag an den Städtischen Bühnen Dortmund und an der Opera North. Von 1983 bis 1987 war er Musikdirektor der Opera 80 und seit 1992 Gründungsmitglied und Direktor der Almeida Opera.

Er übt in Großbritannien und international eine weitgespannte Tätigkeit in den Bereichen Oper und Konzert aus, hat mehrere Produktionen der English National Opera dirigiert und tritt regelmäßig mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra auf. 1996 gab er sein Debüt beim Glyndebourne Festival mit *Così fan tutte* und hat dort 1998 die Uraufführung von Jonathan Doves *Flight* geleitet.

Er ist häufig in Spanien zu Gast und hat mit den meisten bedeutenden spanischen Orchestern Konzerte gegeben. In Madrid hat er die spanische Erstaufführung von *Peter Grimes* dirigiert, und 1996 die erste spanische Inszenierung von *The Rake's Progress*. Er ist in Deutschland, Schweden und den Niederlanden aufgetreten, bei den Festspielen in Pesaro, beim Hong Kong International Festival, in Japan

anlässlich einer *Carmen*-Tournée und in Mexiko mit dem UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Zu den Neuproduktionen, die er in letzter Zeit dirigiert hat, zählen *Fidelio* beim New Zealand Festival, *Maria Stuarda* am Stadttheater Basel und *Lucia di Lammermoor* an der New Israeli Opera.

Seine Tätigkeit im Aufnahmestudio umfasst die Produktion von Marschners *Der Vampyr* fürs BBC-Fernsehen und einundzwanzig vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Darunter befinden sich zahlreiche Aufnahmen des Labels Opera Rara, die mehrere Preise gewonnen haben, beispielsweise den belgischen Prix Cecilia für Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. Für Chandos hat er die Aufzeichnung von sieben Programmen mit Opernarien geleitet (mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson und Della Jones), außerdem *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, *Ernani*, *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Il trovatore*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier*, jeweils in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation.

Grands airs d'opéra

“Toi”, dit Pol Plançon, célèbre basse, à son collègue et ami Edouard de Reszke, “tu n’es pas un chanteur – tu es un cheval”. “Le cheval” resta depuis (dit-on) le surnom d’Edouard de Reszke, et leur amitié n’en fut pas altérée. Ceci se passait au Metropolitan Opera House à New York, pendant ce qu’on appelait l’âge d’or des années 1890. Les deux chanteurs étaient alors au nombre des figures de premier plan de la compagnie, se produisant, parfois, lors de la même représentation. Plançon était la basse lyrique ou *basso cantante*, et de Reszke, la basse profonde. Sa renommée était immense, et il chantait nuit après nuit. Les deux chanteurs ne s’excluaient pas toujours l’un l’autre dans les rôles qui se présentaient à eux, mais lorsque les derniers opéras wagnériens entrèrent dans le répertoire, c’était habituellement de Reszke qui chantait les rôles du Roi Marke dans *Tristan*, de Hagen dans le *Götterdämmerung* (Le Crépuscule des dieux) – et de Wotan et Hans Sachs. Exception faite pour *Der Rosenkavalier* (composé plus tard), un programme Edouard de Reszke à cette époque aurait sans doute ressemblé à celui d’un John Tomlinson de nos jours.

Et de ce point de vue, le travail exigé est à lui seul impressionnant (et doublement, si l’on ajoute les rôles interprétés dans le précédent volume, faisant partie aussi de Chandos Opera in English series, CHAN 3044). La basse dramatique, ou profonde, est de tous les types de voix, celle qui demande le plus d’endurance. Alors que les sopranos et les ténors peuvent parfois se reposer et que les mezzo-sopranos et les barytons semblent même défaillir, la basse est supposée poursuivre à l’infini. Il doit aussi posséder des talents variés. Le récital enregistré ici, par exemple, commence sur le ton de la comédie, mais le second extrait, bien qu’il soit du même compositeur, exige un changement de caractère dramatique et musical: de Gardien du harem (ou sérail) au Grand prêtre d’Isis et d’Osiris. Si l’on y ajoute les grands rôles wagnériens – le Hollandais, Sachs et Wotan –, la voix doit elle-même se recentrer et ajuster son placement de manière à couvrir la musique écrite, non pour *basso profundo* (comme chez Mozart), mais pour baryton-basse.

La basse la plus célèbre associée aux œuvres de Mozart de son vivant était Ludwig Fischer (1745–1825). Plus que la plupart des

chanteurs apparus avant l’ère de l’enregistrement sonore, il survit de manière audible. Nous disposons de descriptions exceptionnellement vivantes faites par ses contemporains et sommes en mesure, plus spécifiquement, de reconstruire partiellement sa voix et son style au travers de la musique écrite pour lui. Certaines pages étaient de sa main: “Im tiefen Keller” reste une pièce particulièrement appréciée de ceux (assez rares de nos jours) qui se considèrent comme de “vraies” basses, taquinant leurs auditeurs aventureusement tandis qu’ils prolongent les derniers moments de la descente dans les profondeurs dans le “D-R-I-N-K-I-N-G” final. Mozart conçut le rôle d’Osmin dans *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 1792) pour Fischer, qui l’interpréta lors de la création de l’œuvre à Vienne. Le solo qui ouvre le récital de John Tomlinson □ commence par un ré aigu et conduit le chanteur à une note soutenue deux octaves plus bas (ce qui est plus extraordinaire encore du point de vue de l’étendue de la tessiture vers les notes graves si l’on songe que la hauteur des notes à l’époque de Mozart était probablement inférieure d’un demi-ton à celle d’aujourd’hui). Mais la tessiture n’est pas seule à intervenir. Mozart écrit d’un seul jet, comme

pour une soprano coloratur, en un jeu rapide de triolets vocaux: sa *basso profundo* doit être “coloratura” aussi. Il est à supposer que Fischer, chanteur expérimenté et techniquement accompli, pouvait faire face – d’une certaine manière ce serait plus gai d’avoir l’impression (à tort ou à raison) que la basse ne peut qu’à *peine* faire face. Osmin, rappelons-le, est un gars vigoureux qui n’est pas des plus brillants dans ses bons moments et qui fanfaronne facilement lorsqu’il est ivre. Ici il aspire à se venger sur les deux jeunes hommes (ténors tous deux) qui pensent avoir eu raison de lui. Mozart le dépeint en une série de caricatures vocales: c’est Hogarth ou Rowlandson en musique. L’effet est du plus haut comique – mais le chanteur doit avoir rien moins que tous les talents d’un véritable virtuose.

Venons en au sublime. Le rôle de Sarastro dans *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) ne peut guère être plus différent sur le plan dramatique et musical. Le Grand prêtre ici est digne et sévère, sage et bienveillant. Son premier aria □ est chanté en phrases amples et est généralement considéré comme l’un des grands tests du *legato* de la basse, l’art de lier les notes harmonieusement et d’utiliser la voix comme un instrument, comme un violoncelle.

Ce rôle ressemble à celui d'Osmin par un aspect au moins: il demande une grande puissance dans le registre grave, terminant sur un fa profond. Sarastro invoque les dieux de son ordre mystique afin qu'ils bénissent les jeunes amants, Pamina et Tamino, qui doivent subir des épreuves rituelles de fidélité et d'endurance. Les prêtres qui l'assistent répètent les dernières phrases de chaque strophe, formant une communauté de prière et de soutien. Le premier Sarastro, Franz Gerl (1764–1827), était lui-même un compositeur accompli, et il serait l'un des trois chanteurs appelés au chevet de Mozart la veille de sa mort pour lire le nouveau *Requiem*.

Dans *Fidelio* (1805, remanié en 1806 et 1814) de Beethoven, le rôle de basse profonde est celui de Rocco, geôlier-chef d'une prison espagnole, dont le gouverneur est Don Pizarro, baryton-basse. C'est Pizarro que nous rencontrons dans ce récital [3], avec un solo imprégné de malveillance qui introduit le scélérat de la pièce. Au fond d'un donjon, isolé dans un cachot, se trouve Florestan, prisonnier politique et ennemi du gouverneur dont il se trouve maintenant à la merci, une merci inexistante. Les gardiens ne sont pas particulièrement heureux des nouvelles qui leur parviennent, mais ils préfèrent sauvegarder

leur tranquillité et se sauver. Rocco aimerait faire de même, mais il va malgré tout jusqu'à refuser de commettre le meurtre lui-même; son caractère ressemble un peu à celui du Common Man dans *A Man for all Seasons* de Robert Bolt: il suit le courant et garde la tête hors de l'eau. Ce n'est pas un rôle comique (bien qu'il soit parfois interprété comme tel), cependant son solo [4], qui apparaît assez tôt dans le Premier Acte, semble appartenir plus à l'opéra-comique qu'à l'opéra seria. A son jeune assistant et prétendu gendre, il donne ce qu'il considère comme un judicieux conseil pratique. Dans les termes les plus convaincants du moralisme shakespearien, il lui dit: "Put money in thy purse" (Emplis-toi les poches).

