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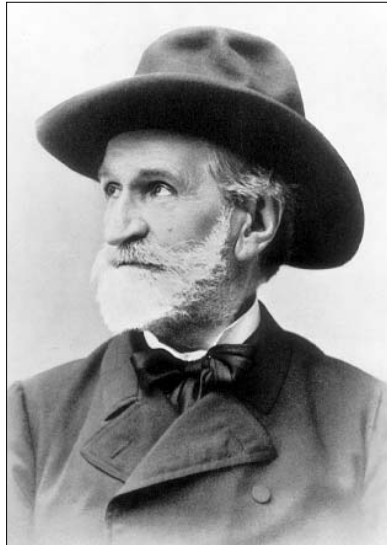
*Verdi*  
FALSTAFF



**CHANDOS**  
OPERA IN  
ENGLISH

# FALSTAFF

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Lebrecht Collection

Giuseppe Verdi

## Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

### Falstaff

Comic opera in three acts

Libretto by Arrigo Boito after Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV*

English translation by Amanda Holden

Sir John Falstaff.....	Andrew Shore <i>baritone</i>
Mrs Alice Ford.....	Yvonne Kenny <i>soprano</i>
Ford, Alice's husband.....	Ashley Holland <i>baritone</i>
Nannetta, their daughter.....	Susan Gritton <i>soprano</i>
Fenton, her suitor.....	Barry Banks <i>tenor</i>
Dr Caius.....	Stuart Kale <i>tenor</i>
Mistress Quickly.....	Rebecca de Pont Davies <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Mrs Meg Page.....	Alice Coote <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Pistol.....	Clive Bayley <i>bass</i>
Bardolph.....	Richard Roberts <i>tenor</i>

### English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Tony Legge assistant conductor

Paul Daniel

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

Scene 1 (16:53)

	Time	Page
[1] 'Falstaff! <i>Dr Caius, Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol</i>	5:07	[p. 92]
[2] 'Your bill, sir' <i>Landlord, Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol</i>	3:12	[p. 94]
[3] 'Are you acquainted with a merchant whose name is Ford?' <i>Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol</i>	2:50	[p. 95]
[4] 'So now, convey these scorching letters' <i>Falstaff, Pistol, Bardolph</i>	1:07	[p. 96]
[5] 'Your honour? Vermin!' <i>Falstaff</i>	4:37	[p. 97]

Scene 2 (15:50)

[6] 'Dear Alice!' <i>Meg, Alice, Quickly, Nannetta</i>	1:17	[p. 97]
[7] "'Heavenly Alice, let me love you...'" <i>Meg, Alice, Quickly, Nannetta</i>	2:36	[p. 98]
[8] 'Monster!' <i>Quickly, Meg, Nannetta, Alice, Dr Caius, Bardolph, Fenton, Pistol, Ford</i>	1:34	[p. 99]
[9] 'Again please' <i>Ford, Pistol, Dr Caius, Bardolph, Fenton, Nannetta, Alice, Meg, Quickly</i>	1:32	[p. 102]
[10] 'Pst, pst, Nannetta' <i>Fenton, Nannetta</i>	1:45	[p. 103]
[11] 'Falstaff has dared to mock me!' <i>Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Quickly</i>	1:31	[p. 104]

	Time	Page
[12] 'Back to the jousting...' <i>Fenton, Nannetta</i>	2:27	[p. 105]
[13] 'You'll gather from his boasting' <i>Bardolph, Ford, Pistol, Dr Caius, Fenton</i>	1:37	[p. 106]
[14] 'Enough of this chattering' <i>Alice, Nannetta, Quickly, Meg</i>	1:32	[p. 107]
<b>Act II</b>		
<b>Scene 1 (25:13)</b>		
[15] 'We're converted, we've reverted' <i>Bardolph, Pistol, Falstaff</i>	1:07	[p. 108]
[16] 'Sir, your servant!'	2:28	[p. 108]
[17] 'I've another commission to bring your worship' <i>Quickly, Falstaff</i>	2:28	[p. 109]
[18] 'Alice is mine!' <i>Falstaff</i>	1:20	[p. 109]
[19] 'Sir John, outside there is a certain Master Brook' <i>Bardolph, Falstaff</i>	0:40	[p. 110]
[20] 'Good sir, may God be with you!' <i>Ford, Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol</i>	3:07	[p. 110]
[21] 'In Windsor there's a lady'	3:32	[p. 111]
[22] 'This cruel beauty has a reputation' <i>Ford, Falstaff</i>	3:39	[p. 112]
[23] 'I'm dreaming! Or is this true?' <i>Ford</i>	5:05	[p. 113]
[24] 'How do I look? I'm ready' <i>Falstaff, Ford</i>	1:47	[p. 113]

COMPACT DISC TWO

	Time	Page
<b>Scene 2 (20:03)</b>		
[1] 'I think we should propose a bill' <i>Alice, Quickly, Meg</i>	0:40	[p. 114]
[2] 'I hurry down the river to the Garter' <i>Quickly</i>	1:07	[p. 114]
[3] 'It's really very simple' <i>Quickly, Alice, Meg, Nannetta</i>	2:14	[p. 115]
[4] 'Witty young women of Windsor...' <i>Nannetta, Meg, Alice, Quickly</i>	1:50	[p. 117]
[5] 'At last I've caught you' <i>Falstaff, Alice</i>	3:49	[p. 117]
[6] 'When I was page to the noble Duke of York' <i>Falstaff, Alice, Quickly</i>	0:59	[p. 118]
[7] 'Mistress Alice, it's Mistress Meg' <i>Quickly, Falstaff, Alice, Meg</i>	1:00	[p. 119]
[8] 'He jumped the hedge, and he trampled the hydrangea' <i>Quickly, Ford, Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, Alice, Meg</i>	1:41	[p. 120]
[9] 'Come here!' <i>Nannetta, Fenton</i>	0:50	[p. 121]
[10] 'I'll kill him! I'll slaughter him!' <i>Dr Caius, Ford, Pistol, Bardolph, Nannetta, Fenton</i>	0:50	[p. 122]
[11] 'When I catch you...' <i>Ford, Dr Caius, Quickly, Meg, Bardolph, Pistol, Fenton, Nannetta, Chorus, Alice</i>	3:16	[p. 123]
[12] 'It's not him!' <i>Dr Caius, Alice, Meg, Quickly, Bardolph, Ford, Pistol, Chorus, Nannetta, Fenton</i>	1:45	[p. 126]

Act III

Scene 1 (17:00)

[13] 'Hey! Landlord!' <i>Falstaff</i>	6:36	[p. 128]
[14] 'Sir, your servant!' <i>Quickly, Falstaff, Alice, Ford, Nannetta, Meg, Dr Caius</i>	3:19	[p. 128]
[15] 'Just as the chimes of midnight are resounding' <i>Quickly, Ford, Alice, Nannetta, Meg, Fenton</i>	4:59	[p. 129]
[16] 'Don't you forget the lanterns' <i>Alice, Ford, Dr Caius, Meg, Quickly, Nannetta</i>	2:06	[p. 131]

Scene 2 (30:07)

[17] [Introduction]	1:16	[p. 132]
[18] 'From lover's lips a happy song' <i>Fenton, Nannetta</i>	2:34	[p. 132]
[19] 'Master Fenton, put on this friar's habit' <i>Alice, Fenton, Nannetta, Quickly, Meg</i>	0:56	[p. 132]
[20] 'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven chimes' <i>Falstaff</i>	3:13	[p. 133]
[21] 'I hear a nimble footstep' <i>Falstaff, Alice, Meg</i>	1:14	[p. 133]
[22] 'Wood-nymphs, elfins, naiads, leprechauns and sirens' <i>Nannetta, Chorus, Falstaff, Alice</i>	1:56	[p. 134]
[23] 'Upon a fragrant breath of night' <i>Nannetta, Chorus</i>	4:25	[p. 134]
[24] 'Who goes there?' <i>Bardolph, Pistol, Falstaff, Quickly, Alice, Nannetta, Meg, Chorus, Ford</i>	0:57	[p. 135]

	Time	Page
25 'Pinch him and burn him' <i>Alice, Meg, Quickly, Falstaff, Chorus</i>	0:56	[p. 136]
26 'Buffoon!' <i>Dr Caius, Ford, Bardolph, Pistol, Alice, Quickly, Meg, Chorus</i>	2:08	[p. 136]
27 'Nose incandescent! Nozzle rubescent!' <i>Falstaff, Quickly, Ford, Meg, Alice, Pistol</i>	2:53	[p. 138]
28 'So the commonest rabble have collected' <i>Falstaff, Chorus, Ford</i>	1:22	[p. 140]
29 'Now the bride is approaching with her bridegroom' <i>Ford, Falstaff, Chorus, Alice</i>	1:11	[p. 140]
30 'Ha, ha!' <i>Falstaff, Pistol, Chorus, Dr Caius, Ford, Alice, Bardolph, Fenton, Nannetta</i>	1:55	[p. 140]
31 'Life is a burst of laughter' <i>Falstaff, All</i>	3:11	[p. 142]

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Andrew Shore as Falstaff in  
English National Opera's production  
of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Rafferty



## Verdi: Falstaff

The crowning achievement of Verdi's glorious Indian summer, *Falstaff* is the true distillation of his amazing achievement over a career of some sixty years in the opera house. Perhaps only Haydn among major composers underwent such an astonishing and fruitful development in style and content over a long period of composition. In this culminating triumph of his old age Verdi is hardly recognisable as the composer of what he called his 'galley years' when his style conformed to the structure and style of the time. Although even in his works of that era, there were signs of the forthcoming change of direction. By the time he reached his concluding masterpiece, he had rejected virtually all the formal constraints and methods of his youth, writing in a through-composed manner where recitative and aria merge naturally and unobtrusively into each other.

In this he was enormously helped by having Boito, himself a composer of some stature, as his librettist. Adapting passages from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in masterly fashion, Boito presented

Verdi, after due consultation with the venerable composer, with just the text to rekindle the fires of the old master. Boito had also been responsible for the very different task of converting *Otello* into *Otello*, a taut drama hammered out from the playwright's somewhat sprawling text. He does exactly the same as regards *Falstaff*; at the same time providing a libretto that stands on its own as a work of literary merit.

From it Verdi fashioned a comedy that moves effortlessly through three succinct acts, not a word or note extraneous to its construction, everything made to tell and justifying its place in the work's firmament. Verdi had written only one comedy, *King for a Day* (*Un giorno di regno*), very early in his career, a piece much influenced by Donizettian example. Between then and *Falstaff*, he sometimes included comic episodes into his serious works, most notably perhaps in *The Force of Destiny* (*La forza del destino*), and lightened the moods of others with cheery characters, such as the page Oscar in *A Masked Ball* (*Un ballo in maschera*). There is also much of a more airy nature in the ballet music

found in many of his scores, especially those written for Paris. Yet none of that quite prepares us for the transparent textures, the witty conceits, the deftly amusing characterisation to be found in *Falstaff*, which is utterly *sui generis*.

From the start Verdi made it clear that he was writing something different from anything that he had before attempted, the comedy he had wanted to write all his life but had not been able to accomplish through lack of an appropriate libretto. In a sense, as Julian Budden, whose volumes on the operas are so revealing, writes: '*Falstaff* was to be a private joke, which the public was to share if they liked.' They have certainly done so.

From the first bars we hear a new Verdi: no overture or introduction of any kind. We are plunged at once into the middle of things. Indeed it is the first touch of genius in the work that we seem to be taken immediately into an already-existing scene of Falstaff and his henchmen carousing at the Garter Inn. The ensuing parley with the tetchy pedant Dr Caius, and his furious banter with the mellow Sir John and the seedy Bardolph and Pistol, is a brilliant example of repartee set to music, a fit *hors d'œuvre* to the musical feast

that ensues. After Caius's departure, Falstaff indulges in more banter, mainly concerned with money or the lack of it, culminating in the paean 'Hail, mighty Falstaff', before Verdi's natural gift for lyricism begins to assert itself as Falstaff describes to his mates his plan of seduction. He waxes lyrical as he describes the respective charms of Alice Ford and Meg Page. But when it comes to it the two rogues refuse to act as Pandarus for Falstaff, which provokes an outbreak of fury from the Fat Knight as he rails against the concept of honour in a famous monologue. Here Verdi combines recitative and aria into one seamless whole, obeying the sense of the text, a kind of distillation, first in this work, of all he had learnt about setting words. It is also, almost needless to say, a fine portrait in music of Falstaff.

In the second scene, as in the first, we again seem to be eavesdropping in on an already established milieu. Alice, Meg, Mistress Quickly and Nannetta, daughter of the Fords, are in vivacious mood as the two wives discover they have received the same amorous missive from Falstaff. Their feelings are expressed in the most sprightly form, quickfire exchanges tinged with wit. Verdi seems to be mocking his previously impassioned style

when he gives Alice a soaring phrase 'Your radiant image will shed its light on me' as she and Meg mock the old boy's preening self-confidence. The wives collapse in a series of guffaws miraculously set into the musical texture. In a close-knit ensemble they begin to plot Falstaff's comeuppance.

That is expanded when the men come on the scene deciding on their course of action against Falstaff. Unerringly intertwined with this complex nonet is the love music for Nannetta and her innamorato Fenton. Their romantic sweet-nothings seem suffused throughout with a touch of melancholy, as if the elderly composer were recollecting past passion. The *concertato* for all the characters is an intricate skein of words and music unlike anything else in Verdi. The hubbub of voices eventually subsides and, to close a wonderful act, Alice repeats her lyrical phrase making fun of Falstaff.

The first scene of Act II consists almost entirely of two duologues, Falstaff and Quickly, Falstaff and Ford. The drollery of the first encounter is another new departure for the composer. Bardolph and Pistol beat their breasts in mock contrition, graphically described in the orchestra. Quickly enters to a kind of stately minuet, culminating in an

onomatopoeic-like curtsy on the words 'Sir, your servant' (Reverenza!). She butters up Falstaff in a series of falsely flattering comments, the most famous of which suggests he is a noted seducer. He replies: 'I know. Continue', a touch of hubris he will come to regret, set so impishly by Verdi. Equally apt and concise is the phrase from Quickly remarking that Ford is out 'From eleven till twelve', yet further evidence of Verdi's comic brevity. After Quickly has told of Meg's desire for Falstaff, he exclaims: 'Alice is mine!', and in a short but telling arioso, so typical of Verdi's new and exigent style, Falstaff preens himself while marching around the room, exulting in his continuing power over women.