Le rôle de Caspar, le mauvais génie de *Der Freischütz* (1821) de Weber, rappelle à la fois ceux de Rocco et de Pizarro. Sa chanson à boire [5] a, à première vue, la fruste jovialité de la chanson du geôlier sur l'argent, tandis que le sinistre monologue [6] partage cette identification manifeste au mal présente chez Pizarro, et Caspar termine comme lui par des cris de triomphe prématurés. Mais il y a aussi des différences. Le discours de Rocco paraît presque sans détours, avec un peu de cette franche simplicité du folk. La célébration du dieu Bacchus par Caspar est tapageuse comme

les beuveries dans les tavernes "honnêtes", mais les changements de tonalité et les touches de grotesque dans l'orchestration créent l'équivoque et les allusions dans le texte à la Trinité ont une connotation blasphématoire. Caspar est en fait un tentateur, exerçant ici ses pouvoirs sur Max, héros au caractère faible, qui refuse la boisson mais participe à la tricherie magique, plus implacable, dans le concours de tir local.

Un examen plus approfondi de la question des allusions blasphématoires donne à penser que l'on a certes avancé déjà que Weber pouvait être considéré comme le Jean-Baptiste de Wagner. Est-ce ou non le cas, toujours est-il qu'il semble y avoir un lien évident entre *Der Freischütz* (littéralement *Le Franc-tireur*) et *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*, 1843). Le blasphème était le péché originel du Hollandais condamné à parcourir les mers jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve une femme fidèle pour assurer sa rédemption. Tous les sept ans, dans cette quête encore vaine, il peut jeter l'ancre, et l'opéra conte l'incalculable succès final de son entreprise. Le premier solo du Hollandais est le premier extrait repris dans cet enregistrement [7]. C'est un monologue long et imposant, dans lequel l'affliction initiale se mue bientôt en un désespoir passionnel. Une

fois calmé, le Hollandais, debout sur la côte norvégienne, rencontre Daland, capitaine d'un autre navire amarré dans le port, qui lui, en homme sans détours qui sait saisir une chance quand elle se présente, voit dans cet étranger d'une impressionnante richesse, un parti, tel un don venu du ciel, pour sa fille, Senta. Daland les présente alors l'un à l'autre [8], expliquant tout d'abord que le Hollandais est sans foyer, mais aussi qu'il est fortuné et offre sa main en mariage. Cette mélodie, enjouée et franche, contraste avec les harmonies tourmentées du discours du Hollandais et l'ardent désir qui s'exprime dans ligne vocale de son monologue. Une fois son chant terminé, le Capitaine disparaît. La jeune fille et l'étranger se font face avec un sentiment presque mystique qu'un souhait longtemps caressé est sur le point de se réaliser.

Le fatalisme qui plane sur les conflits et les passions, et plus encore sur l'attente et le déroulement des événements, dans le cycle du *Ring* est moins personnel que celui dont est victime le Hollandais; il est plus cosmique et philosophique. A la fin de *The Rhinegold* (*Das Rheingold*, 1869), le premier des quatre opéras, les dieux de la mythologie scandinave entrent à Walhalla, la cité-forteresse construite grâce à la toute-puissance de l'anneau d'or,

dérobé et conservé aux risques et périls du propriétaire. Pour Wotan, qui en est le chef suprême, c'est l'apogée. Un peu plus tôt dans cette scène, il avait été torturé par sa conscience, mais la magnificence de l'édifice qui resplendit à présent au soleil couchant l'inspire. Le demi-dieu Froh indique le chemin à suivre, qui enjambe un pont imposant, et Wotan invite son épouse Fricka à les accompagner. L'extrait [7] se termine là, mais ensuite, Loge, dieu du feu et le plus intelligent parmi eux, présage la fin des souverains de ce monde. Wotan lui-même est victime de ses illusions, bien que la chaleur qui émane de la voix mêlant ses accents aux sonorités orchestrales exprime la noblesse qui imprègne sa vision; les productions modernes qui soulignent la folie et la mesquinerie réduisent l'effet du subtil amalgame d'émotions dans ce passage de la partition de Wagner, qui est d'une profonde expressivité.

Wotan et le Hollandais sont parmi les rôles majeurs pour baryton-basse. Mais le plus grand de tous est peut-être celui de Hans Sachs, cordonnier, poète et personnage central de **The Mastersingers of Nuremberg** (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, 1868). La race humaine se flatte, et on ne peut que le

regretter, quand (comme c'est souvent le cas) elle décrit Sachs comme le "plus humain" des personnages d'opéra: il est tout simplement ce qu'un être humain *devrait* être. "Enrichi par l'expérience", "chaleureux" et "généreux" sont les qualificatifs habituels qui s'appliquent à sa personne, mais il est aussi (et ceci est moins courant), d'une vive intelligence, assez réaliste pour percevoir les raisons qui incitent au pessimisme, et assez discipliné et actif pour y faire face. Il est humain aussi par la faculté qu'il a d'user sans trop de scrupules, et au moment opportun, de quelques tours qu'il a dans son sac.

L'opéra se déroule au milieu du seizième siècle à Nuremberg, à la Saint-Jean. Un concours de chant va y avoir lieu, dont le premier prix cette année-là sera la main d'Eva, la fille d'un des citoyens les plus en vue, Veit Pogner. Ce dernier fait part à l'assistance de son offre dans l'Acte I [10]. Sachs, le cordonnier, chante son premier solo [11] dans l'Acte II alors qu'il hume avec bonheur l'air du couchant et le parfum des fleurs de sureau. Il pense à la mélodie que la Guilde des maîtres chanteurs de la ville a accueillie si défavorablement. Personnellement, il est obsédé par sa beauté, il la trouve originale et considère, en bref, qu'elle mériterait le premier prix (tout comme le

jeune inconnu qui l'a chantée). Lors du second monologue [12], qui se situe au début de l'Acte III, Sachs est abattu. Il y a eu une émeute en ville pendant la nuit. La raison en est insignifiante et les dommages sont restreints, mais cette brève vision d'anarchie dans une communauté civilisée amène un homme réfléchi à se poser des questions sur la nature de la condition humaine, sur une sorte de folie qui se cache derrière un ordre superficiel, sur la réalité qui n'est peut-être qu'illusion. Il chasse ses idées noires. C'est un grand jour, et Sachs, en tant qu'individu et exemple de civisme, sera à la hauteur des circonstances, le moment venu. Mais la lueur de joie qui illumine tout, à la fin de l'Acte, n'estompe pas les réflexions plus sombres du début.

Dans **Der Rosenkavalier**, 1911 (*Le Chevalier à la rose*) de Richard Strauss, le Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau n'est pas torturé par des sentiments aussi limpides. C'est un tempérament jovial, il est vrai, mais il n'est pas l'époux dont rêverait une jeune fille raffinée de dix-huit ans, et la jeune et belle Sophie vient de repousser ses avances. Piqué au vif par cette malencontreuse aventure, il reprend espoir [13], quand arrive une lettre, remise par une professionnelle des intrigues de

cour, une certaine Annina, qui prétend avoir été envoyée par une autre jeune fille mieux disposée à son égard. Il sera déçu, ici aussi, mais en ce moment précis, à la fin de l'Acte II, il quitte la scène, joyeux, sa corpulente silhouette se dandinant au son d'une valse viennoise.

La dernière pièce est à considérer plutôt comme un bis, une petite pièce qui fait plaisir et n'appelle pas de questions. Elle provient en fait d'un opéra comique qui fut très apprécié à une certaine époque en Allemagne, **The Armourer** (*Der Waffenschmied*, 1846). Son compositeur, Albert Lortzing, qui eut son heure de gloire, était probablement trop à l'image de son temps et de son milieu pour susciter autant d'enthousiasme en dehors de ce contexte. L'opéra composé d'après un livret de sa main conte l'histoire d'un maître-armurier, Hans Stadlinger, père d'une très jolie fille. Et de là découle la suite. L'allure en est assez calme pour qu'y trouve place une mélodie délicate chantée par le vieil homme, [14], jetant un regard sur les années dorées de sa jeunesse. De nombreux amateurs d'opéra de nos jours s'en délecteront encore.

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Traduction: Marie-Françoise de Meeûs

John Tomlinson est né dans le Lancashire. Après un diplôme d'ingénieur des travaux publics à l'université de Manchester, il obtint une bourse pour étudier au Royal College of Music de Manchester.