Bardolph now tells Falstaff that a 'Signor Fontana' (a direct translation of Shakespeare's Master Brook), Ford in disguise, has arrived and desires an audience with Falstaff. A present of a demi-john of Cyprus wine makes him all the more welcome. He needs Falstaff's help, and as an inducement places a bag of money on the table. The ensuing colloquy is a distillation of the many duets in Verdi's opera in its subtle, seamless and natural conversation in music. In apparently deferential tones Ford relates how a certain woman at Windsor is

deaf to his entreaties. He is willing to pay cash (the jingle of coins is heard in the orchestra) to have Falstaff woo the lady on his behalf. There is a sudden full stop in the orchestra when Ford is thunderstruck to hear that Falstaff already has an assignation with Alice Ford. Ford's hidden anger is hardly contained when Falstaff, in musically preening terms, says he will cuckold Ford for 'Master Brook'. The irony and self-deception implicit in Falstaff's attitude and Ford's fury are inferred throughout their encounter, Falstaff set up for his coming fall.

The Verdi of *Otello* re-appears as soon as Falstaff has gone off to robe himself for his afternoon tryst: in an Iago-like outburst, Ford ponders on his seemingly abject position. Can this really be happening to him: in a dark, long-breathed phrase beginning at the bottom of the baritone's register, he discloses the intensity of his feelings. Just as he is about to explode, Falstaff returns dressed to the nines, and the score resumes its normal lightness, an inspired touch on the composer's part extended by the fine conceit of the pair arguing as to who should first go through the door as they leave. So this superbly written scene closes on a note of pure comedy.

The next scene is the opera's centrepiece, in which Falstaff eventually receives his initial comeuppance. After Quickly has described to the other merry wives her encounter with Falstaff, vividly mimicking their talk at the Garter Inn, they all combine in a rousing, quicksilver exchange of ideas on how they are going to cope with Falstaff's imminent arrival. Suddenly he is espied approaching the Ford residence: all leave the stage apart from Alice who is seen playing her lute as Falstaff arrives. His apparent gallantry and growing ardour, finely depicted in the orchestra, as he begins his wooing, and Alice's demure replies, are accompanied recitative raised to great art. When she comments on his portly appearance he – perhaps inappropriately – launches into his delightful arietta – 'When I was page' (Quand'era paggio) – recalling his slender appearance when he was page to the Duke of Norfolk. Its airy nature is another example of the ultimate refinement of Verdi's art in his operatic swansong.

As Quickly hurries in, falsely agitated, to tell of Meg's approach, Falstaff hides. Meg tells of the men approaching in fury and after his blood. The distinguished scholar and analyst Donald Tovey wrote of the opera being 'Chinese in its workmanship'. The rest of this

scene explains his meaning, the musical skein closely argued yet in its ultimate effect of gossamer texture. Verdi has an answer to the swift movement of incident and character, culminating in Falstaff being tipped into the Thames from the laundry basket where he has hidden to escape Ford's and his followers' wrath – and to the delight of the merry wives. The few moments of repose, themselves seamlessly woven into the scene's structure, are the exchanges of the lovers, hidden behind a screen. Over all the traditional *concertato* (big ensemble) of Verdi's previous works is developed almost out of recognition to accommodate his comedic purposes.

Act III, beginning with a brief, brilliant prelude, finds a rueful Falstaff post-ducking, ruminating on his awful fate. There are onomatopoeic touches as he describes what happened to him in the water. His spirits revive only when he sips a draught of wine. He describes how a little 'grillo' (cricket) gets into a man's veins when he is 'brillo' (tipsy), causing the body to resound to a 'trillo' (trill) and we hear in the orchestra – wonderful idea – a massive trill describing the wine coursing through Falstaff's body and reviving him. But just when he seems

himself again, Quickly appears and repeats her 'Sir, your servant!' to the hero's consternation. However, she manages to gull him by telling him the disaster that befell him was not of Alice's doing, and he falls for the new idea of meeting Alice at Herne's Oak at midnight.

Thereafter in this scene, nocturnal mystery seems to pervade the score as the fantasy and enchantment illuminate the texture. Plans for Falstaff's second fall and for the forest masquerade are developed against a translucent background. The plotting is subtly delineated, including a clear indication that Ford himself is to be prevented from forcing Nannetta marry old Caius rather than her desired lover Fenton. As the scene ends Nannetta, Alice and Quickly call to one another off stage, a magical end to a magical scene.

The final scene in Windsor Park with Herne's Oak at its centre is brimful of fairy-like sounds. It begins with Fenton's sonnet, a sort of recollection in tranquility of all the tenor love-songs in Verdi's previous operas. Here it is crowned by the sound of Nannetta completing the last line. But Verdi dismisses sentiment as Alice breaks in the tryst with the business of giving everyone their disguises.

Falstaff's entry, in some trepidation, is graphically described as he counts the chimes to midnight, before Nannetta sings her delicate, poetic faery-song, the scoring diaphanous, the melody refined. From then on Verdi releases a whole heap of novel ideas, including a mock litany, as Falstaff is taunted by all around him, Verdi even parodying his own Requiem Mass.

When Bardolph's mask slips, the plot begins to unravel. Falstaff realises how he has been duped again. The Fords explain how they have unkindly mocked him. He is not too disconcerted, pointing out in a nice conceit that he has been the cause of wit in other men. It is now time for Ford to be duped in his turn, as Caius finds he has been married to a disguised Bardolph and the other couple, Nannetta and Fenton, also masked, have unwittingly been given Ford's blessing. Alice persuades her husband to accept the inevitable and his new son-in-law. All prepare to feast with Falstaff, but not until Verdi has allowed us a coruscating finale in a complex fugue led by Falstaff, a suitably inspired end to this unique work and to Verdi's operatic career.

## Synopsis

*The action takes place in Windsor*

### COMPACT DISC ONE

#### Act I

##### *At the Garter Inn*

1 Sir John Falstaff has just sealed two letters when Dr Caius arrives to hurl accusations at him. He complains to the corpulent knight that Bardolph and Pistol, Falstaff's hangers-on, made him drunk and picked his pockets. They laugh at him until he storms out of the inn.

2 Falstaff studies his weekly bill at the inn and, learning that he is seriously short of funds, flies into a rage and blames his spendthrift pair of lackeys. 3 He now reveals his masterplan to overcome these financial difficulties: he plans to seduce two women, Alice Ford and Meg Page, the wives of two rich local merchants. 4 He hands his recently completed love letters to his companions for a speedy delivery. 5 When they refuse to become involved in such dishonourable goings-on, an outraged Falstaff lectures them on their so-called 'honour' before throwing them out.

##### *The garden of Ford's house*

6 – 9 Alice and Meg discover they are the



recipients of identical love letters and resolve to teach their suitor a lesson. Their neighbour, Mistress Quickly, readily agrees to act as go-between to entice Falstaff into a rendezvous. Meanwhile the cashiered Pistol and Bardolph tell Ford of Falstaff's scheme, in the expectation of some financial reward for themselves. Ford decides to test his wife's fidelity by visiting Falstaff in disguise and pretending to ask his assistance in seducing her. <sup>[10]</sup> – <sup>[14]</sup> Ford's daughter Nannetta snatches a furtive meeting with her lover Fenton, although Ford has decreed they can not marry, because he intends that Dr Caius should be Nannetta's husband.

## Act II

### *At the Garter Inn*

<sup>[15]</sup> Pretending to be contrite, Bardolph and Pistol apologise to Falstaff for their earlier behaviour. <sup>[16]</sup> Mistress Quickly arrives to deliver replies from both Alice and Meg. Falstaff is invited to visit Alice between eleven and twelve o'clock; <sup>[17]</sup> – <sup>[18]</sup> Meg cannot provide a rendezvous. <sup>[19]</sup> – <sup>[22]</sup> He is even more delighted when a complete stranger – Master Brook (Ford in disguise) – offers him money if he will soften up Alice for him by seducing her. <sup>[23]</sup> – <sup>[24]</sup> After Sir John leaves the room to groom himself in readiness for his

amorous assignation with Alice, Ford rages against Falstaff and Alice, whom he supposes to be guilty of actual infidelity.

## COMPACT DISC TWO

### *At Ford's House*

<sup>[1]</sup> – <sup>[2]</sup> Mistress Quickly recounts to Alice and Meg the unqualified success of her mission. <sup>[3]</sup> – <sup>[6]</sup> Preparations are made to receive Falstaff: a laundry basket is brought in so that when Meg raises a false alarm that Ford has unexpectedly returned home, Falstaff can be concealed in it and the servants can tip the contents into the Thames. Alice notices that her daughter is not sharing in the mischief; on learning that Nannetta is upset because her father insists that she marry Dr Caius, Alice reassures her that she will not let this happen.

<sup>[7]</sup> – <sup>[11]</sup> The women's scheme runs according to plan until Mistress Quickly runs in to warn Alice that Ford is *really* coming, accompanied by a band of sympathisers (Caius, Fenton, Bardolph and Pistol) resolved to find Falstaff and shame the unfaithful Alice. <sup>[12]</sup> However, the only lovers unmasked are Nannetta and Fenton, while Ford, on seeing Falstaff and the dirty laundry in the river, admits that he was wrong to suspect Alice's fidelity.

## Act III

### *Outside the Garter Inn*

<sup>[13]</sup> Falstaff, recovering from his drenching, reviles the world for its injustice. <sup>[14]</sup> He is in no mood for Mistress Quickly, who brings another invitation from Alice. Although he is reluctant at first, she persuades him to accept. <sup>[15]</sup> Falstaff is to meet Alice at midnight at Herne's Oak in Windsor Forest, the tree from which, according to popular legend, Herne the Huntsman hanged himself and whose ghost, adorned with horns, haunts the forest at night. To frighten off anyone who might happen to see him, Falstaff should disguise himself as the ghost of the huntsman by wearing stag's antlers on his head. Unknown to Sir John, everyone in Windsor is involved in yet another deception of the knight, and also will be in the forest in disguise.

<sup>[16]</sup> Ford eagerly anticipates a second opportunity to teach Falstaff a lesson, all the more so because in the midnight confusion of the forest he hopes to marry off Nannetta to Dr Caius. Mistress Quickly overhears this intrigue and vows to thwart Ford's plan (and teach *him* a lesson as well) by disguising someone else in Nannetta's costume.

### *Windsor Forest, at night*

<sup>[17]</sup> – <sup>[19]</sup> The women gather at Herne's Oak

and instruct Fenton when to disappear with Nannetta in order to upset Ford's plans. Alice intends to substitute Fenton for Caius. <sup>[20]</sup> – <sup>[21]</sup> At midnight Falstaff, wearing his disguise of antlers, arrives and begins to woo Alice (and Meg as well). <sup>[22]</sup> – <sup>[26]</sup> But both women run away when they hear apparently supernatural noises, leaving their suitor alone to be tormented by a band of goblins and elves. <sup>[27]</sup> The deception is successful until Falstaff recognises Bardolph's red nose.

<sup>[28]</sup> Ford laughs at Falstaff for the extent of his self-delusion and makes him admit the error of his ways, but Falstaff has the final word by claiming to be the source of laughter in others. <sup>[29]</sup> Ford gives his blessing to the marriage of two couples, one of whom he assumes to be Caius and Nannetta, the other unknown. <sup>[30]</sup> When the couples unmask, Ford discovers that not only has Caius married Bardolph but that he himself has given his blessing to a union between Nannetta and Fenton. Ford admits that he has been duped as effectively as has Falstaff. <sup>[31]</sup> The merry wives have triumphed over the men's schemes, and Falstaff leads everyone in a last and reconciliatory fugal burst of laughter.

Robert Workman



**Andrew Shore** is acknowledged as Britain's premier *buffo* baritone and an outstanding singer/actor. He has worked with English National Opera, The Royal Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera, and has appeared abroad with

San Diego Opera, New Israeli Opera, Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, Opéra Comique, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, as well as in Lyon, Nantes, Santa Fe, Montpellier, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver and Ottawa.

His many engagements have included the title roles in *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Don Pasquale*, as well as Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), King Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Dikoy (*Kát'a Kabanová*), Dr Kolenaty (*The Makropulos Affair*), Shishkov (*From the House of the Dead*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), Baron (*La Vie parisienne*), Baron Trombonok

(*Il viaggio a Reims*), George Wilson (*The Great Gatsby*), Alberich in concert performances of *Das Rheingold*, Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*) and Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Recordings include the title role in *Don Pasquale*, Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Dr Bartolo (*The Barber of Seville*), Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), the Sacristan in *Tosca*, Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier* (highlights), and *La Bohème*, all for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.



**Yvonne Kenny** was born in Sydney and is one of the most distinguished sopranos of her generation. After winning the Kathleen Ferrier Competition she joined the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where her roles have included Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Liù (*Turandot*), Aspasia (*Mitridate*) and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*).

She has won international renown in the great Handel roles, notably Semele and Alcina

(Covent Garden and La Fenice, Venice), Romilda (*Xerxes*) for English National Opera and the Bavarian State Opera, and both Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) and Armida (*Rinaldo*) in Sydney. She has also sung at the San Francisco Opera, the Vienna State Opera, La Scala Milan, the Berlin Staatsoper, the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, Paris Opéra, in Hamburg, Zurich, Washington and Glyndebourne, and she returns frequently to her native Australia where she has sung many roles. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia for Services to Music in 1989.

Yvonne Kenny's many recordings include *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Elgar's *The Kingdom*, Britten's *The Beggar's Opera* and *Gloriana*, Handel's *Deborah*, Dyson's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (for Chandos), highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier* and a disc of Great Operatic Arias (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation), and for Opera Rara Donizetti's *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'eremitaggio di Liverpool*, and *Ugo, Conte di Parigi*, and Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto*.

A graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music, **Barry Banks** has established himself as one of the finest tenors of his generation for

Catherine Ashmore



his outstanding performances in opera and concert. Roles include the title role in *The Rake's Progress* for English National Opera, both Belfiore and Libenskof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) in Bologna, Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) for Basel Opera, Oreste (*Ermione*) for the Santa Fe Opera, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) at La Monnaie, Leipzig Opera, Scottish Opera, and the Salzburg Festival, Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) Tamino, and the title role in *Le Comte Ory* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) and Argirio (*Tancredi*) for Frankfurt Opera, Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) at the Metropolitan Opera, Candide for Chicago Lyric Opera, Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for San Francisco Opera, Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) for Welsh National Opera.

A committed concert artist, Barry Banks has performed Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle*, *Fidelio* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Walter Weller, *War Requiem*, Bruckner's *Requiem* with the

Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Sir Charles Mackerras, and a performance of Rossini's *Armida* at the Edinburgh Festival

Recordings include Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*) (all for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation), Mendelssohn's *St Paul* (for Chandos), *Un ballo in maschera*, and *Trial by Jury*, and he has appeared on video releases of *Billy Budd* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

Winner of the 1994 Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize, **Susan Gritton** read botany at



Oxford and London Universities before taking up a career in singing. She appears regularly in recital throughout Britain, and her extensive concert experience has taken her to the

Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, and the the Philharmonie in Berlin.

Susan Gritton's operatic roles have included Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) for Glyndebourne Festival and

Touring Operas; Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) and Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*) under Steuart Bedford at Snape Maltings; Marenka (*The Bartered Bride*), Euridice (*Orfeo*), Thalie and Clarine (*Platée*), and Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*) and Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich; Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) at the Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin, and Marzelline (*Fidelio*) with the Rome Opera. At English National Opera, where she is a Company Principal, her roles include Atalanta (*Xerxes*), Caroline (*The Fairy Queen*), Constance (*The Carmelites*), Xenia (*Boris Godunov*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Drusilla (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Recordings for Chandos include Vivaldi's *Ottone in Villa*, *Sir John in Love*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, Haydn Masses, and *Aida* (this last with the Peter Moores Foundation). Susan Gritton is a member of English National Opera.

**Ashley Holland** studied at Warwick University and the Royal Northern College of Music, where he won the Webster Booth/Esso Competition and the Curtis Gold

Medal, and was a Peter Moores scholar. In 1998 Ashley Holland won the Ranieri i Cestelli opera competition in Hamburg.

He is currently a principal baritone at English National Opera, where his roles have included Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Sharpless (*Madam Butterfly*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Cecil in Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*, Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*), Lescart



in Massenet's *Manon*, Ottakar (*Der Freischütz*), Marcello (*La Bohème*) and Escamillo (*Carmen*). He also sang the baritone role in English National Opera's co-production with the Mark Morris Dance Group of Handel's *L'Allegro*. Other engagements include Junius (*The Rape of Lucretia*) for Lausanne Opera, Ford (*Falstaff*) for English National Opera, Sharpless for Cincinnati Opera, Antonio in concert performances of *Linda di Chamounix* with Mark Elder and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Don Giovanni for Calgary Opera, roles in *Candide* with the London Symphony Orchestra/Kent Nagano and in Weill's *Der Protagonist* and *The Royal Palace*

with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis, his debut at the Bastille Opéra as Bosun (*Billy Budd*) and his debut with Semperoper Dresden as Ford.

Recordings include Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*) for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.



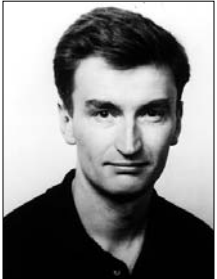
**Alice Coote** studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal Northern College of Music (where she received support from the Peter Moores Foundation) and the National Opera Studio.

Operatic roles have included Cherubino, Penelope (*The Return of Ulysses*), Dorabella, Tamiri (*Il Re Pastore*) for Opera North; Fortuna and Valetto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for Welsh National Opera; Cherubino for Scottish Opera; Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*) and the title role in *The Coronation of Poppea* for English National Opera; Page (*Salome*), Ruggiero (*Alcina*) for Stuttgart Opera and at the Edinburgh Festival; Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*), and performances at the Paris Opéra-Bastille, and in Nancy,

Nantes, and at the Salzburg Festival. Her US debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*) met with great success.

Her concert appearances include repertoire from the oratorios of Bach and Handel through to the works of Mahler, Debussy and Britten, which she has performed under conductors including Nagano, Pesek, Menuhin, Salonen, Dohnányi and Christie, in London, Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam, Brussels, Madrid and Salzburg. She is in increasing demand as a recitalist and has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall and for BBC Radio 3. Her recordings include *The Choice of Hercules*.

Clive Bayley was a Peter Moores Scholar, and now sings regularly with the major opera companies in a repertoire ranging from



Monteverdi to Verdi, Puccini, Berg, Britten and Birtwistle. He made his debut with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, in the premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's *Gawain* and subsequently appeared

as Colline in *La Bohème*. He has had notable successes with Opera North in Verdi's *Jerusalem*, as Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), the Referee in Benedict Mason's *Playing Away*, Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Arkel (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Wurm (*Luisa Miller*), the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro*, the Doctor (*Wozzeck*), Biterolf (*Tannhäuser*) and Antinous (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*); with Opera Factory in *Don Giovanni*; with English National Opera in *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck*, as Cadmus (*Semele*), the four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), and Pistol in *Falstaff*. Abroad Clive Bayley has appeared with Netherlands Opera, Seattle Opera, in Lisbon and Lausanne. Other engagements have included the Fisherman in Kurt Weill's *The Royal Palace* at the BBC Promenade concerts and performances with Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas.

Recordings for Chandos include *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd*, and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Madam Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Boris Godunov* highlights, *Don Pasquale* and *Il trovatore*.

**Stuart Kale** is internationally recognised as one of the most outstanding singing actors in the operatic world, and his roles cover a huge

range of repertoire, from Monteverdi to Messiaen. He began his career at Welsh National Opera before joining English National Opera, where he remained for eight years, singing roles such as Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (Martinů's *Julietta*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) and Nanki-Poo in



Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado*.

Notable engagements include the High Priest (*Idomeneo*) at Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) for Canadian Opera Company and in San Francisco, Geneva, Zürich, Montpellier, Bordeaux and Bologna, Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) in Strasbourg, Bordeaux and Montpellier, Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) for English National Opera's 1990 Russian Tour, Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*) for ENO, Zinoviev (*Lady Macbeth*) in Toulouse and Marseille, Idomeneo in Drottningholm, and the three tenor roles in *Lulu* at the Châtelet, Aegisth in Karlsruhe, *L'occasione fa il ladro* at the Schwetzingen Festival and in Cologne, Bob Boles at Covent Garden, the

Munich State Opera, and in Genova and Strasbourg, Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) in Cologne, Gregor (*The Makropoulos Case*) and Herod, both in new productions in Strasbourg.

Recordings include Goro (*Madam Butterfly*), Shuisky (*Boris Godunov* highlights) and Roderigo (*Otello*), all for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

**Rebecca de Pont Davies** was born in



London and trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she won many prizes and an award from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. She made her operatic debut with

Glyndebourne Touring Opera in Britten's *Death in Venice*, and since then she has worked with major companies in Great Britain, and toured to many parts of Europe. Since her English National Opera debut in 1998 as Emilia (*Otello*), she has sung a number of roles there, including Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Geneviève (*Pelleas*

and *Melisande*), Ottavia (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Flosshilde (*The Rhinegold*), Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*), Princess Marya (*War and Peace*), Mother Goose (*The Rake's Progress*), and Suzanne in the world premiere of Martin Butler's *A Better Place*. She is currently a Company Principal with English National Opera.

Other roles include Moksada (Param Vir's *Snatched by the Gods*) for Scottish Opera, Gaea (*Daphne*), Die alleswissende Muschel (*Die ägyptische Helene*) and Leda (*Die Liebe der Danae*) for Garsington Opera, the title role in Handel's *Flavio* (Opera Theatre Company, Dublin). Also active as a concert singer, Rebecca de Pont Davies has sung with leading British orchestras in repertoire including the major works by Bach and Handel, Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Mahler's Symphony No. 2, Elgar's *Sea Pictures* and *The Dream of Gerontius*, and Tippett's *A Child of our Time*.

**Richard Roberts** studied at the University of Kansas, the Chatauqua School of Music, New York, and with Anthony Laciura of the Metropolitan Opera, Audrey Langford, Felicity Palmer and Robert Dean.

As a Company Principal at English National Opera, Richard Roberts sang many roles including Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*),



Edmondo (*Manon Lescaut*), Abbé (*War and Peace*), Teacher (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), Don Riccardo (*Ernani*), Bardolph (*Falstaff*), and Roderigo (*Otello*). Other engagements have included *Candide* for Eugene Opera, Oregon, Jiri (*The Jacobin*) for Scottish Opera, Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) in Raymond Gubbay's production at the Royal Albert Hall, and Scaramuccio (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) with the City of London Sinfonia under Richard Hickox.

Richard Roberts is also an experienced concert artist, with engagements including Beethoven's Choral Symphony at the Brighton Dome, *Elijah* in Sheffield Cathedral, the Mozart *Requiem* at the Royal Festival Hall, *Carmina Burana* at the Barbican Hall, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* at St John's, Smith Square, and opera galas at the national concert halls in Cardiff, Dublin and Glasgow.

**Amanda Holden** studied music at Oxford before winning a scholarship to the Guildhall School in London, where she subsequently taught piano. Since 1987 she has written about fifty translations for performance in the theatre, concert hall and opera house, many of them commissioned by English National Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera North and Raymond Gubbay. She is the founder-editor of The Viking/Penguin Opera Guides; a completely revised new edition, *The New Penguin Opera Guide*, was published in 2001. Amanda Holden also wrote the libretto for Mark-Anthony Turnage's opera, *The Silver Tassie*, for which, with the composer, she received the 2001 *Olivier* award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera.

Critically and publicly acclaimed, the **English National Opera Orchestra** (Leader Barry Griffiths) has in recent years received several prestigious awards, including the *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* and an *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. The Orchestra is at the heart of the Company's artistic life and as well as opera performances in the London Coliseum has also been seen on the concert platform. In addition many of the players participate in the

work of the Baylis Programme of the Company's education and outreach department and with the English National Opera Studio in the development of new operas, in particular Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* which had its world premiere in February 2000. The Orchestra appears in many recordings for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation: *Otello*, *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production), *La traviata* and *Werther*.

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

sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation, as did their recording of the celebrated 'Ring Cycle' conducted by Sir Reginald Goodall. Other Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation recordings are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production) and *La traviata*.

**Paul Daniel** is widely regarded as one of the most exciting and talented conductors of his generation and is in great demand with both opera companies and orchestras worldwide.

He appears as a guest conductor with major orchestras throughout the world, including the Philharmonia, Orchestra

Snowdon



of the Age of Enlightenment, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Orchestre National de Lyon, Tonhalle-

Orchester Zürich, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, the MDR Symphony Orchestra Leipzig, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra.

In 1997 he became Music Director of English National Opera where he has conducted *The Flying Dutchman*, *Falstaff*, *From the House of the Dead*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Otello*, *Boris Godunov*, *La traviata*, *The Carmelites*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, the world premiere of *The Silver Tassie* by Mark-Anthony Turnage, *Nixon in China*, *Peter Grimes* (at the Aldeburgh Festival), *Il Trovatore*, *War and Peace* and concert performances of Ponchielli's *La gioconda* and the Verdi *Requiem*. Before his appointment, he had already worked extensively with the company where productions included the world premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's *Mask of Orpheus*, *Figaro's Wedding*, Philip Glass's *Akhmaten*, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, and performances of *King Priam*, as part of Tippett's ninetieth birthday celebrations.

From 1990 to 1997 Paul Daniel was Music Director of Opera North, where he attracted

critical acclaim for his exciting and fresh performances of Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, Tippett's *King Priam*, *Don Giovanni*, Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*, *Boris Godunov*, *Don Carlos*, *Wozzeck*, *Gloriana*, *Il trovatore*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, the world premieres of Michael Berkeley's *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and Benedict Mason's *Playing Away*, which was premiered at the Munich Biennale and won awards for best production and design, *Jenůfa*, *Luisa Miller*, *Medea*, *Falstaff* and *Tannhäuser*.

He was Music Director of Opera Factory from 1987 to 1990.

His recordings include the Elgar/Payne Symphony No. 3 with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, works by Thomas Armstrong (for Chandos), and *Boris Godunov* highlights (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation). In February 1998 Paul Daniel received an *Olivier* Award for outstanding achievement in opera, and he was awarded the CBE in the 2000 New Year's Honours list.