John Tomlinson chante régulièrement avec l'English National Opera depuis 1974 et avec The Royal Opera depuis 1976; il s'est également produit avec Opera North, le Sottish Opera, le Glyndebourne Festival Opera et le Glyndebourne Touring Opera sans oublier Kent Opera. Depuis 1988 il participe chaque année au Festival de Bayreuth où il a été Wotan (*Das Rheingold* et *Die Walküre*), le Voyageur (*Siegfried*), Titurel et Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*), le roi Marke (*Tristan und Isolde*) et Heinrich (*Lohengrin*). Il s'est aussi produit à Genève, Lisbonne, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin (avec le Deutsche Oper et le Deutsche Staatsoper), à Munich et Vienne ainsi qu'aux Festivals d'Orange, d'Aix-en-Provence, de Salzbourg, d'Edimbourg et dans le cadre du Mai musical de Florence. A son répertoire figurent aussi les rôles de Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), du Landgrave (*Tannhäuser*), de Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*), du baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), de Moïse (*Moïse et Aaron*),

du Chevalier vert dans la première mondiale de *Gawain*, de Rocco (*Fidelio*), Philippe II (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), les quatre rôles de basse des *Contes d'Hoffmann*, le rôle de Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), celui de Boromeo (*Palestrina*) et le rôle-titre de *Boris Godounov*, *Oberto* et *Attila*.

Pour Chandos, John Tomlinson a enregistré *Billy Budd* et, en association avec la Peter Moores Foundation, *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Werther*, *Rigoletto*, les grands airs du *Rosenkavalier* et de *Boris Godounov* ainsi qu'un recueil plus ancien de grands airs d'opéra (CHAN 3044). John Tomlinson se vit conférer le titre honorifique de Compagnon de l'Empire britannique en janvier 1997.

Après avoir étudié avec Sergiu Celibidache, **David Parry** commença sa carrière comme assistant de Sir John Pritchard. Il fit ses débuts avec l'English Music Theatre avant de devenir l'un des chefs d'orchestre au Städtische Bühnen à Dortmund et à Opera North. Directeur musical d'Opera 80 de 1983 à 1987, il est directeur musical d'Almeida Opera depuis sa fondation en 1992.

Sa carrière, nationale et internationale, est extrêmement remplie, aussi bien sur la scène

lyrique qu'en concert. Il a dirigé plusieurs productions de l'English National Opera et collabore régulièrement avec le Philharmonia Orchestra. C'est avec *Così fan tutte* qu'il fit ses débuts au Festival de Glyndebourne en 1996, une scène qu'il retrouva en 1998 pour diriger la création mondiale de *Flight* de Jonathan Dove.

Il séjourne fréquemment en Espagne où il a dirigé en concert la plupart des grands orchestres espagnols. C'est lui qui dirigea la première espagnole de *Peter Grimes* à Madrid et en 1996 la première production espagnole de *The Rake's Progress*. Il a dirigé en Allemagne, en Suède, aux Pays-Bas, au Festival de Pesaro en Italie, au Festival international de Hong-Kong, au Japon pour une tournée de *Carmen* et au Mexique avec l'Orchestre symphonique d'UNAM. Il a récemment dirigé plusieurs nouvelles productions dont *Fidelio* au Festival de Nouvelle-Zélande, *Maria Stuarda* au

Théâtre de Bâle et *Lucia di Lammermoor* avec le New Israeli Opera.

En studio, il a participé entre autres à la production de la BBC Television de *Der Vampyr* de Marschner, dirigeant aussi vingt et une intégrales d'opéras financées par la Peter Moores Foundation. Plusieurs de ces intégrales furent enregistrées pour Opera Rara et primées, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* de Donizetti recevant en Belgique le Prix Cecilia. Pour Chandos, Parry a dirigé sept enregistrements d'airs d'opéra (avec Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson et Della Jones) de même que *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, *Ernani*, *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, l'enregistrement primé de *Tosca* et des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, tous ces enregistrements étant réalisés en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation.

Grandi arie operistiche

“Tu non sei un cantante: sei un cavallo”, disse il grande basso Pol Plançon a Eduard de Reszke, suo amico e collega. Da allora in poi De Reszke fu soprannominato “le cheval” (così si dice) e i due cantanti rimasero amici. Questo episodio si verificava alla Metropolitan Opera House di New York nel cosiddetto periodo aureo del decennio intorno al 1890; all’epoca entrambi gli artisti erano importanti membri della compagnia e talvolta comparivano nella stessa rappresentazione. Plançon, però, era basso lirico, il *basso cantante*; De Reszke era un peso massimo. Aveva una reputazione gigantesca e un’energia inesauribile. I due tipi di voce non sempre si escludevano a vicenda nell’interpretazione dei ruoli; ma quando le ultime opere wagneriane entrarono nel repertorio fu De Reszke l’interprete regolare di personaggi come re Marke nel *Tristan*, Hagen nel *Götterdämmerung* (Crepuscolo degli Dei), Wotan e Hans Sachs. Fatta eccezione per *Der Rosenkavalier* (che non era ancora stato composto), un programma di Eduard de Reszke dell’epoca sarebbe stato molto simile a quello che oggi propone John Tomlinson.

Naturalmente il lavoro che queste interpretazioni comportano è notevole (soprattutto se le aggiungiamo ai ruoli proposti nel precedente volume, sempre parte della serie Chandos Opera in English, CHAN 3044). Tra tutti i tipi di voce, il basso drammatico o profondo è quello che richiede più energia. Quando soprani e tenori invocano una pausa e persino mezzosoprani e baritoni sembrano indebolirsi, il basso non ha alternative: deve andare avanti. Deve anche essere versatile. Per esempio, il recital di questo disco si apre con la commedia e il secondo brano, per quanto dello stesso compositore, richiede un cambiamento di carattere musicale e drammatico, per compiere il passaggio dal custode dell’harem (o serraglio) al gran sacerdote di Iside e Osiride. Se si aggiungono i grandi ruoli wagneriani – l’Olandese, Sachs e Wotan – allora la voce stessa deve regolare sufficientemente il proprio centro e la propria impostazione per includere la musica composta non per basso profondo (come quella di Mozart), ma per basso-baritono.

Il più famoso dei bassi legati al nome di Mozart durante la vita del compositore fu

Ludwig Fischer (1745–1825). Per quanto precedenti all’avvento delle registrazioni acustiche, le sue interpretazioni sopravvivono in maniera quasi percettibile. Abbiamo a disposizione alcune descrizioni particolarmente vivaci dei contemporanei e, soprattutto, possiamo almeno parzialmente ricostruire la voce e lo stile attraverso la musica composta per lui. In parte si trattava di musica composta dallo stesso cantante: “Im tiefen Keller” è ancora uno dei brani preferiti da coloro che si considerano “veri” bassi (non ne sono rimasti tanti), e stuzzicano l’ascoltatore con un senso di avventura mentre prolungano gli ultimi passi della discesa nel profondo con l’ultimo ‘D-R-I-N-K-I-N-G’. In **The Abduction from the Seraglio** (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 1792), Mozart compose il ruolo di Osmينو per Fischer, che lo cantò alla sua prima a Vienna. L’assolo che apre il recital di John Tomlinson □ inizia su un re alto e porta il cantante a una nota sostenuta due ottave più in giù (ancora più notevole per quanto riguarda la gamma discendente se si pensa che all’epoca di Mozart il tono era fissato probabilmente un semitono più basso rispetto a oggi). Ma non è solo questione di gamma. Mozart propone, in una sola lunga frase, come farebbe per un soprano di coloratura, con

rapidi spostamenti vocali in terzine: il suo basso profondo deve essere anche lui di “coloratura”. Bisogna dedurre che Fischer, un cantante altamente preparato, tecnicamente raffinato, fosse in grado di affrontarlo, sebbene per alcuni versi sia più divertente avere la sensazione (giusta o sbagliata) che il basso in questione riesca ad affrontarlo *appena*. Osmينو, ricordiamo, è un personaggio forte, non troppo sveglio nei momenti migliori e facilmente ingannato quando è ubriaco. In questo brano pregusta la vendetta contro i due giovani (entrambi tenori) che pensano di avere avuto la meglio su di lui. Mozart lo descrive in una serie di caricature vocali, come un Hogarth o Rowlandson musicale. L’effetto è comichissimo, ma il cantante deve fare appello comunque a tutte le capacità di un vero virtuoso.