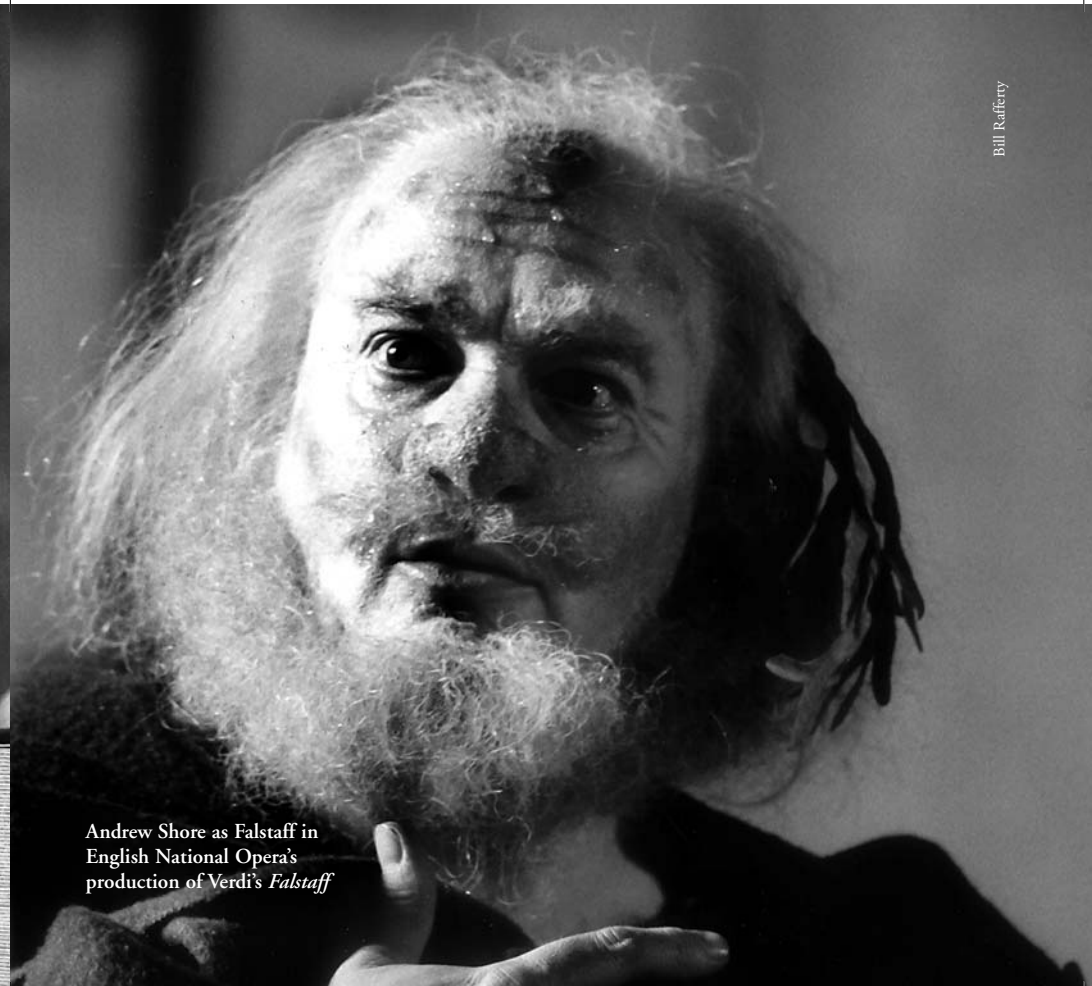
Susan Gritton as Nannetta  
in English National Opera's  
production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Raifery



Andrew Shore as Falstaff in  
English National Opera's  
production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Raifery

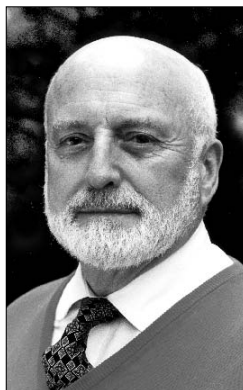


## PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

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.



## Verdi: Falstaff

*Falstaff* war nicht nur der krönende Abschluss einer letzten, großartigen Schaffensphase, sondern auch die Quintessenz all dessen, was Verdi in sechs Jahrzehnten illustrierter Operngeschichte zu erreichen vermochte. Wohl nur Haydn hat unter den großen Komponisten eine ähnlich verblüffende und fruchtbare Langzeitentwicklung seiner stilistischen und inhaltlichen Ansätze erlebt. In dieser reifen Glanzleistung ist Verdi kaum als der Komponist jener "Galeerenjahre" (der Ausdruck stammt von ihm selbst) wiederzuerkennen, als er sich dem Stil der Zeit beugte, obwohl selbst damals bereits der künftige Richtungswechsel zu erahnen war. Als er sein letztes Meisterwerk in Angriff nahm, hatte sich Verdi praktisch aller frühen Formzwänge entledigt, um durchkomponierte Werke zu schreiben, in denen Rezitative und Arien auf natürliche und unaufdringliche Weise ineinander verfließen.

Dabei erwies es sich als große Hilfe, dass ihm Boito, seinerseits kein schlechter Komponist, als Librettist zur Verfügung stand. Nach geflissentlicher Absprache mit dem altherwürdigen Meister legte Boito mit seiner

meisterlichen Verarbeitung von Passagen aus *Heinrich IV.* und *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*) einen Text vor, der ideal dazu angetan war, die schöpferischen Kräfte des Komponisten neu zu beleben. Boito war es auch, der bereits *Othello* in *Otello* verwandelt und dabei den recht breit angelegten Text des Bardens auf ein knappes, fesselndes Drama komprimiert hatte. Ähnlich behandelte er *Falstaff*, und das Resultat ist ein Libretto, das zudem als literarisch anspruchsvolles Werk auf eigenen Füßen stehen kann.

Verdi schuf nun eine Komödie, die sich ungezwungen über drei knappe Akte entwickelt, wobei in punkto Aufbau kein Wort und keine Note zuviel sind, alles zählt und seinen Platz im Firmament des Werkes verdient. Die einzige komische Oper, die Verdi zuvor komponiert hatte (*Un giorno di regno*) – lag ein halbes Jahrhundert zurück und stand unter dem deutlichen Einfluss Donizettis. Danach hatte Verdi hin und wieder komische Episoden in seine ersten Werke einfließen lassen, vor allem vielleicht in *La forza del destino*, und zuweilen heiterte er mit Hilfe

munterer Gestalten, wie der des Pagen Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*, die Stimmung auf. Auch die Ballettmusik in vielen, vor allem den für Paris bestimmten Partituren hat etwas Leichteres an sich. Aber nichts von alledem bereitet uns auf die transparenten Strukturen, die geistreichen Einfälle, die raffiniert amüsante Charakterisierung im ganz und gar einzigartigen *Falstaff* vor.

Von Anfang an ließ Verdi keinen Zweifel daran, dass er hier etwas schrieb, was von allen seinen anderen Werken vollkommen abwich: nämlich die lang ersehnte Komödie, zu der ihm immer das geeignete Libretto gefehlt hatte. Aufschlussreich wie immer, wenn es um Oper geht, bemerkt Julian Budden zu *Falstaff*, dass dieses Werk ein privater Scherz sein sollte, an dem die Öffentlichkeit ganz nach Belieben teilhaben durfte. Das hat sie zweifellos getan.

Schon in den ersten Takten hören wir einen neuen Verdi: keine Ouvertüre, keine Einleitung irgendeiner Art. Wir stehen ganz plötzlich in medias res. Ja, gleich der erste Geniestreich in diesem Werk liegt darin, dass wir scheinbar spontan Zeugen einer sich bereits abspielenden Szene werden, in der Falstaff und seine Kumpanen im Garter Inn (Gasthof "Zum Hosenband") feuchtfröhlich beisammen sitzen. Der stürmische

Wortwechsel zwischen dem gereizten Pedanten Dr. Cajus und dem umgänglichen Sir John sowie dessen zwielichtigen Dienern Bardolfo und Pistola dürfen als großartiges Beispiel vertonter Schlagfertigkeit gelten, ein angemessenes Appetithäppchen vor dem musikalischen Festessen, das sich nun anbahnt. Nachdem Cajus abgezogen ist, witzelt Falstaff weiter, diesmal vor allem über das Geld und besonders den Mangel daran. Das alles erreicht mit dem Freudengesang "Hail, mighty Falstaff" einen Höhepunkt, bevor sich allmählich das lyrische Talent Verdis durchsetzt, als Falstaff seinen Zechkumpanen schildert, wie er Alice Ford und Meg Page verführen will. In schwärmerischen Tönen beschreibt er die Reize der beiden Damen. Aber als es zur Sache gehen soll, bekunden die beiden Spitzbuben moralische Bedenken dagegen, für Falstaff den Zuhälter zu spielen. Der wohlbeleibte Ritter ist außer sich und hält den beiden eine Standpauke über das Konzept der Ehre. Ganz im Sinne des Textes lässt Verdi hier zum erstenmal in diesem Werk Rezitativ und Arie nahtlos miteinander verschmelzen, quasi als Essenz all dessen, was er über die Vertonung eines Textes gelernt hat. Man braucht wohl kaum zu erwähnen, dass es sich dabei auch um ein hervorragendes

musikalische Porträt von Falstaff handelt.

In der zweiten Szene entsteht, wie schon bei der ersten, der Eindruck, dass wir mitten in die Handlung eintreten. Bei Alice, Meg, Mrs. Quickly und Nannetta, der Tochter des Ehepaars Ford, herrscht eine muntere Stimmung, als die beiden "Weiber" feststellen, dass sie von Falstaff gleichlautende Liebesbriefe erhalten haben. Ihre Gefühle kommen in lebhaftester Form in einem flotten, gestreichten Schlagabtausch zum Ausdruck. Fast scheint es, als wolle Verdi über seinen früheren, leidenschaftlichen Stil spötteln, als er Alice die hochfliegende Phrase "Your radiant image will shed its light on me" in den Mund legt, während sie und Meg sich über den selbstgefälligen Dünkel des alten Knaben lustig machen. Die zwei Frauen verfallen hilflos in Gelächter, das auf geradezu unglaubliche Weise mit der musikalischen Struktur verquickt ist. In einem dicht gewebten Ensemble hecken sie einen Plan aus, um Falstaff seine wohlverdiente Strafe zukommen zu lassen.

Dies wird erweitert, als die Männer auftreten und ihrerseits beschließen, wie sie gegen Falstaff vorgehen wollen. Auf geradezu meisterhafte Weise wird das Liebesthema für Nannetta und ihren Geliebten Fenton mit

diesem komplizierten Nonett verflochten. Doch ihre romantischen Turteleien scheinen durchweg von einem Hauch Melancholie durchzogen, so als rufe der greise Komponist sich die Leidenschaft vergangener Tage in Erinnerung. Das *concertato* für alle diese Charaktere ist ein komplexer Strang aus Text und Musik, der im Gesamtwerk Verdis einzigartig ist. Das Durcheinander der Stimmen verklingt schließlich, und zum Abschluss dieses herrlichen Aktes wiederholt Alice die lyrische Phrase, mit der sie Falstaff verspottet.

Die erste Szene des 2. Aktes ist fast ausschließlich zwei Zwiegesprächen gewidmet: zwischen Falstaff und Quickly einerseits und Falstaff und Ford andererseits. Auch das Possenhafte an der ersten Begegnung ist für den Komponisten etwas Neues. Bardolfo und Pistola tun zerknirscht und machen sich Vorwürfe – ein Vorgang, der vom Orchester veranschaulicht wird. Der Auftritt Quicklys wird von würdevoller, an ein Menuett erinnernder Musik begleitet, die beim Wort "Reverenza!" (Sir, your servant) mit einem fast lautmalerischen Knicks ihren Höhepunkt erreicht. Quickly schmiert Falstaff Honig um den Bart, indem sie ihm falsche Komplimente macht und ihm vorgaukelt, er sei ein

berühmter Herzensbrecher. Er erwidert: "I know. Continue." Diese Hybris, von Verdi so verschmitzt vertont, wird er später noch bereuen. Ebenso knapp und passend ist der Satz, mit dem Quickly bemerkt, Ford sei "Dalle due alle tre" (von 11 bis 12) unterwegs – ein weiterer Beweis dafür, dass Verdi sich in Sachen Komik kurz zu fassen weiß. Als Quickly Falstaff von Mogs Leidenschaft für ihn erzählt, ruft er: "Alice is mine!" In einem kurzen, aber bezeichnenden *Arioso*, das für den neuen, knappen Stil Verdis sehr typisch ist, stolziert Falstaff prahlerisch im Zimmer umher und freut sich, dass die Frauen ihm nach wie vor verfallen sind.

Dann meldet Bardolfo, dass ein gewisser "Signor Fontana" (eine wörtliche Übersetzung von Shakespeares "Master Brook") eingetroffen sei und mit Falstaff sprechen wolle. In Wirklichkeit handelt es sich aber um den maskierten Ford. Er überreicht eine Korbflasche mit zyprischem Wein als Geschenk und sichert sich so eine besonders herzliche Aufnahme. Er gibt vor, Falstaffs Hilfe zu brauchen und legt als Anreiz einen Beutel Geld auf den Tisch. Die nun folgende Unterredung darf als Quintessenz der vielen Duette in dieser Verdi-Oper gelten – so subtil, nahtlos und natürlich ist das musikalische

Gespräch. In scheinbar ehrerbietigem Ton berichtet Ford, dass eine gewisse Bürgerin von Windsor ihn nicht erhören wolle. Er erklärt sich bereit, Bargeld auf den Tisch des Hauses zu legen (im Orchester klingeln die Münzen), wenn nur Falstaff die Dame in seinem Namen umwerben wolle. Dann kommt das Orchester plötzlich ganz zum Schweigen, als Ford wie vom Donner gerührt erfährt, dass Falstaff bereits ein Rendezvous mit Alice Ford vereinbart hat. Fords heimliche Wut lässt sich kaum verbergen, als Falstaff im Überschwang musikalischer Prahlerie verspricht, er wolle Ford im Auftrag "Fontanas" Hörner aufsetzen. Die in der Haltung Falstaffs enthaltene Ironie und Selbsttäuschung und die Wut Fords schwingen während ihrer Unterhaltung ständig mit. Falstaff ist in die Falle gegangen und wird sein blaues Wunder erleben.

Kaum ist Falstaff abgegangen, um sich für sein Rendezvous am Nachmittag fein zu machen, tritt der Verdi des *Otello* wieder in Erscheinung, und in einem an Jago erinnernden Ausbruch grübelt Ford über seine scheinbar desolante Lage nach: Wie kann das nur sein? In einer tiefen, lang ausgehaltenen Phrase, die ganz am unteren Ende des Baritonregisters beginnt, bringt er die Heftigkeit seiner Gefühle zum Ausdruck. Aber

als er gerade loswettern will, tritt Falstaff piekfein herausgeputzt wieder auf, und in der Partitur setzt sich die leichte Stimmung erneut durch. Es ist ein begnadeter Einfall des Komponisten, der auf geistreichste Weise fortgesetzt wird, als die beiden sich darüber streiten, wer beim Verlassen des Raums den Vortritt haben soll. Diese hervorragend geschriebene Szene endet also in reinster Komik.

In der nächsten Szene, die das Herzstück der Oper bildet, bekommt Falstaff seiner Strafe ersten Teil. Nachdem Quickly den anderen lustigen Weibern von ihrer Begegnung mit Falstaff berichtet und dabei ihre Unterhaltung im Gasthaus "Zum Hosenband" aufs Lebhafteste nachgeahmt hat, stimmen alle in einen mitreißenden, flotten Austausch von Geistesblitzen ein: Was für einen Empfang sollen sie Falstaff bereiten? Plötzlich wird er vor dem Haus Fords erspäht, und alle gehen ab – außer Alice, die auf der Laute spielt, als Falstaff auftritt. Seine Galanterie und zunehmende Leidenschaftlichkeit werden, ebenso wie die sittsamen Antworten der Alice, auf schönste Weise im Orchester geschildert: Hier wird das Rezitativ mit Begleitung zur hohen Kunst. Als Alice sich über Falstaffs wohlgerundete Gestalt äußert,

stimmt er – vielleicht etwas unpassend – die entzückende *Arietta* "When I was page" an, in der er sich daran erinnert, wie schlank er einmal als Page in Diensten des Herzogs von Norfolk war. Die beschwingte Musik beweist wieder einmal, welchen Grad der Verfeinerung Verdi in seiner letzten Oper erreichte.

Als Quickly auf die Bühne stürzt und in gespielter Aufregung berichtet, dass Meg sich nähert, versteckt sich Falstaff. Meg ihrerseits verkündet, die Männer seien im Anzug, wutentbrannt und auf Falstaff aus. Der angesehene Musikwissenschaftler Donald Tovey schrieb einmal, dass die Oper "von der Ausführung her etwas Chinesisches" habe. Was er damit meinte, kann man am Rest dieser Szene erkennen, in dem das musikalische Gefüge straff aufgebaut ist und doch zart und federleicht wirkt. Verdi hat durchaus eine Antwort auf die rasche Entwicklung der Handlung und der Charaktere parat; sie gipfelt darin, dass Falstaff aus dem Wäschekorb (in dem er sich zum Vergnügen der lustigen Weiber vor dem wutentbrannten Ford und seinen Begleitern versteckt hatte) in die Themse gekippt wird. Die wenigen ruhigen Augenblicke, die ihrerseits nahtlos in den Aufbau der Szene einfließen, sind dem Gespräch der Liebenden gewidmet, die sich

hinter einem Schirm versteckt haben. Insgesamt wird das in den früheren Werken Verdis übliche *concertato* (große Ensemble) im Sinne seiner auf Komik ausgerichteten Absichten so weiter entwickelt, dass es kaum wiederzuerkennen ist.

Im 3. Akt, der mit einem kurzen, brillanten Präludium beginnt, werden wir zeugen, wie ein trübseliger Falstaff nach seinem unfreiwilligen Bad über sein schlimmes Schicksal nachsinnt. Hier und da klingt etwas Lautmalerei an, als er beschreibt, was ihm im Wasser zugestoßen ist. Erst als er an einem Gläschen Wein nippt, beleben sich seine Geister wieder. Er beschreibt, wie ein kleiner "grillo" (eine Grille) einem Mann ins Blut eingeht, wenn er "brillo" (angetrunken) ist, und wie der Körper dadurch von einem "trillo" (Triller) widerhallt. Daraufhin hören wir (herrlicher Einfall) im Orchester einen gewaltigen Triller, der den Wein verkörpert, der durch Falstaffs Körper jagt und ihn wieder belebt. Doch kaum ist er wieder der Alte, als Quickly auftritt und zur Bestürzung unseres Helden ihre "Sir, your servant!" wiederholt. Es gelingt ihr aber, ihn wieder an der Nase herumzuführen: Sie macht ihm weis, dass Alice mit seinem Missgeschick nichts zu tun hatte, und er fällt auf ihren Vorschlag herein,

sich um Mitternacht mit Alice an Hernes Eiche zu treffen.

Danach scheint die Instrumentierung in dieser Szene von einer geheimnisvoll-nächtlichen Stimmung durchzogen zu sein, als das phantastisch-magische Element in die Klangstruktur einfließt. Vor einem hauchzarten Hintergrund werden die Pläne für die Maskerade im Wald und für den zweiten Streich ausgeheckt, den man Falstaff spielen will. Das Komplott wird subtil skizziert, wobei ein klarer Hinweis mit anklingt, dass Ford davon abgehalten werden soll, Nannetta zur Heirat mit dem greisen Cajus statt mit ihrem Geliebten Fenton zu zwingen. Am Ende der Szene rufen Nannetta, Alice und Quickly sich hinter den Kulissen – ein magisches Ende einer magischen Szene.

Die letzte Szene im Park von Windsor, bei der Hernes Eiche im Mittelpunkt steht, steckt voller feenhafter Klänge. Sie beginnt mit Fentons Sonett, einer Art stillen Reminiszenz, in der alle für den Tenor geschriebenen Liebeslieder aus früheren Verdi-Opern anklingen. Als Krönung singt hier Nannetta die letzte Zeile zu Ende. Aber Verdi wendet sich vom Emotionalen ab, als Alice das Tête-à-tête stört und die Masken austeil. Falstaffs recht ängstlicher Auftritt wird

anschaulich vermittelt, als er die mitternächtlichen Glockenschläge zählt. Dann stimmt Nannetta ihr zartes, poetisches Feenlied an, das sich durch eine besonders grazile Instrumentierung und eine raffinierte Melodie auszeichnet. Von dem Moment an, als Falstaff von allen Anwesenden verspottet wird, wartet Verdi mit einem ganzen Stoß innovativer Ideen auf, wobei er unter anderem mit einer Pseudolitaneei sogar sein eigenes Requiem parodiert.

Als Bardolfos Maske verrutscht, beginnt der Knoten sich zu lösen. Falstaff stellt fest, dass er wieder genarrt worden ist. Das Ehepaar Ford gibt zu, ihn auf unfreundliche Weise verspottet zu haben. Falstaff ist nicht allzu betroffen und weist – wenn auch etwas weit hergeholt – darauf hin, dass andere durch ihn etwas zu lachen hatten. Dann kommt der Moment, wo Ford seinerseits hinter Licht geführt wird, denn Cajus muss feststellen, dass er den verkleideten Bardolfo geehelicht hat, während Ford dem zweiten, ebenfalls maskierten Paar, Nannetta und Fenton, seinen Segen gegeben hat. Alice überredet ihren Ehemann, sich in das Unvermeidliche zu fügen und sich mit dem neuen Schwiegersohn abzufinden. Bevor sich alle zum Festmahl mit Falstaff aufmachen, schenkt Verdi uns ein glänzendes Finale mit

einer komplexen, von Falstaff angeführten Fuge – ein zünftiger, inspirierter Abschluss für ein einzigartiges Werk und die unvergleichliche Karriere eines Opernkomponisten.

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### Handlung

*Schauplatz des Geschehens ist die Stadt Windsor*

#### COMPACT DISC ONE

##### 1. Akt

*Im Gasthof Zum Hosenband*

[1] Sir John Falstaff hat gerade zwei Briefe versiegelt, als Dr. Cajus auftritt und ihn wütend mit Anschuldigungen überhäuft. Er beklagt sich beim beleibten Ritter über dessen Kumpanen, Bardolfo und Pistola, die ihn, so sagt er, betrunken gemacht und anschließend bestohlen hätten. Doch alle lachen ihn aus, und er stürmt davon. [2] Falstaff studiert seine wöchentliche Zeche, und als er feststellt, dass er ernsthaft knapp bei Kasse ist, verfällt er in Rage und gibt seinen beiden verschwenderischen Kumpanen die Schuld. [3] Doch er hat einen raffinierten Plan, der ihn sanieren soll. Er will Alice Ford und Meg Page verführen,

die Ehefrauen von zwei wohlhabenden Kaufleuten am Ort. [4] Er überreicht seinen beiden Gefolgsleuten soeben verfasste Liebesbriefe mit der Anweisung, sie schnellstens zu überbringen. [5] Als die beiden plötzlich moralische Bedenken entwickeln, hält Falstaff ihnen einen Vortrag über ihre sogenannte "Ehre" und jagt sie davon.

*Garten bei Fords Haus*

[6] – [9] Alice und Meg stellen fest, dass sie jeweils gleichlautende Liebesbriefe erhalten haben, und beschließen, ihrem Freier eine Lektion zu erteilen. Ihre Nachbarin Mrs. Quickly erklärt sich gern bereit, als Vermittlerin zu dienen und Falstaff zu einem Rendezvous zu überreden. Pistola und Bardolfo, von Falstaff entlassen, hinterbringen Ford indessen Falstaffs Plan und erhoffen sich dafür eine Belohnung. Ford beschließt, die Treue seiner Ehefrau auf die Probe zu stellen und stattet Falstaff einen Besuch ab, bei dem er – in Verkleidung – um Hilfe bei der Verführung seiner eigenen Frau bittet. [10] – [14] Fords Tochter Nannetta trifft sich heimlich mit ihrem Liebhaber Fenton, obwohl Ford die Heirat der beiden untersagt hat, weil er Dr. Cajus als Nanettas künftigen Bräutigam ausgewählt hat.

##### 2. Akt

*Im Gasthof Zum Hosenband*

[15] Bardolfo und Pistola spiegeln Reue vor und entschuldigen sich bei Falstaff für ihr Benehmen. [16] Mrs. Quickly tritt auf und übermittelt die Antworten von Alice und Meg. Falstaff wird gebeten, Alice zwischen elf und zwölf Uhr zu besuchen; [17] – [18] Meg aber kann kein Rendezvous vereinbaren. [19] – [22] Umso größer ist Falstaffs Freude, als ein Fremder – Master Brook (Ford in Verkleidung) – ihm Geld anbietet, damit er Alice verführt und so dem vermeintlichen Fremden den Weg bereitet. [23] – [24] Nachdem Sir John den Raum verlässt, um sich für sein amouröses Treffen mit Alice fein zu machen, wettet Ford über Falstaff und Alice, die er tatsächlich der Untreue für schuldig hält.

#### COMPACT DISC TWO

*Im Haus Fords*

[1] – [2] Mrs. Quickly berichtet Alice und Meg vom uneingeschränkten Erfolg ihrer Mission. [3] – [6] Die Damen treffen Vorbereitungen für den Empfang, den sie Falstaff bereiten wollen: Ein Wäschekorb wird hereingeholt, in dem Falstaff sich verstecken soll, sobald Meg – fälschlicherweise – Alarm schlägt und so tut,

als ob Ford unerwartet heimgekehrt sei; die Dienstboten sollen dann den Inhalt des Korbes in die Themse werfen. Alice bemerkt, dass ihre Tochter bei dem Streich nicht mitmacht; als sie erfährt, dass Nannetta ganz aufgelöst ist, weil der Vater auf einer Hochzeit mit Dr. Cajus besteht, versichert Alice dem Mädchen, dass sie das nicht zulassen werde.

[7] – [11] Das Komplott der Frauen verläuft wie geplant, bis Mrs. Quickly herbeigestürzt kommt, um Alice eine Warnung zu überbringen: Ford ist *tatsächlich* in Begleitung einer Schar von Begleitern (Dr. Cajus, Fenton, Bardolfo und Pistola) im Anzug, um Falstaff zu erwischen und die treulose Alice zu beschämen. [12] Doch nur Nannetta und Fenton werden als Liebespaar entlarvt, und als Ford Falstaff und die schmutzige Wäsche im Fluss schwimmen sieht, räumt er ein, dass er Alice zu Unrecht der Untreue verdächtigt hat.

### 3. Akt

#### *Vor dem Gasthof Zum Hosenband*

[13] Falstaff erholt sich von seinem unfreiwilligen Bad und schimpft angesichts dieser Ungerechtigkeit über die ganze Welt.

[14] Er reagiert unwirsch, als Mrs. Quickly ihm

eine weitere Einladung von Alice überbringt, aber nach einigem Zögern lässt er sich überreden, die Einladung anzunehmen.

[15] Falstaff soll sich um Mitternacht im Wald von Windsor an "Hernes Eiche" einfinden. An diesem Baum soll sich der Legende zufolge der schwarze Jäger erhängt haben, und sein gehörnter Geist spukt angeblich nachts im Wald. Um mögliche Zeugen in Angst und Schrecken zu versetzen, soll Falstaff sich als Hernes Geist verkleiden und ein Hirschgeweih auf dem Kopf tragen. Was Sir John nicht weiß, ist dass ganz Windsor bei diesem neuen Streich mitmacht und sich – ebenfalls in Verkleidung – im Wald einfinden wird.

[16] Ford freut sich schon darauf, Falstaff erneut eine Lektion zu erteilen – umso mehr, als er hofft, im Zuge der mitternächtlichen Verwirrung im Wald die Trauung von Nannetta und Dr. Cajus abzuwickeln. Doch Mrs. Quickly wird Zeugin dieser Intrige und beschließt, Fords Plan zu vereiteln (und auch *ihm* eine Lektion zu erteilen): Ein anderer soll sich als Nannetta verkleiden.

#### *Wald von Windsor bei Nacht*

[17] – [19] Die Frauen versammeln sich bei Hernes Eiche und lassen Fenton wissen, wann

er mit Nannetta verschwinden soll, um Fords Pläne zu durchkreuzen. Alice hat vor, Fenton an die Stelle von Dr. Cajus treten zu lassen.

[20] – [21] Um Mitternacht erscheint der maskierte Falstaff mit Hirschgeweih und beginnt, Alice (und auch Meg) den Hof zu machen. [22] – [26] Aber beide Frauen laufen davon, als sie scheinbar übernatürliche Geräusche hören. Ihr Freier bleibt allein zurück und wird von einer Bande von Kobolden und Elfen gequält. [27] Der Streich gelingt – aber dann erkennt Falstaff Bardolfos rote Nase wieder.

[28] Ford verspottet Falstaff wegen seiner Selbsttäuschung und zwingt ihn, seine Fehler einzugestehen. Doch Falstaff hat das letzte Wort, denn wie er zu Recht bemerkt, haben andere durch ihn etwas zu lachen. [29] Ford gibt seine Zustimmung für die Eheschließung von zwei Paaren. Bei dem einen, so nimmt er jedenfalls an, handelt es sich um Dr. Cajus und Nannetta, das andere ist ihm unbekannt. [30] Als die Paare die Masken abnehmen, muss Ford nicht nur feststellen, dass Dr. Cajus und Bardolfo miteinander vermählt wurden, sondern dass er selbst dem Bund zwischen Nannetta und Fenton seinen Segen gegeben hat. Ford gesteht, dass er genauso raffiniert hinters Licht geführt worden ist wie Falstaff. [31] Die lustigen Weiber

haben die Männer überlistet, und Falstaff eröffnet den fugalen Schlussgesang, in dem sich alle lachend versöhnen.