Il ruolo di Sarastro nel **The Magic Flute** (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) non potrebbe essere più diverso per quanto riguarda il carattere drammatico e musicale. L’Alto Sacerdote qui è dignitoso e serio, saggio e benevolo. La sua prima aria □ è eseguita in frasi ampie e in genere per un basso viene considerata uno dei grandi banchi di prova per quanto riguarda il legato, l’arte di collegare le note in maniera uniforme e utilizzare la voce come uno

strumento, per esempio un violoncello. L'aria somiglia a quella di Osmino in quanto richiede molta potenza nel registro basso (termina su un fa basso). Sarastro invoca gli dei del proprio ordine mistico per chiedere la loro benedizione sui giovani innamorati, Pamina e Tamino, che si apprestano a superare prove rituali di fedeltà e sopportazione. I sacerdoti presenti ripetono le ultime frasi di ciascun verso, in una preghiera comune di sostegno. Il primo Sarastro fu Franz Gerl, (1764–1827) egli stesso raffinato compositore; si riteneva che fosse stato uno dei tre cantanti convocati al capezzale di Mozart per leggere il nuovo *Requiem* alla vigilia della morte del compositore.

Nel *Fidelio* di Beethoven (1805, riveduto nel 1806, 1814) il ruolo per basso profondo è quello di Rocco, capo carceriere di una prigioniera spagnola, il cui governatore è Don Pizarro, basso-baritono. È Pizarro che incontriamo per la prima volta in questo recital [3]; un assolo di malevolenza concentrata presenta il malvagio di questo brano. Nel profondo delle segrete, in isolamento, si trova Florestano, un prigioniero politico nemico del governatore e adesso alla sua spietata mercé. Il coro delle guardie non è particolarmente felice delle istruzioni ricevute, ma per amore della

tranquillità si mette in disparte. Rocco vorrebbe fare lo stesso ma per lo meno ha la forza di rifiutarsi di commettere un omicidio; il suo personaggio è un po' come quello del Common Man in *A Man for all Seasons* di Robert Bolt, che segue la corrente per tenersi a galla. Non è un ruolo comico (anche se talvolta viene interpretato in questa chiave) ma il suo assolo [4], verso l'inizio del primo atto, sembra appartenere più all'opera comica che a quella seria. Al suo giovane assistente e possibile genero offre quello che considera un valido consiglio pratico, quello di farsi pagare, per usare le parole del moralista più convincente di Shakespeare.

Per un cantante, il ruolo di Caspar, anima nera del *Freischütz* di Weber (1821), ha in sé qualcosa di Rocco e di Pizarro insieme. Il suo brindisi [5] manifesta il gusto allegro e plebeo della canzone del carceriere sul denaro, mentre il sinistro monologo [6] ha in comune con quello di Pizarro l'identificazione nuda con il male e termina anch'esso con premature esclamazioni di trionfo. Ma ci sono delle differenze. L'oro di Rocco sembra quasi onesto, ha qualcosa come la sincerità dei motivi popolari. La celebrazione del dio Bacco da parte di Caspar ha tutta la vanteria delle "oneste" spaccionate da osteria, ma il suo

cambio di tonalità e gli accenni di grottesco nell'orchestrazione la rendono più equivoca e le allusioni testuali all'uno e trino hanno un sapore blasfemo. Caspar è in realtà un tentatore e tenta di agire sulla debole volontà dell'eroe Max, che rifiuta il vino ma si associa a un'impresa più sinistra: quella di vincere con inganno soprannaturale la gara locale di tiro.

Sempre sul tema di allusioni blasfeme, sicuramente qualcuno ha già suggerito prima d'ora che Weber si possa considerare profeta di Wagner. Forse no, ma sicuramente esiste un collegamento tra *Der Freischütz* (letteralmente *Il franco tiratore*) e *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*, 1843). La bestemmia è il peccato originale dell'Olandese, condannato a navigare finché incontrerà una donna in grado di redimerlo con la sua fedeltà. Per questa ricerca, finora senza frutto, gli è consentito toccare la riva a intervalli di sette anni e il successo finale sarà pagato a caro prezzo. Il primo assolo dell'Olandese è il primo dei brani inclusi qui [7], un lungo e potente monologo, di tono inizialmente desolato, che ben presto culmina nella disperazione. Al termine, sulla spiaggia norvegese, l'Olandese incontra Daland, capitano di un'altra nave ancorata nel porto, un altro uomo normale attento a cogliere al

vollo ogni occasione, che vede in questo ricchissimo sconosciuto un compagno inviato dal cielo per sua figlia Senta. Durante il suo brano [8], Daland li presenta in seguito, spiegando prima che l'Olandese è senza casa e poi che è ricco e offre la mano della figlia. La melodia, esuberante e aperta, contrasta con le tormentate armonie dell'Olandese e l'eterno struggimento della sua linea vocale nel monologo. Terminata la sua canzone, il Capitano si ritira e la fanciulla e lo straniero si trovano l'uno di fronte all'altra con una sensazione quasi mistica che qualcosa di atteso da lungo tempo sta per compiersi.

Nel ciclo del *Ring*, il fatalismo che avvolge i conflitti e le passioni, e ancora di più l'attesa e la contemplazione, è meno personale di quello dell'Olandese, più cosmico e filosofico. Alla fine di *The Rhinegold* (*Das Rheingold*, 1869), prima opera della tetralogia, gli dei della mitologia nordica entrano nel Walhalla, la roccaforte costruita con il potere dell'anello conquistato con l'inganno e conservato a rischio del proprietario. Per Wotan, soprattutto, questo è l'attimo del compimento. Poco prima nella scena era stato tormentato dalla propria coscienza, ma la magnificenza dell'edificio che adesso risplende nella luce del tramonto lo ispira. Il semidio Froh indica il

cammino da percorrere, con il suo possente ponte, e Wotan ordina a sua moglie Fricka di seguirlo. Il brano [7] termina qui, ma in seguito l'astuto Loge, dio del fuoco, prevede la fine di questi grandi. Lo stesso Wotan si illude, sebbene il calore combinato della voce e dell'orchestra parli di una nobiltà insita nel suo ideale: gli allestimenti moderni che esaltano la stoltezza e la meschinità riducono il sottile gioco wagneriano di sentimenti contrastanti in questo sentito passaggio nella partitura.

Wotan e l'Olandese sono due dei più grandi ruoli per basso-baritono. Forse il più grande di tutti è quello di Hans Sachs, calzolaio, poeta e personaggio centrale di **The Mastersingers of Nuremberg** (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, 1868). In genere ci si illude quando (come spesso accade) si definisce Sachs il "più umano" dei personaggi operistici: è semplicemente quello che un essere umano *dovrebbe* essere. "Maturo", "cordiale" e "generoso" sono aggettivi normalmente usati per descriverlo, eppure Hans è anche (ma questo è meno evidente) molto intelligente, realista abbastanza da vedere la regione del pessimismo, disciplinato e sufficientemente attivo da superarlo. Inoltre è umano perché ricorre ad espedienti non troppo scrupolosi al momento giusto.

L'opera è ambientata a metà del Cinquecento, il giorno di san Giovanni a Norimberga. Si svolge una gara di canto e il primo premio dell'anno è la mano di Eva, figlia di uno dei cittadini più eminenti, Veit Pogner, che annuncia la sua offerta nell'Atto I [10]. Il primo assolo di Sachs [11] viene cantato nel Secondo atto, mentre il calzolaio assapora l'aria della sera e il profumo dei fiori di sambuco. Pensa a un canto che poco prima ha ricevuto una pessima accoglienza da parte della gilda dei maestri cantori cittadino; per lui, personalmente, è bellissimo, originale e, in breve, una carta vincente (come il giovane sconosciuto che l'aveva cantato). Il secondo monologo [12], tratto dall'inizio dell'Atto III, lo trova giù di morale. Durante la notte, in città c'è stata una rissa; è nata da un pretesto da nulla e i danni sono stati pochi, ma il breve scorcio di anarchia in una comunità civile spinge l'uomo ponderato a mettere in discussione la natura della vita umana, che nasconde sotto una patina di ordine una sorta di follia, che porta a mettere in discussione tutta la realtà. Ma il calzolaio si scrolla di dosso questo stato d'animo. Questo è il grande giorno e Sachs come persona e come maestro cantore della città si dimostra sempre all'altezza dell'occasione quando si presenta.

Ma lo scoppio di gioia che avvolge tutta alla fine dell'Atto non cancella le riflessioni più cupe del suo inizio.

Il barone Ochs di Lerchenau in **Der Rosenkavalier** (*Il cavaliere della rosa*, 1911) di Richard Strauss non nutre dubbi del genere. Carattere abbastanza gioviale, ma non desiderabile come marito di una raffinata diciottenne, ha appena visto respinte le sue profferte dalla bella e giovane Sophie. Il rifiuto gli brucia ancora, ma lo risolveva l'arrivo di una lettera [13], consegnata da una professionista degli intrighi di corte, una certa Annina, che sostiene di essere stata inviata da un'altra fanciulla più compiacente. Il barone rimarrà deluso anche questa volta ma, per il momento, alla fine dell'Atto II, esce dalla scena di ottimo umore, ondeggiando pesantemente al ritmo di un valzer viennese.