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**Andrew Shore** gilt als führender britischer Baritonbuffo und als herausragender Sänger/Schauspieler. Er hat mit der English National Opera, The Royal Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera und Welsh National Opera zusammengearbeitet und ist im Ausland mit der San Diego Opera, New Israeli Opera, Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, Opéra Comique und dem Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona sowie in Lyon, Nantes, Santa Fe, Montpellier, Kopenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver und Ottawa aufgetreten.

Sein Repertoire umfasst u.a. die Titelrollen in *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* und *Don Pasquale* sowie Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), King Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*Die Liebe zu den drei Orangen*), Dikoy (*Káťa Kabanová*), Dr. Kolenaty (*Die Sache Makropulos*), Siskov (*Aus einem Totenhaus*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), Baron (*La Vie*

parisienne), Baron Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), George Wilson (*The Great Gatsby*), Alberich in konzertanten Aufführungen von *Das Rheingold*, Varlaam (*Boris Godunow*) und Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen gehören die Titelrolle in *Don Pasquale*, Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Dr. Bartolo (*The Barber of Seville*), Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), Mesner (*Tosca*), Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Auswahl) und *La Bohème*, alle für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Die aus Sydney stammende **Yvonne Kenny** zählt zu den renommiertesten Sopranistinnen ihrer Generation. Nachdem sie den Kathleen Ferrier Wettbewerb gewonnen hatte, kam sie an die Royal Opera Covent Garden, wo sie unter anderem die Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Liù (*Turandot*), Aspasia (*Mitridate*) und Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) gesungen hat.

Internationalen Ruhm errang sie in den großen Händel-Rollen, vor allem Semele und Alcina (Covent Garden und La Fenice, Venedig), Romilda (*Xerxes*) für die English National Opera und die Bayrische Staatsoper, sowie Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) und Armida

(*Rinaldo*) in Sydney. Außerdem hat man sie an der San Francisco Opera, Wiener Staatsoper, La Scala in Mailand, Berliner Staatsoper, Bayerischen Staatsoper und Pariser Opéra sowie in Hamburg, Zürich, Washington und Glyndebourne erlebt, und oft kehrt sie in ihre australische Heimat zurück, wo sie zahlreiche Rollen gesungen hat. 1989 wurde sie für ihre Verdienste um die Musik mit dem Order of Australia geehrt.

Zu den zahlreichen Aufnahmen Yvonne Kennys zählen *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Elgars *The Kingdom*, *The Beggar's Opera* und *Gloriana* von Britten, Händels *Deborah*, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* von Dyson (für Chandos), eine Auswahl aus *Der Rosenkavalier* und eine CD mit großen Opernarien (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation); für Opera Rara hat sie Donizettis *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'eremitaggio di Liverpool* und *Ugo, Conte di Parigi* sowie *Il crociato in Egitto* von Meyerbeer aufgenommen.

**Barry Banks**, einer der Spitzentenöre seiner Generation, studierte am Royal Northern College of Music. Er ist u.a. in der Titelrolle von *The Rake's Progress* an der English National Opera aufgetreten, als Belfiore und auch

Libenskof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) in Bologna, Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) in Basel, Oreste (*Ermione*) in Santa Fe, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) in La Monnaie, an der Leipziger Oper, der Scottish Opera und bei den Salzburger Festspielen, Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Tamino und in der Titelrolle von *Le Comte Ory* bei der Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) und Argirio (*Tancredi*) an der Frankfurter Oper, Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) an der Metropolitan Opera, Candide an der Chicago Lyric Opera, Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) an der San Francisco Opera und Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) an der Welsh National Opera.

Barry Banks ist auch der Konzertbühne verpflichtet; so hat er bei der *Petite Messe solennelle* von Rossini mitgewirkt, in *Fidelio* mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra unter Leitung von Walter Weller, in Britten's *War Requiem*, in Bruckners *Requiem* mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra unter Leitung von Sir Charles Mackerras sowie bei einer Aufführung von Rossinis *Armida* beim Edinburgh Festival.

Aufgenommen hat er u.a. Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*) (alle für

Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation), *St. Paul* von Mendelssohn (für Chandos), *Un ballo in maschera* und *Trial by Jury*. Außerdem hat er bei Videofilmen von *Billy Budd* und *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* mitgewirkt.

**Susan Gritton**, 1994 mit dem Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize ausgezeichnet, studierte Botanik in Oxford und London, bevor sie ihre Gesangslaufbahn antrat. Sie tritt regelmäßig landesweit bei Kammerkonzerten auf, und als erfahrene Konzertinterpretin hat sie auch im Amsterdamer Concertgebouw, im Wiener Konzerthaus und an der Philharmonie in Berlin gesungen.

Zu ihren Opernrollen zählen Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) an der Glyndebourne Festival Opera und mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera; *Gouvernante* (*The Turn of the Screw*) und Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*) unter Leitung von Stuart Bedford in Snape Maltings; Marenka (*Die verkaufte Braut*), Euridice (*Orfeo*), Thalie und Clarine (*Platée*) und Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*) an der Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*) und Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) an der Bayerischen Staatsoper, München; Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) an der Deutschen

Staatsoper Berlin und Marzelline (*Fidelio*) in Rom. Als Solistin der English National Opera hat sie Atalanta (*Xerxes*), Caroline (*The Fairy Queen*), Schwester Constance (*The Carmelites*), Xenia (*Boris Godunov*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Drusilla (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), die Titelrolle in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) und Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*) gesungen.

Ihre Aufnahmen für Chandos umfassen *Ottone in Villa* von Vivaldi, *Sir John in Love*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *St. Paul* von Mendelssohn, Messen von Haydn sowie *Aida* (letztere in Verbindung mit der Peter Moores Foundation). Susan Gritton ist Mitglied der English National Opera.

**Ashley Holland** studierte an der Universität Warwick und am Royal Northern College of Music, wo er den Webster Booth/Esso Wettbewerb gewann und mit der Curtis Goldmedaille ausgezeichnet wurde. Er war Stipendiat der Peter Moores Stiftung und gewann 1998 den Ranieri i Cestelli Opernwettbewerb in Hamburg.

Zur Zeit singt er solistische Baritonrollen an der English National Opera, wo man ihn u.a. als Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Sharpless

(*Madam Butterfly*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Cecil in *Mary Stuart* von Donizetti, Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*), Lescaut in Massenets *Manon*, Ottakar (*Der Freischütz*), Marcello (*La Bohème*) und Escamillo (*Carmen*) erlebt hat. Er hat außerdem in einer Koproduktion der English National Opera und der Mark Morris Dance Group die Baritonrolle in Händels *L'Allegro* gesungen. Zu seinen weiteren Rollen zählen Junius (*The Rape of Lucretia*) für die Lausanne Opera, Ford (*Falstaff*) für die English National Opera, Sharpless für die Cincinnati Opera, Antonio in konzertanten Aufführungen von *Linda di Chamounix* mit Mark Elder und dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Don Giovanni für die Calgary Opera, Rollen in *Candide* mit dem London Symphony Orchestra/Kent Nagano und in *Der Protagonist* und *Royal Palace* von Kurt Weill mit dem BBC Symphony Orchestra unter Leitung von Sir Andrew Davis, sein Debüt an der Bastille Opéra als Bosun (*Billy Budd*) und sein Debüt bei der Semperoper Dresden als Ford.

Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen gehört u.a. Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*) für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation aufgenommen.

**Alice Coote** absolvierte ihr Studium an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama, am Royal Northern College of Music (wo sie von der Peter Moores Foundation gefördert wurde) und am National Opera Studio.

Auf der Opernbühne hat sie Cherubino, Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*), Dorabella und Tamiri (*Il Re Pastore*) für die Opera North gesungen; Fortuna und Valetto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) für die Welsh National Opera; Cherubino für die Scottish Opera; Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*) und die Titelrolle in *The Coronation of Poppea* für die English National Opera; Page (*Salome*) und Ruggiero (*Alcina*) für die Stuttgarter Oper und beim Edinburgh Festival; Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*) sowie Aufführungen an der Opéra de Paris Bastille, in Nancy, Nantes und bei den Salzburger Festspielen. Ihr US-Debüt an der Lyric Opera of Chicago in der Rolle des Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) war ein großer Erfolg.

Auf der Konzertbühne beherrscht sie ein Repertoire, das von den Oratorien Bachs und Händels bis zu Werken von Mahler, Debussy und Britten reicht, und sie ist unter Leitung von Dirigenten wie Nagano, Pesek, Menuhin, Salonen, Dohnányi und Christie in London, Paris, Wien, Amsterdam, Brüssel, Madrid und Salzburg aufgetreten. Auch als Kammer-

sängerin ist sie zunehmend gefragt und hat bei Kammerkonzerten in der Wigmore Hall und im BBC Rundfunk mitgewirkt. Unter anderem hat sie *The Choice of Hercules* aufgenommen.

**Clive Bayley** war Stipendiat der Peter Moores Foundation und singt heute regelmäßig mit den großen Opernensembles. Sein Repertoire reicht von Monteverdi bis Verdi, Puccini, Berg, Britten und Birtwistle. Er debütierte an der Royal Opera Covent Garden in der Premiere von Harrison Birtwistles *Gawain* und trat anschließend als Colline in *La Bohème* auf. Beachtliche Erfolge verzeichnete er mit der Opera North in Verdis *Jerusalem*, Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Referee in *Playing Away* von Benedict Mason, Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Arkel (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) und Wurm (*Luisa Miller*), in der Titelrolle von *Le nozze di Figaro*, als Doktor (*Wozzeck*), Biterolf (*Tannhäuser*) und Antinoo (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*); mit der Opera Factory in *Don Giovanni*; mit der English National Opera in *Billy Budd* und *Wozzeck*, als Cadmus (*Semele*), die vier dämonischen Gegenspieler in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) und Pistolo in *Falstaff*. Im Ausland ist Clive Bayley an der Nederlandse Opera und der Seattle Opera sowie in Lissabon und Lausanne

aufgetreten. Zu seinen weiteren Verpflichtungen zählten Fischer in Kurt Weills *Royal Palace* bei den Promenade Concerts der BBC sowie Auftritte an der Glyndebourne Festival Opera und mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

Für Chandos hat er *Troilus and Cressida* und *Billy Budd* und für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Madam Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Boris Godunov* (Auswahl) *Don Pasquale* und *Il trovatore* aufgenommen.

**Stuart Kale** gilt international als einer der besten singenden Schauspieler in der Welt der Oper, mit einem breit gefächerten Repertoire von Monteverdi bis Messiaen. Seine Karriere begann an der Welsh National Opera, bevor er zur English National Opera kam, wo er acht Jahre lang in Rollen wie Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (*Julietta* von Martinů), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) und Nanki-Poo in Jonathan Millers Inszenierung von *The Mikado* auftrat.

Zu seinen Bühnenverpflichtungen gehörten u.a. der Oberpriester (*Idomeneo*) in Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) für die Canadian Opera Company und in San Francisco, Genf, Zürich, Montpellier, Bordeaux und Bologna, Schuiski (*Boris Godunow*) in Straßburg, Bordeaux und

Montpellier, Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) für die Russlandtournee der English National Opera 1990, Trouffaldino (*Die Liebe zu den drei Orangen*) für die ENO, Sinowi (*Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*) in Toulouse und Marseilles, Idomeneo in Drottningholm, die drei Tenorrollen in *Lulu* in Châtelet, Aegisth in Karlsruhe, *L'occasione fa il ladro* bei den Schwetzingen Festspielen und in Köln, Bob Boles in Covent Garden, an der Münchner Staatsoper, in (Genova) und Straßburg, Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) in Köln, Gregor (*Die Sache Makropoulos*) und Herodes, beide in Neuinszenierungen in Straßburg.

Seine Diskografie umfasst u.a. Goro (*Madam Butterfly*), Schuiski (*Boris Godunov* – Auswahl) und Rodrigo (*Otello*), alle für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

**Rebecca de Pont Davies** stammt aus London und absolvierte ihre Ausbildung an der Guildhall School of Music und Drama, wo sie zahlreiche Auszeichnungen sowie einen Preis des Countess of Munster Musical Trust erhielt. Ihr Operndebüt gab sie mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera in *Death in Venice* von Britten. Seitdem hat sie mit bedeutenden Ensembles in Großbritannien zusammengearbeitet und in

vielen europäischen Ländern gastiert. Seit ihrem Debüt an der English National Opera 1998 als Emilia (*Otello*) hat sie dort Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Geneviève (*Pelleas and Melisande*), Ottavia (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Flosshilde (*The Rhinegold*), Mrs. Quickly (*Falstaff*), Fürstin Maria Bolkonski (*War and Peace*), Mother Goose (*The Rake's Progress*) und Suzanne in der Weltpremiere von *A Better Place* von Martin Butler gesungen. Zur Zeit wirkt sie als Solistin an der English National Opera.

Zu ihren weiteren Rollen zählen Moksada (*Snatched by the Gods* von Param Vir) für die Scottish Opera, Gaea (*Daphne*), Die alleswissende Muschel (*Die ägyptische Helene*) und Leda (*Die Liebe der Danae*) für die Garsington Opera sowie die Titelrolle in Händels *Flavio* (Opera Theatre Company, Dublin). Rebecca de Pont Davies tritt auch gern auf der Konzertbühne auf und hat mit führenden britischen Orchestern u.a. die Hauptwerke von Bach und Händel, Rossinis *Petite Messe solennelle*, *Elijah* von Mendelssohn, das *Requiem* von Verdi, Mahlers 2. Sinfonie, *Sea Pictures* und *The Dream of Gerontius* von Elgar sowie *A Child of our Time* von Tippett gesungen.

**Richard Roberts** studierte an der Universität Kansas, der Chatauqua School of Music in New York und bei Anthony Laciura von der Metropolitan Opera sowie bei Audrey Langford, Felicity Palmer und Robert Dean.