L'ultimo brano è un famoso bis, da accettare senza tante cerimonie. È tratto da un'opera comica un tempo apprezzata in Germania, **The Armourer** (*Der Waffenschmied*, 1846). Il suo compositore, un tempo famoso, Albert Lortzing, fu probabilmente troppo legato al suo tempo e luogo per suscitare entusiasmo paragonabile al di fuori di entrambi. L'opera, composta su un suo libretto, si impernia su un mastro armaiolo, Hans Stadlinger, padre di

una bella ragazza. La vicenda inizia con questo brano. Il ritmo è sufficientemente delicato per lasciare spazio a un melodioso motivo con cui l'anziano armaiolo rievoca i tempi d'oro della sua giovinezza. Molti appassionati d'opera contemporanei l'apprezzeranno.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

John Tomlinson è nato nella regione inglese del Lancashire. Dopo aver conseguito la laurea in Ingegneria civile presso l'Università di Manchester si aggiudicava una borsa di studio presso il Royal Manchester College of Music.

John Tomlinson canta regolarmente con l'English National Opera dal 1974 e con la Royal Opera dal 1976; inoltre è comparso con Opera North, la Scottish Opera, la Festival Opera e Touring Opera di Glyndebourne e la Kent Opera. A partire dal 1988 si è esibito al festival di Bayreuth, interpretando i ruoli di Wotan (*Das Rheingold* e *Die Walküre*), il Viandante (*Siegfried*), Tituel e Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*), re Marke (*Tristan and Isolde*) e Heinrich (*Lohengrin*). Ha cantato anche a Ginevra, Lisbona, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Parigi, Amsterdam, Berlino (Deutsche Oper e Deutsche

Staatsoper), Monaco e Vienna; è intervenuto ai festival di Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Salisburgo, Edimburgo e al Maggio musicale fiorentino. Il suo repertorio comprende inoltre i ruoli di Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*), il barone Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Moses (*Moses und Aron*), Green Knight alla prima mondiale di *Gawain*, Rocco (*Fidelio*), re Filippo (*Don Carlos*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), i quattro ruoli per basso dei *Contes d'Hoffmann*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Boromeo (*Palestrina*) e i ruoli di protagonista in *Boris Godunov*, *Oberto* e *Attila*.

La discografia per Chandos comprende *Billy Budd* e, in associazione con la Peter Moores Foundation, *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Werther*, *Rigoletto*, brani salienti da *Der Rosenkavalier* e *Boris Godunov* e, prima ancora, un disco di arie operistiche (Great Operatic Arias, CHAN 3044). John Tomlinson è stato insignito del CBE, un'onorificenza reale, nel 1997.

David Parry ha studiato con Sergiu Celibidache ed ha cominciato la sua carriera come assistente di Sir John Pritchard. Ha debuttato all'English Music Theatre,

quindi è diventato direttore d'orchestra presso la Städtische Bühnen Dortmund e la Opera North. È stato Direttore Musicale di Opera 80 dal 1983 al 1987 e dal 1992 è stato Direttore Musicale fondatore dell'Opera di Almeida.

Lavora copiosamente in opere e concerti, a livello nazionale ed internazionale. Ha diretto diverse produzioni presso la English National Opera e appare regolarmente con la Philharmonia Orchestra. Nel 1996 ha debuttato con *Così fan tutte* al Glyndebourne Festival, dove nel 1998 ha diretto la prima mondiale di *Flight* di Jonathan Dove.

È un frequente visitatore della Spagna dove si è esibito in concerto con la maggior parte delle maggiori orchestre spagnole. Ha diretto la prima spagnola di *Peter Grimes* a Madrid e nel 1996 la prima produzione spagnola di *The Rake's Progress*. È apparso in Germania, Svezia, Paesi Bassi, al Festival di Pesaro in Italia, al Festival Internazionale di Hong Kong, in Giappone con una tournée della *Carmen* e in Messico con la UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recenti nuove produzioni da lui dirette comprendono il *Fidelio* al Festival della Nuova Zelanda, *Maria Stuarda* al Teatro di Basilea e *Lucia di Lammermoor* alla New Israeli Opera.

Il suo lavoro in studio di registrazione comprende la produzione della BBC di *Der Vampyr* di Marschner nonché ventuno registrazioni operistiche complete con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation. Tra questi vi sono numerosi dischi per l'etichetta Opera Rara che hanno vinti parecchi premi, tra cui il belga Prix Cecilia per la *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* di Donizetti. Per Chandos ha

diretto sette registrazioni di arie d'opera (con Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson e Della Jones), nonché *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, *Ernani*, *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Tosca* (vincitrice di un premio) e brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier*, tutte in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation.

Philip Langridge as Palestrina and John Tomlinson as
Cardinal Carlo Borromeo in The Royal Opera's production
of Pfitzner's *Palestrina*

Catherine Ashmore

John Tomlinson as Hans Sachs in
The Royal Opera's production of
Wagner's *The Mastersingers of
Nuremberg*

Catherine Ashmore

from The Abduction from the Seraglio

Osmín's Revenge

Osmín

- [1] When they lead you to the scaffold,
I will sing and I will laugh, for
they will hang the two of you, all askew!
Swinging corpses, there'll be two – you know
who!

With no pity, I will dance and
sing a ditty most entrancing,
just because I'm rid of you.
Yes, I shall be rid of you!

Creeping round my lovely women
like a nasty pair of vermin;
but I pounced before you'd flown!
Now you're trapped! That very much is
how you fell into my clutches,
and you'll reap what you have sown.
You shall reap what you have sown.

Creeping round my lovely women
like a nasty pair of vermin;
These two mice are fully grown,
and for their crimes they shall atone.

I'll be singing! Dancing!
And I'll sing a ditty, most entrancing.
Just because I'm rid of you!
Yes, I shall be rid of you!

J.G. Stephanie, after C.F. Bretzner,
translation by John Tomlinson

from The Magic Flute

Sarastro's Prayer

Sarastro

- [2] O Isis and Osiris, listen:
bestow on them your wisdom's power;
grant them your guidance on their mission;
help them endure the darkest hour.

Chorus

Help them endure the darkest hour.

Sarastro

May they withstand the trials that face them;
but, should they die, do not reject them;
boldly they ventured, courage they've shown,
take them to your eternal home.

Chorus

Take them to your eternal home.

E. Schikaneder, translation by John Tomlinson

from Fidelio

Pizarro's Revenge

Pizarro

- [3] Now, now for my victory!
When I release my anger,
when you, you will have to die.
Within your heart – my dagger!
Victorious am I!
I'll tear you with my dagger,
and I shall be laughing as you die.

Defeated, I lay in dust before him,
I squirmed in shame below him,
repelled and spurned;
now the tables have been turned:
now he shall be my victim,
my destiny's to kill him.

I lay in dust before him,
I squirmed in shame below him,
in pain, I bled, without reply;
now he shall be my victim,
my destiny's to kill him.
And in his final moments,
he'll bleed and writhe in torment,
and in his ear I'll cry –
'It's me, it's me, it's me
who's going to watch you die!'

Now for my victory!
I'll tear you with my dagger.
Now, now he shall be my victim.
My destiny is to kill him.
Now for my victory!
When I release my anger,
when you will have to die.
Victorious am I!
I'll watch you die!
You will die!

Chorus

He talks of pain and wounding,
let's leave him to his brooding.
The fury that's glinting in his eye!

The rage that's glinting in his eye!
Let's go, let's go, let's go!

J. Sonnleithner, after J.N. Bouilly,
translation by John Tomlinson

from Fidelio

Rocco's Aria

Rocco

- [4] If you don't have any money,
you'll be in for stress and strife.
Endless misery is not funny,
sad and dull will be your life.

But if you're a rich man it's quite the
reverse,
it's easy to ward off disaster.
There's gold, and silver that clinks in your
purse
and then you can be your own master.
You really will be your own master.

The underling becomes a king,
if he has money. Money brings you
everything.
Yes, money brings you everything,
if you have money you'll live just like a king.

We must serve her in despair
while rich men live a life of ease.
They are proud and overbearing,
and they do just as they please,
they can do just as they please.

Surrounded by ill-gotten riches they sit,
in luxury we never dreamed of.
But power corrupts them and then they commit
great evils they should be ashamed of.
They cover up crimes I'd be ashamed of.

It's money, money is the king,
it gives you power over almost anything.
Yes, money is the thing that gets you anything.
With money you can live just like a king.

J. Sonnleithner, after J.N. Bouilly,
translation by David Pountney

from Der Freischütz

Caspar's Song

Caspar

- [5] On this earth we could not bear
such a life of pain and fear
were it not for liquor.
So, until I breathe my last,
to young Bacchus I hold fast
for his gen'rous succour.

One is one and three is three:
two more make a trinity
with the joys of drinking.
Cards and dice shall be your test,
love will be a shapely breast:
there's your heav'nly living!

If we shun these holy rites,
we can find no true delights
since Eve ate the apple.

Drink shall be my ABC,
cards and girls my litany
till with death I grapple.

F. Kind, after J.A. Apel & F. Laun,
translation by David Parry

from Der Freischütz

Caspar's Aria

Caspar

- [6] Go! Go! The fatal die is cast!
Silence! The fatal die is cast!
The Devil's snare will hold you fast!
Nothing can save you from your downfall,
no, there is no rescue from endless fire.
Surround him, you spirits of treacherous night:
he is already in your clutches!
I laugh, for vengeance is mine!

F. Kind, after J.A. Apel & F. Laun,
translation by David Parry

from The Rhinegold

Wotan's Monologue

Froh

- [7] The bridge leads you homeward,
light, yet firm to your feet.
So, boldly tread, on that shining path.

Wotan

Evening rays flood the sky with splendour,
those glorious beams shine there on my hall.
In the morning radiance bravely it glistened
standing masterless, proudly beckoning its lord.

From morning till evening, in fear and dread
I worked dark deeds till I'd gained it!
The night is near: from all its ills
we have our refuge now.
Thus I greet the hall, safe from all fear and dread.
(*He turns solemnly to Fricka.*)
Follow me, wife: in Valhalla, reign there with me!

Fricka

What name did you call it?
No name that I've ever heard of.

Wotan

When all that I've dreamed and planned comes
to pass,
when victory is mine, you'll understand that name.

Wagner, translation by Andrew Porter
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from The Flying Dutchman

The Dutchman's Monologue

The Dutchman

- [8] The time comes round
once more, after the seven allotted years,
the sea rejects me, throws me back on land.
Proud, mighty ocean!
But soon enough, you'll take me back and hold
me.
Your rage soon softens:
my pain will stay the same.
On land I search for my salvation,

never shall I find it.
You, you boundless ocean, I'll be your friend
until your very last foaming wave,
until your final tide recedes.

I've longed for death in deepest seas,
thrown myself headlong in the waves,
but never, never could I die.
I steered my boat toward the rocks:
the graveyard of many a ship;
but there was never a grave for me.
With scorn I mocked dangerous pirates:
I longed to perish by their swords;
I shouted 'come aboard and fight me,
my ship is filled with shining gold.'
But no, those cruel, cold-blooded rogues,
just crossed themselves, and fled in fear!
I've longed for death in deepest seas,
thrown myself headlong in the waves,
I steered my boat toward the rocks:
but there was never a grave for me.
No grave for me! Never to die!
This is the fate to which I'm damned.
I'm damned to live for evermore.

I pray to you, God's most beloved angel,
you who secured for me one single hope,
you who explained my one chance of salvation,
you who explained my one chance of reprieve,
I pray to you, God's most beloved angel,
when you secured for me one single hope,
you made of me an object of derision,
you made of me a victim of your spite.

A vain illusion! Never on this earth!
A woman who will love me
can't be found.

There's only one remaining hope,
a single steadfast hope for me:
the earth, where living things are thriving,
will in the end collapse and die.
Last day of judgment! Drawing near!
Day which will end my cursed night!
Destroyer! Overwhelming day!
When will your hammer crush this world?

When all the dead shall stand again,
then I shall vanish into dust
and be no more.

The universe shall be destroyed!
Endless oblivion, take me away!

Wagner, after Heine,
translation by John Tomlinson

from The Flying Dutchman

Daland's Aria

Daland

[9] Senta, my child, please make this stranger
warmly welcome.

Sailors are honoured guests and sailing is his
trade.

Homeless, he's wandered far and wide across the
ocean,

in distant foreign lands a fortune he has made.
But now his wandering days have ended,

he seeks a home and he will pay.
So, Senta, would you be offended
if I invited him to stay?

(to the Dutchman)

Well, did I overpraise her virtue, see for yourself.
Make up your mind. Now, only need one
glimpse of her to be sure.

The flower of womankind,
without a doubt, the flower of womankind.

Senta, my child, you ought to welcome and
befriend him.

He also asks if you would share with him your
life.

Give him your hand, I would most strongly
recommend him.

If you agree, tomorrow you shall be his wife,
yes, you shall be his wife.

Look at these jewels, come and admire them,
and he has more, finer than those.

Now, dearest child, if you desire them
accept what he and I propose.

But, no one speaks. They have no use for me.
All right. I'll slip away and let them be.

(to Senta)

You could not win a nobler husband.
Child, take the chance while it is there.

(to the Dutchman)

Stay here with her. It's now in your hands.

Trust me, she's true as she is fair.

Wagner, after Heine,
translation by John Tomlinson

from The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Pogner's Monologue

Pogner

[10] Now hear, and attend me well.
The feast of John, Midsummer day,
ye know we keep tomorrow.
In meadows green, by hedges gay,
with song and dance among the hay,
with heart so full of gladness,
forgetting all his sadness,
let each rejoice as best he may.
The singing school will raise on high
a hymn of praise and glory,
with joyous sounds and hearts aglow
into the meadows we will go,
amid the festive thronging
the folk shall hear resounding
the songs that mastersingers know.

When gifts are won in strife of song
that blithely swells and rises,
then acclamations loud and long
will greet both songs and prizes.
As God made me a wealthy man,
and each man gives as best he can,
I sought among my treasure
a gift beyond all measure,
lest I to shame be brought;
I found then what I sought.

In all my journeys far and wide,
I oft was angered greatly,
finding we townsmen were decried
as selfish and unfriendly.
In castle and in humble hut,
the evil slander ended not,
that only treasure and gold
our fondest dreams can hold!

Though in our country's spacious bounds
the arts we alone have tended,
for this we are little commended.
But how our deeds do honour us all,
and how in steadfast mood,
we cherish the fair and good,
the pow'r of art and all its worth
to that I would here bear witness on earth:
this gift, then, I choose as prize:
may ye Masters think it wise!

To him whose song among the rest,
in contest here you judge the best,
on John the Baptist's day,
let him be who he may,
him give I a Mastersinger
of Nuremberg, I Pogner,
with all I possess and all I hold,
Eva, my only child, as bride.

Wagner,
translation by Frederick Jameson

from The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Flieder Monologue

Hans Sachs

[11] My elder tree in flower,
the scent so rich and strong,
you sooth me and inspire,
you want me to sing a song.
It's no good. Tonight I'm uninspired.
Forgive an old cobbler who's tired.
If you don't mind, elder brother,
I'll take this evening off,
there's Beckmesser's shoes to be finished.
Of songs and singing, I've had enough!
That tune goes round and round,
I feel the joy in its sound.
I can't ignore it, I try to restrain it,
I cannot forget, cannot explain it.
Yet how could I explain it,
such music can't be explained.
It followed rules of its own making,
'twas true to itself alone.
An age-old song that's fresh as a bird
that sings to all the world in spring.
You'll be wrong to try a song,
stolen from a warbling bird.
That's foolish and absurd.
Love in spring, its sweetest sting's
too poignant for birds up above.
The singer must be in love.
He loves with deep devotion,

to sing with such emotion.
I heard a song today,
'twas full of nature's inspiration.
Some listened with dismay,
Hans Sachs was brimming with elation.
Wagner,
translation by Frederick Jameson

from The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Hans Sachs's Wahn Monologue

Hans Sachs

[12] Mad, mad, all the world's mad.
It's everywhere I look;
in every history book
I'm searching for a reason
why there on every page
there's cruelty, unleashing
itself in hopeless rage.
We go to war – whatever for?
Like herds of cattle
we charge into battle,
don't seem to hear our own cries of pain;
when we have vengeance on the brain,
we think that's all that matters.
It's always been the same,
and madness is its name:
without this demon 'madness'
there'd be no joy or sadness.
Sometimes he sleeps:
he saves his strength within his den,

then out he leaps,
and 'madness' is in charge again!
This town's a peaceful family:
good folk, good thoughts, good works;
right at the heart of Germany,
my home, my Nuremberg.

But very late last night,
young Eva and her lover
had tried eloping together;
and I gave them a fright:
I woke up that sleeping demon
and there was pandemonium.

For 'madness' ran through the city,
through every street and alley:
man, wife and family
started to fight ferociously.
And, blazing like the demon
there's shrieks and cries and mayhem.
With beating, pain and anguish,
the demon's flame's extinguished.

But why? God only knows!
Was 'madness' the only cause?
A glow-worm failed to find his light!
A goblin helped to start the fight!
My elder tree! Midsummer night!
But now it's day: midsummer's day!
Let's watch Hans Sachs put wrong to right
by using 'madness' as a way
to achieve some noble aims.
If 'madness' plays his games

in dear old Nuremberg,
then let him do some work:
we'll take him on a bold adventure
which needs a little 'madness' to prosper!