Als Solist der English National Opera hat Richard Roberts zahlreiche Rollen gesungen, darunter Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Edmondo (*Manon Lescaut*), Abbé (*War and Peace*), Lehrer (*Lady Macbeth of Mzensk*), Don Riccardo (*Ernani*), Bardolfo (*Falstaff*) und Rodrigo (*Otello*). Weitere Verpflichtungen waren *Candide* für die Eugene Opera, Oregon, Jiri (*The Jacobin*) für die Scottish Opera, Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) in Raymond Gubbays Inszenierung in der Royal Albert Hall und Scaramuccio (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) mit der City of London Sinfonia unter Leitung von Richard Hickox.

Richard Roberts ist auch ein erfolgreicher Konzertkünstler, so mit der Neunten von Beethoven im Brighton Dome, *Elijah* in der Kathedrale zu Sheffield, Mozarts *Requiem* in der Royal Festival Hall, *Carmina Burana* in der Barbican Hall, *Stabat Mater* von Rossini in St. John's, Smith Square sowie festlichen Opernabenden in den Landeskonzertsälen von Cardiff, Dublin und Glasgow.



**Amanda Holden** studierte Musik in Oxford, bevor sie ein Stipendium von der Guildhall School in London bekam, wo sie später dann Klavier unterrichtete. Seit 1987 hat sie etwa fünfzig Übersetzungen für Bühnen- und Konzertwerke geliefert, viele davon als Auftragsarbeiten für English National Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera North und Raymond Gubbay. Sie ist die Begründerin und Chefredakteurin des Viking/Penguin-Opernführers; eine völlig überarbeitete Neuausgabe erschien 2001 unter dem Titel *The New Penguin Opera Guide*. Amanda Holden verfasste auch das Libretto für Mark-Anthony Turnages Oper *The Silver Tassie*, für das sie (ebenso wie der Komponist) mit dem *Olivier Award* für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper 2001 ausgezeichnet wurde.

Das von der Kritik ebenso wie vom Publikum gefeierte **Orchester der English National Opera** unter Konzertmeister Barry Griffiths hat in den letzten Jahren mehrere angesehene Preise gewonnen, beispielsweise den Musikpreis der *Royal Philharmonic Society* und einen *Olivier Award* für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper. Das Orchester ist von zentraler Bedeutung für das künstlerische Leben der Truppe und war nicht

nur bei Opernvorstellungen im Londoner Coliseum, sondern auch auf dem Konzertpodium zu sehen. Zusätzlich sind viele der Musiker am Baylis-Programm der für Schul- und Gemeindearbeit zuständigen Abteilung des Orchesters beteiligt und arbeiten mit dem English National Opera Studio an der Entwicklung neuer Opern, speziell an Mark-Anthony Turnages *The Silver Tassie*, das im Februar 2000 uraufgeführt wurde. Aufnahmen des Orchesters für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Otello*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (in der Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* und *Werther*.

Der **Chor der English National Opera** ist eine Stütze der gesamten Truppe. In zahllosen Produktionen der English National Opera hat er das Publikum mit der Kraft seines Gesangs und der Intensität seiner Darstellung entzückt. Der Chor besteht aus achtundsechzig Sängern, und die weit gefächerten Talente und Erfahrungen, die sie in ihre Darbietungen einbringen, kennzeichnen jede Inszenierung, an der sie mitwirken. Besondere Triumphe für den Chor waren Prokofjews *Krieg und Frieden*, Schostakowitschs *Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*,

Brittens *Billy Budd* und *Peter Grimes*, Mussorgskis *Boris Godunow*, Bizets *Carmen* und Verdis *Otello*. Seine Aufnahme der letztgenannten Oper in der von Mark Elder geleiteten Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller wird unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation demnächst bei Chandos erscheinen, ebenso seine Aufzeichnung des gefeierten *Ring*-Zyklus unter der Leitung von Sir Reginald Goodall. Andere Aufnahmen des Chors für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (Regie: Jonathan Miller) und *La traviata*.

**Paul Daniel** gilt in weiten Kreisen als einer der interessantesten und begabtesten Dirigenten seiner Generation; er ist sowohl bei Opernensembles als auch bei Orchestern in aller Welt gefragt.

Als Gastdirigent tritt er international mit führenden Orchestern auf, darunter dem Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Philharmonischen Orchester des niederländischen Rundfunks,

Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de Lyon, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Göteborger Sinfonieorchester, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, der Deutschen Kammerphilharmonie, dem MDR-Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony und Cleveland Orchestra.

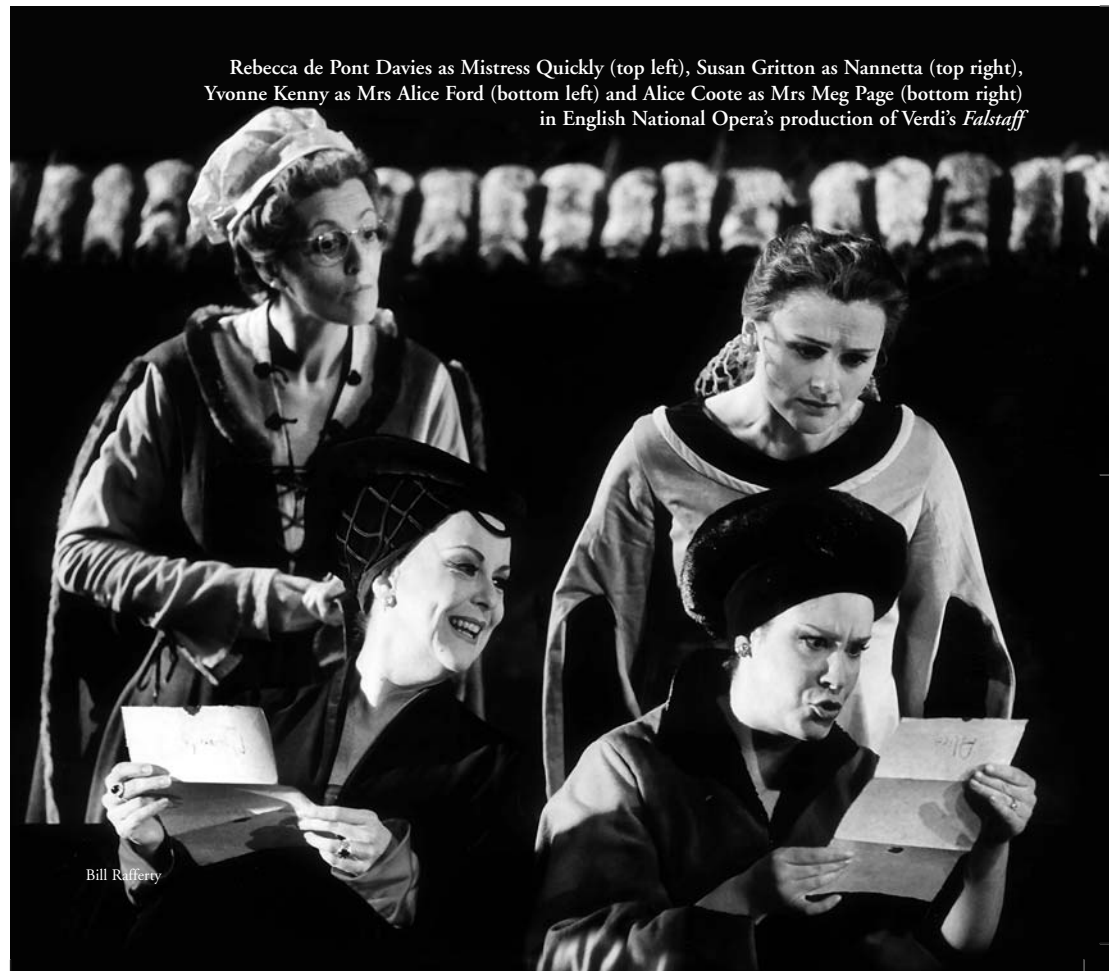
An der English National Opera, die ihn 1997 zum musikalischen Leiter ernannte, hat er *The Flying Dutchman*, *Falstaff*, *From the House of the Dead*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Otello*, *Boris Godunov*, *La traviata*, *The Carmelites*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, die Weltpremiere von *The Silver Tassie* von Mark Anthony Turnage, *Nixon in China*, *Peter Grimes* (beim Aldeburgh Festival), *Il trovatore*, *War and Peace* sowie konzertante Aufführungen von Ponchiellis *La gioconda* und Verdis *Requiem* dirigiert. Vor seiner Ernennung hatte er bereits in größerem Umfang mit dem Ensemble zusammengearbeitet und unter anderem bei Inszenierungen wie der Weltpremiere von Harrison Birtwistles *Mask of Orpheus*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Echnaton* von Philip Glass, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto* sowie – im Rahmen der Feierlichkeiten zum 90. Geburtstag von Tippett – an Aufführungen von *King Priam* mitgewirkt.

Von 1990 bis 1997 wirkte Paul Daniel als musikalischer Leiter der Opera North, wo die Kritik seine interessanten und frischen Aufführungen würdigte. Dazu gehörten: *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* von Dukas, *King Priam* von Tippett, *Don Giovanni*, Schrekers *Der ferne Klang*, *Boris Godunow*, *Don Carlos*, *Wozzeck*, *Gloriana*, *Il trovatore*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, die Weltpremierens von Michael Berkeley's *Baa Baa Black Sheep* und Benedict Masons *Playing Away* (das bei der Münchner Biennale als beste Inszenierung ausgezeichnet wurde und einen Preis für künstlerische Gestaltung gewann), ferner *Jenifa*, *Luisa*

*Miller*, *Medea*, *Falstaff* und *Tannhäuser*. Von 1987 zu 1990 war er musikalischer Leiter der Opera Factory.

Aufgenommen hat er u.a. die Sinfonie Nr. 3 von Elgar/Payne mit dem Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Werke von Thomas Armstrong (für Chandos) sowie eine Auswahl aus *Boris Godunov* (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation). Im Februar 1998 wurde Paul Daniel für seine herausragenden Leistungen auf dem Gebiet der Oper mit einem *Olivier* Preis ausgezeichnet, und zu Neujahr 2000 wurde er mit dem Verdienstorden CBE geehrt.

Rebecca de Pont Davies as Mistress Quickly (top left), Susan Gritton as Nannetta (top right), Yvonne Kenny as Mrs Alice Ford (bottom left) and Alice Coote as Mrs Meg Page (bottom right) in English National Opera's production of Verdi's *Falstaff*



## Verdi: Falstaff

Couronnement du glorieux été indien de Verdi, *Falstaff* est la vraie distillation de son extraordinaire réussite tout le long d'une carrière de quelque soixante ans consacrée à l'opéra. Parmi les grands compositeurs, seul peut-être Haydn a connu un développement aussi stupéfiant et fructueux sur le plan du style et du contenu pendant une longue période de composition. Dans ce triomphe final de sa vieillesse, Verdi est à peine reconnaissable comme étant le compositeur de ce qu'il qualifia lui-même ses "années de galère", quand son style se conformait à la structure et au style du temps. Pourtant, même dans les œuvres de cette époque, on peut trouver des signes du changement de direction à venir. Au moment où il parvint à son chef-d'œuvre final, il avait rejeté presque toutes les contraintes formelles et les méthodes de sa jeunesse, écrivant en un seul mouvement continu dans lequel récitatif et aria se succèdent l'un à l'autre avec naturel et discrétion.

Il fut en cela considérablement aidé par son librettiste Arrigo Boito, lui-même un compositeur d'une certaine stature. Adaptant de manière magistrale des passages de *Henri IV*

et de *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*Joyeuses Commères de Windsor*) de Shakespeare, Boito présenta à Verdi, après consultation avec le vénérable compositeur, le texte idéal pour ranimer le feu du vieux maître. Boito avait également reçu la tâche très différente de convertir *Othello* en *Otello*, réalisant un drame tendu à partir du texte quelque peu informe de Shakespeare. Il fit exactement la même chose avec *Falstaff*, et offrit en même temps un livret qui s'impose comme une œuvre littéraire de qualité et autonome.

Verdi en tira une comédie qui se déroule sans effort à travers trois actes concis, sans une note ou un mot de trop, chaque élément étant organisé pour dire et justifier sa place dans le firmament de l'œuvre. Verdi n'avait écrit qu'une seule comédie, *Un giorno di regno* (*Un jour de règne*), une pièce datant du tout début de sa carrière et fortement influencée par le modèle de Donizetti. Entre cette comédie et *Falstaff*, le compositeur avait parfois inséré des épisodes comiques dans certaines de ses œuvres sérieuses, le plus notablement peut-être dans *La forza del destino* (*La Force du destin*), et allégé l'atmosphère

dans d'autres avec des personnages joyeux tels que le page Oscar dans *Un ballo in maschera* (*Un bal masqué*). Il y a également beaucoup d'éléments d'une nature plus légère dans ses musiques de ballet, en particulier celles composées pour Paris. Cependant, rien de tout cela ne nous prépare véritablement aux textures transparentes, aux métaphores spirituelles, à la représentation habile et amusante des personnages rencontrés dans *Falstaff*, qui se présente comme une œuvre totalement *sui generis*.

Dès le début, Verdi fit clairement comprendre qu'il était en train de composer quelque chose de différent de tout ce qu'il avait tenté auparavant, la comédie qu'il avait voulu écrire toute sa vie, mais qu'il n'avait pu réaliser faute d'un livret approprié. En un sens, comme l'écrivit Julian Budden, dont les ouvrages consacrés au domaine de l'opéra sont si révélateurs, "*Falstaff* allait être une plaisanterie privée, que le public partagerait s'il le souhaitait." C'est certainement ce qu'il a fait.