Wagner,
translation by John Tomlinson

from Der Rosenkavalier (The Knight of the Rose)

Baron Ochs's Waltz

Baron Ochs

[13] Look for my glasses there in my jacket.
(*very suspicious*)
No! Better not. If you can read, let's hear it.
Here.

Annina (*taking the letter and reading*)
'Herr Cavalier! Tomorrow come evening,
I'll be free.

I liked you, at once but I
was too shy there before her Highness
'cos I am only a young girl. Your most loving
Mariandel,
humble serving girl and sweetheart.
Hoping Herr Cavalier has not completely
forgotten me.
I wait an answer.'

Baron Ochs (*delighted*)

She waits an answer!
It works like a charm, just like home,
but better with an extra flavour that's new.
(*very merry*)

I still have all the luck of all the Lerchenaus.
Come back tonight. I'll give the answer and in
writing.

Annina

Yours to command Herr Cavalier. You won't
forget your servant.

Baron Ochs (*not hearing, to himself*)
'Without me, lonely days feel all wrong.'

Annina (*more importunate*)
You won't forget your servant, your Highness!

Baron Ochs

All right.
'With me, with me, with me not a night is too
long.'
(*Annina makes another gesture of begging.*)
No tip yet – in a lump sum when it's done.
She waits an answer. In the meanwhile leave me.
When you come up, bring me a pen and ink,
and I will
think of an answer to dictate!
(*Annina goes out, not without indicating by a
menacing gesture behind the Baron's back that she
will soon be even with him for his niggardliness.
The Baron takes a last sip of wine.*)
'Nights cannot be too long.'
(*Sentimentally, followed by his Servants, he goes
slowly and quite at his ease towards his room.*)
'With me, with me, with me not a night is too
long.'

Hugo von Hofmannsthal,
English version by Alfred Kalisch

from Der Waffenschmied (The Armourer)

Hans Stadlinger's Song

The old days were wonderful days

^[14] I used to be young with a fine head of hair,
and hope in my vigorous heart.
A swordsmith's apprentice, I studied with care:
in no time I'd mastered the art.
I loved to be singing, and dancing was fun;
I kissed all the lassies, and many a one
confessed that she'd love me always,
she promised she'd love me always.

To think of those wonderful days!
The old days were wonderful days.

In those days a girl, when she'd promised her
hand,
was faithful to you to the end;
and ev'n if you died in some far foreign land,
her broken heart never would mend.
But nowadays a girl, once her loved one is dead,
will find her a new man and soon will be wed:
'You only live once,' so she says.
'Forget all your old-fashioned ways.'

For these are most wonderful days!
I've ne'er had such wonderful days!

I wish every sword that I've forged in my time
had fought on the side of the just,
I wish, like the old days, the good men and
fine
had trampled the bad into dust.

But life's not so simple, and many have died
in battle, believing that 'God's on their side';
for that is the oft-quoted phrase.
Yes, that is the dubious phrase.

Where are they, those wonderful days?

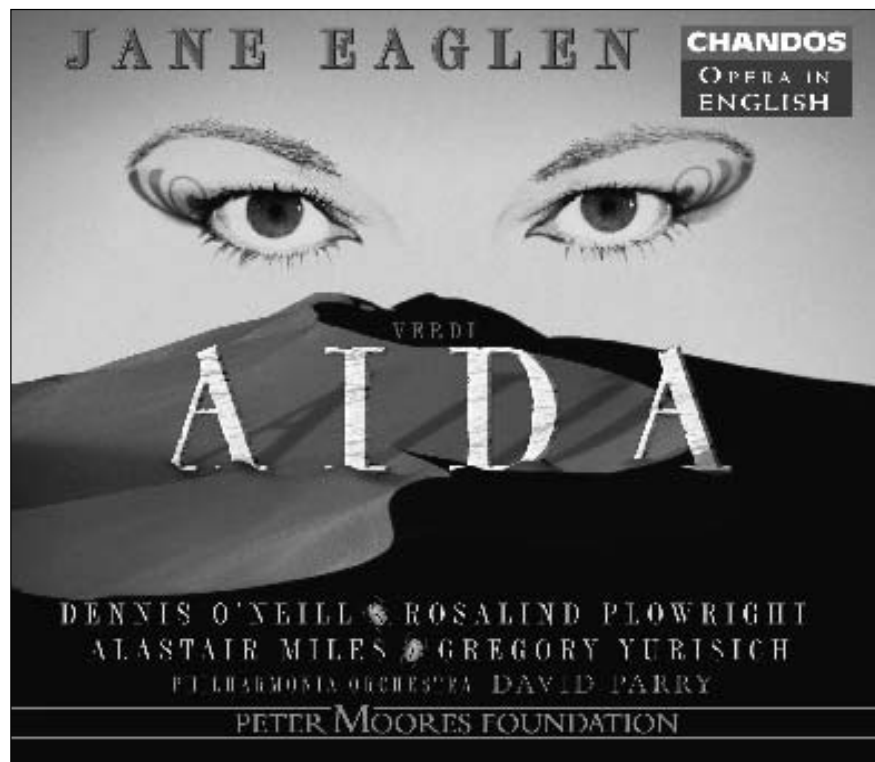
Albert Lortzing,
translation by John Tomlinson

Track ^[15]

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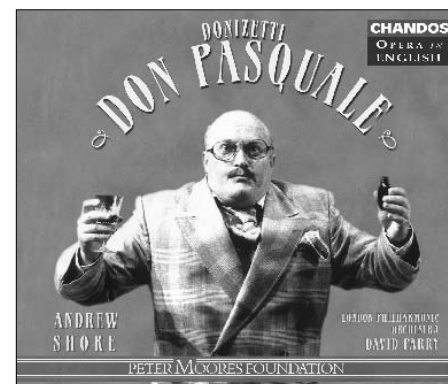
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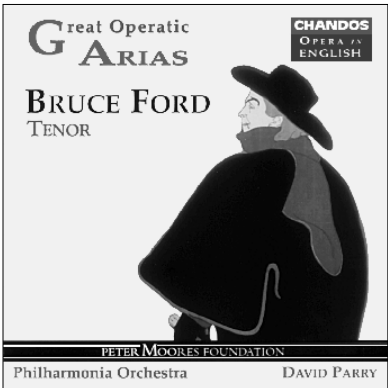


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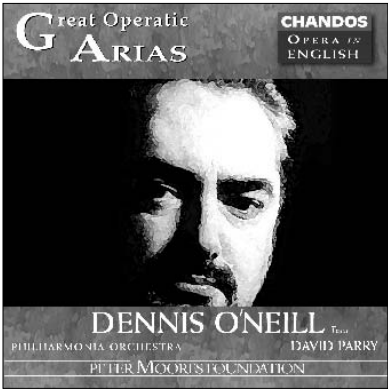


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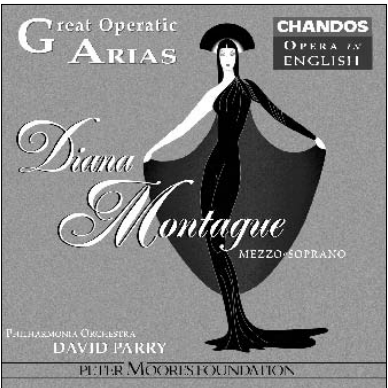
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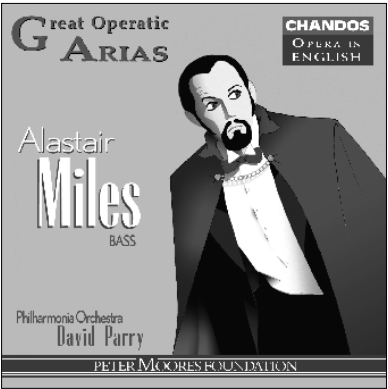
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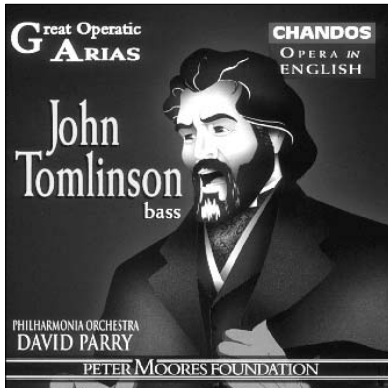


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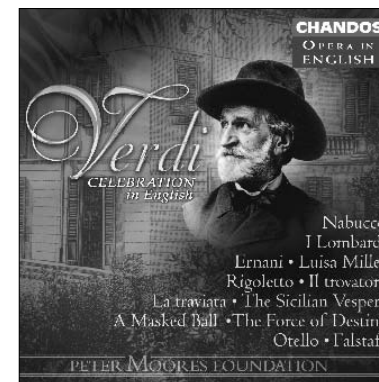
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CHAN 3067

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3004

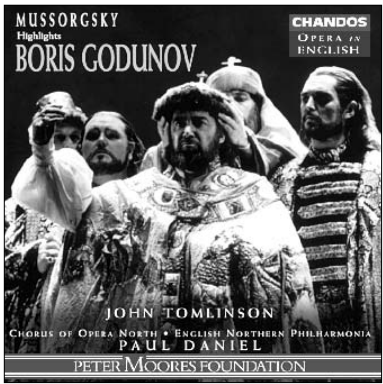


CHAN 3003



CHAN 3005(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3007

CHAN 3014(3)



CHAN 3057(3)

CHAN 3022



Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3042(2)



CHAN 3033(2)



CHAN 3019(3)



CHAN 3029

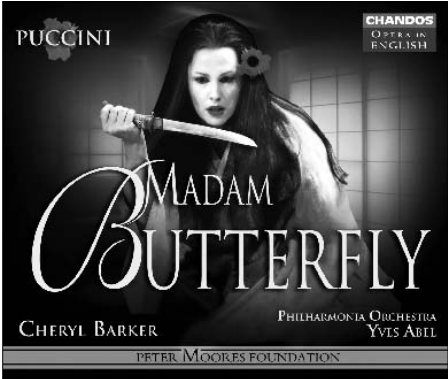
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CHAN 3000(2)



CHAN 3008(2)



CHAN 3070(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3066

CHAN 3025(2)

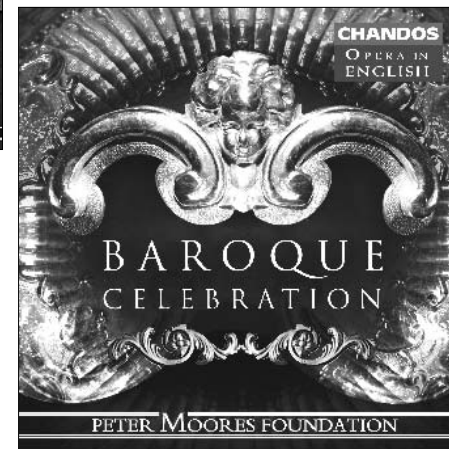


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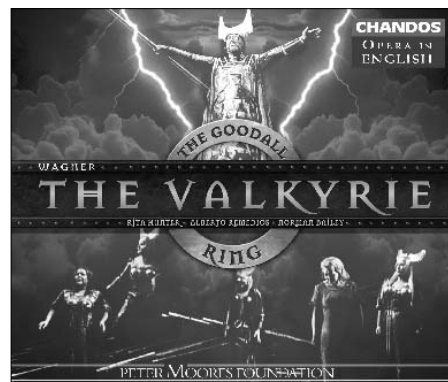
CHAN 3078



Opera in English on Chandos



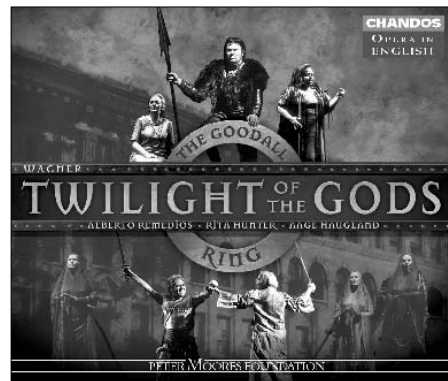
CHAN 3054(3)



CHAN 3038(4)



CHAN 3045(4)



CHAN 3060(5)

Opera in English on Chandos

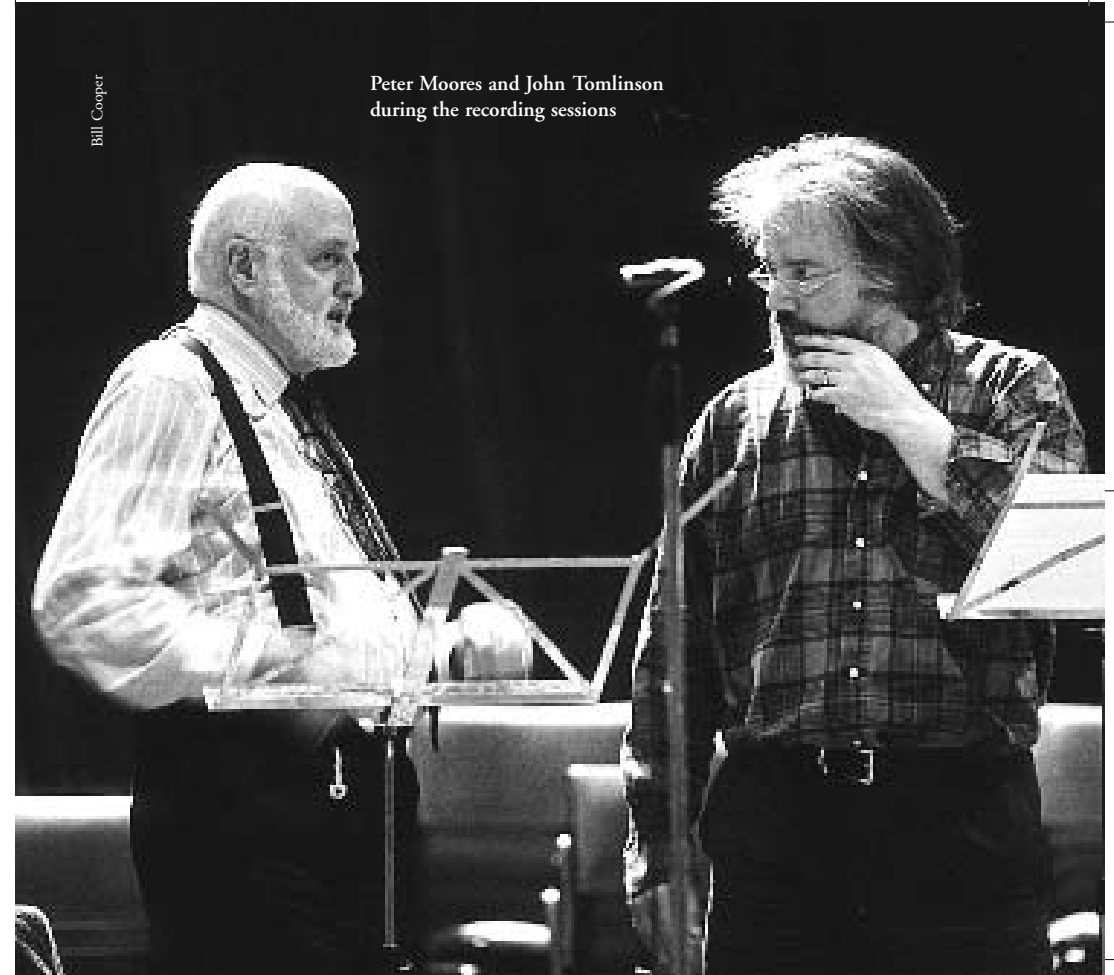


CHAN 3065(16)

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Bill Cooper

Peter Moores and John Tomlinson
during the recording sessions

CHANDOS DIGITAL**CHAN 3076**

1 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
from The Abduction from the Seraglio
 ‘When they lead you to the scaffold’ 3:30

2 *from The Magic Flute*
 ‘O Isis and Osiris, listen’ 4:13

3 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
from Fidelio
 ‘Now, now for my victory!’ 3:25

4 ‘If you don’t have any money’ 2:47

5 Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)
from Der Freischütz (The Freeshooter)
 ‘On this earth we could not bear’ 2:24

6 ‘Go! Go! The fatal die is cast!’ 3:47

7 Richard Wagner (1813–1883)
from The Rhinegold
 ‘The bridge leads you homeward’ –
 ‘Evening rays flood the sky with splendour’ 6:07
 with Colin Lee tenor and Alice Coote mezzo-soprano

8 *from The Flying Dutchman*
 ‘The time comes round’ 13:12

9 ‘Senta, my child, please make this stranger
 warmly welcome’ 5:36

10 *from The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*
 ‘Now hear and attend me well.
 The feast of John, Midsummer day’ 5:58

11 Flieder Monologue
 ‘My elder tree in flower’ 6:32

12 Wahn Monologue
 ‘Mad, mad, all the world’s mad’ 7:57

13 Richard Strauss (1864–1949)
from Der Rosenkavalier (The Knight of
 the Rose)
 ‘Look for my glasses there in my jacket’ 5:58
 with Elizabeth Vaughan contralto

14 Albert Lortzing (1801–1851)
from The Armourer (Der Waffenschmied)
 ‘I used to be young with a fine head
 of hair’ 5:36

TT 78:31

John Tomlinson

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Philharmonia Orchestra (tracks 4, 9 & 11)

David Parry