Dès les premières mesures, nous entendons un nouveau Verdi: pas d'ouverture ni d'introduction d'aucune sorte. Nous sommes tout de suite plongés dans le vif du sujet. En effet, c'est le premier trait de génie de l'œuvre de nous donner l'impression d'être immédiatement

transportés au milieu d'une scène déjà commencée dans laquelle Falstaff et ses acolytes font la noce à l'auberge de la Jarrettière (Garter Inn). La conversation qui suit avec le grincheux et pédant Dr Caius, et ses furieuses plaisanteries avec détendu Sir John et les minables Bardolph et Pistol, est un brillant exemple de répartie mise en musique, un parfait *hors d'œuvre* à la fête musicale qui va se dérouler. Après le départ de Caius, Falstaff se laisse aller à de nouvelles plaisanteries. Elles concernent principalement l'argent ou son manque, et culminent dans l'hymne "Hail, mighty Falstaff". Puis le don lyrique naturel de Verdi s'impose lorsque Falstaff décrit son plan de séduction à ses comparses. Il disserte avec lyrisme sur les charmes respectifs d'Alice Ford et de Meg Page. Mais quand il est question d'agir, les deux coquins refusent de lui servir d'entremetteurs, ce qui provoque une explosion de colère chez le gras Chevalier qui s'insurge contre l'idée d'honneur en un célèbre monologue. Ici, Verdi combine récitatif et aria en un tout continu obéissant au sens des paroles, un genre de distillation, pour la première fois dans cette œuvre, de tout ce qu'il a appris concernant l'art de mettre un texte en musique. Il est presque inutile de dire que c'est également un remarquable portrait musical de Falstaff.

Dans la deuxième scène, nous avons de nouveau l'impression de tomber du ciel dans un milieu déjà établi. Alice, Meg, Mrs Quickly et Nannetta, la fille des Ford, sont d'humeur joyeuse car les deux épouses découvrent qu'elles ont reçu la même missive amoureuse de Falstaff. Leurs sentiments sont exprimés de la manière la plus alerte en une série d'échanges rapides teintés d'humour. Verdi semble se gausser du style passionné qu'il a utilisé auparavant en confiant à Alice une phrase élanée, "Your radiant image will shed its light on me", quand elle se moque avec Meg de l'assurance pomponnée du vieux garçon. Les deux femmes s'écroulent en une série d'éclats de rire miraculeusement entremêlés à la texture musicale. En un ensemble serré, elles commencent à réfléchir à la punition que mérite Falstaff.

L'ensemble s'élargit quand les hommes entrent en scène pour décider de leur action contre Falstaff. A la texture complexe de ces neuf voix vient s'entrelacer de manière parfaite la musique d'amour entre Nannetta et Fenton. Leurs doux mots romantiques semblent imprégnés d'une touche de mélancolie, comme si le vieux compositeur était en train de se souvenir d'une passion disparue. Le *concertato* qui réunit tous les personnages est

une trame complexe de paroles et de musique sans équivalent dans toute la production de Verdi. Le brouhaha des voix finit par s'atténuer, et concluant un acte merveilleux, Alice répète la phrase lyrique dans laquelle elle se moque de Falstaff.

La première scène de l'Acte II est presque entièrement constituée de deux dialogues en duo: Falstaff et Quickly, Falstaff et Ford. La drôlerie de la première rencontre constitue un autre nouveau départ pour le compositeur. Décrits de manière pittoresque par l'orchestre, Bardolph et Pistol font mine d'être penauds en se frappant la poitrine. Accompagnée d'un genre de menuet solennel, l'entrée de Quickly culmine avec une révérence onomatopéique aux mots "Sir, your servant". Elle passe de la pommade à Falstaff en une série de commentaires faussement flatteurs, le plus célèbre laissant entendre qu'il est un séducteur notoire. Falstaff répond: "I know. Continue", une touche de prétention qu'il regrettera, si espièglement mise en musique par Verdi. La phrase de Quickly notant que Ford est absent de la maison "From eleven till twelve" (De deux heures à trois) est également appropriée et concise, une nouvelle preuve de la brièveté comique de Verdi. Quand Quickly parle du penchant de Meg pour Falstaff, il s'exclame:

"Alice is mine!", et en un brève mais parlant arioso, si typique du style nouveau et exigeant de Verdi, Falstaff se pomponne en faisant les cent pas dans la pièce, tout grisé par de son pouvoir continu sur les femmes.

Bardolph entre alors et annonce à Falstaff qu'un "Signor Fontana" (une traduction directe de Master Brook dans la pièce de Shakespeare), Ford déguisé, vient d'arriver et qu'il désire une audience avec Falstaff. Le présent d'une outre de vin de Chypre le rend encore davantage bienvenu. Il a besoin de l'aide de Falstaff, et comme encouragement, il place sur la table une bourse remplie de ducats. Le colloque qui suit est une distillation des nombreux duos dans l'opéra de Verdi en une conversation musicale subtile s'enchaînant avec naturel. Prenant un ton apparemment plein de déférence, Ford explique comment une certaine dame à Windsor demeure sourde à ses avances. Il est prêt à payer Falstaff argent comptant (le cliquetis des pièces en entendu à l'orchestre) si ce dernier accepte de faire la cour à la dame pour lui. L'orchestre s'arrête soudainement de jouer quand Ford est foudroyé d'apprendre que Falstaff a déjà un rendez-vous avec Alice Ford. Ford parvient à peine à contenir sa colère quand Falstaff raconte en termes musicaux pleins de

suffisance qu'il va tromper Ford au profit de "Master Brook". L'ironie et la duperie implicites dans l'attitude de Falstaff et la fureur de Ford sont sous-entendues tout au long de leur conversation. Falstaff est prêt pour sa chute imminente.

Le Verdi d'*Otello* réapparaît aussitôt après le départ de Falstaff pour son rendez-vous galant de l'après-midi: dans un éclat digne de Iago, Ford médite sur sa position misérable. Cela peut-il véritablement lui arriver: en une phrase sombre d'une longue respiration commençant dans le registre le plus grave du baryton, il dévoile l'intensité de ses sentiments. Mais juste au moment où il va exploser, Falstaff revient vêtu de son trente et un, et la partition retrouve sa légèreté habituelle. Cette touche inspirée du compositeur est développée par la fine vanité des deux personnages discutant de savoir qui devrait sortir le premier. Ainsi, cette scène superbement écrite se termine sur une note de pure comédie.

La scène suivante, au cours de laquelle Falstaff reçoit sa première punition, constitue le centre de l'opéra. Après la description de Quickly aux autres joyeuses commères de sa rencontre avec Falstaff, imitant avec brio leur conversation à l'auberge de la Jarretière, elles combinent leurs idées sur la manière de faire

face à l'arrivée imminente de Falstaff en un échange stimulant et vif. Soudain, il est aperçu marchant en direction de la maison des Ford: elles sortent toutes de scène à l'exception d'Alice qui se met à jouer du luth tandis que Falstaff arrive. Son apparente galanterie et son ardeur croissante, habilement dépeintes par l'orchestre tandis qu'il commence sa cour, et les réponses pleines de réserve d'Alice, sont du récitatif accompagné transformé en grand art. Quand Alice évoque le gros ventre de Falstaff, il se lance – peut-être de manière inappropriée – dans sa charmante arietta “When I was page”, rappelant sa minceur du temps où il était le page du duc de Norfolk. Son caractère léger est un autre exemple du raffinement suprême de l'art de Verdi dans son chant du cigne.

Quand Quickly, faussement agitée, entre précipitamment pour annoncer l'arrivée de Meg, Falstaff se cache. Meg les prévient que les hommes en colère s'approchent et qu'ils veulent tuer Falstaff. L'éminent musicologue et analyste anglais Donald Tovey a écrit que l'opéra est “chinois par son exécution”. Le reste de cette scène explique ce qu'il veut dire: la trame musicale est étroitement argumentée malgré l'effet de légèreté suprême de sa texture. Verdi a une réponse au mouvement rapide des incidents et des personnages,

culminant avec la chute de Falstaff dans la Tamise du panier à linge où il s'était caché pour échapper à la colère de Ford et de ses suivants – et pour le plus grand plaisir des joyeuses commères. Les quelques moments de repos, également parfaitement fondus dans la structure de la scène, sont les échanges entre les amants cachés derrière un paravent. Le traditionnel *concertato* (grand ensemble) des œuvres précédentes de Verdi est ici développé de manière presque méconnaissable afin de servir les buts de sa comédie.

L'Acte III s'ouvre par un prélude bref et brillant. Tout désabusé après sa baignade forcée, Falstaff rumine sur son sort terrible. Des touches onomatopéiques accompagnent sa description de ce qui lui est arrivé dans l'eau. Sa mauvaise humeur ne se dissipe que quand il avale une coupe de vin. Il explique comment une petite “grillo” (grillon) entre par les veines d'un homme quand il est “brillo” (pompette), faisant résonner son corps à un “trillo” (trille), et nous entendons dans l'orchestre – une idée merveilleuse – un grand trille dépeignant le vin parcourant le corps de Falstaff et lui redonnant vie. Mais juste au moment où il semble complètement revenu à lui, Quickly apparaît, et à la consternation de notre héros, elle renouvelle sa “Sir, your servant”.

Cependant, elle parvient à le duper en lui affirmant que le désastre qui lui est arrivé n'est pas la faute d'Alice, et il se laisse séduire par la nouvelle idée de rencontrer Alice sous le Chêne de Herne à minuit.

Dans la suite de cette scène, le mystère nocturne semble imprégner la partition, tandis que la fantaisie et l'enchantement illuminent la texture. Les plans pour la seconde chute de Falstaff et pour la mascarade dans la forêt se développent sur un arrière-fond translucide. Le complot est subtilement décrit, incluant la claire indication que Ford sera empêché de contraindre Nannetta à épouser le vieux Caius au lieu de l'écu de son cœur, Fenton. Tandis que la scène se termine, Nannetta, Alice et Quickly quittent de nouveau la scène, un moment magique dans une scène magique.

La scène finale dans le parc de Windsor avec en son centre le Chêne de Herne est débordante de bruits féériques. Elle commence par le sonnet de Fenton, une sorte de souvenir tranquille de toutes les chansons d'amour pour ténor figurant dans les opéras précédents de Verdi. Ici, elle est couronnée par Nannetta qui complète le dernier vers. Mais Verdi écarte les sentiments quand Alice interrompt leur échange galant pour distribuer à chacun son

déguisement. L'entrée de Falstaff, en proie à une certaine appréhension, est vivement dépeinte tandis qu'il compte les douze coups de minuit. Ensuite, Nannetta chante un air d'une poésie féérique et délicate, l'orchestration diaphane, la mélodie raffinée. A partir de là, Verdi lâche la bride à tout un ensemble d'idées originales, incluant une fausse litanie quand Falstaff est raillé par tous ceux qui l'entourent. Il va même jusqu'à parodier son propre *Requiem*.

Quand le masque de Bardolph glisse, l'intrigue commence à se dénouer. Falstaff comprend alors qu'il vient d'être à nouveau dupé. Alice et Ford expliquent comment ils se sont méchamment moqués de lui. Falstaff n'est pas trop décontenancé, et souligne avec une charmante vanité qu'il a été la cause du rire chez les autres. C'est maintenant au tour de Ford d'être dupé: Caius découvre qu'il vient d'être marié à Bardolph déguisé, tandis que l'autre couple, Nannetta et Fenton, également déguisés, ont reçu la bénédiction involontaire de Ford. Alice persuade son époux d'accepter l'inévitable et son nouveau beau-fils. Tout le monde se prépare à faire la fête avec Falstaff, mais pas avant que Verdi nous offre un étincelant finale en forme de fugue complexe conduite par Falstaff, une fin d'une

inspiration appropriée pour cette œuvre unique et pour la carrière de compositeur lyrique de Verdi.

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Traduction: Francis Marchal

### Argument

*L'action se passe à Windsor*

### COMPACT DISC ONE

#### Acte I

*Une salle de l'Auberge de la Jarretière*

[1] Sir John Falstaff finit juste de cacheter deux lettres quand le Dr Caius arrive et se met à lui lancer des accusations. Il se plaint au corpulent chevalier de la conduite de Bardolph et Pistol, les parasites de Falstaff, qui l'ont enivré et lui ont vidé les poches. Ils se moquent de lui jusqu'à ce qu'il sorte furieux de l'auberge. [2] Falstaff lit attentivement son addition hebdomadaire de l'auberge, et constatant qu'il est sérieusement à cours d'argent, il entre en colère et blâme ses deux laquais dépensiers. [3] Il révèle alors le plan qu'il a imaginé pour se sortir de ses difficultés financières: il a l'intention de séduire deux dames, Alice Ford et Meg Page,

les épouses de deux riches marchands de la ville. [4] Il tend ses lettres d'amour récemment achevées à ses compagnons pour qu'ils les portent immédiatement, [5] mais ces derniers refusent de prendre part à une entreprise aussi déshonorante. Outragé, Falstaff leur fait la leçon à propos de leur soi-disant "honneur", puis les chasse.

*Le jardin de la maison de Ford*

[6] – [9] Alice et Meg découvrent qu'elles sont les destinataires de lettres d'amour identiques, et décident de donner une leçon à leur prétendant. Leur voisine, Mrs Quickly, accepte immédiatement de leur servir d'intermédiaire pour convaincre Falstaff de venir à un rendez-vous. Pendant ce temps, Pistol et Bardolph, maintenant congédiés, vont raconter à Ford le plan de Falstaff, dans l'espoir d'obtenir une récompense en échange. Ford décide de mettre à l'épreuve la fidélité de sa femme. Déguisé, il vient rendre visite à Falstaff et fait semblant de lui demander son aide. [10] – [14] Nannetta, la fille de Ford, rencontre furtivement son amant Fenton, bien que Ford ait décrété qu'ils ne peuvent pas se marier, car il a l'intention de l'unir au docteur Caius.

#### Acte II

*Une salle de l'Auberge de la Jarretière*

[15] Prenant un air contrit, Bardolph et Pistol s'excusent de leur conduite auprès de Falstaff. [16] Mrs Quickly entre et apporte la réponse d'Alice et de Meg. Falstaff est invité à rendre visite à Alice entre onze heures et midi; [17] – [18] Meg ne peut lui accorder un rendez-vous. [19] – [22] Falstaff est encore plus enthousiaste quand un personnage totalement étranger – Maître Brook (Ford déguisé) – lui propose de l'argent s'il accepte de lui rendre Alice favorable en la séduisant. [23] – [24] Falstaff quitte la pièce, tout empressé d'aller se faire beau pour sa mission amoureuse auprès d'Alice. Ford est furieux contre Falstaff et Alice, car ils les croit réellement coupables d'infidélité.

### COMPACT DISC TWO

*La maison de Ford*

[1] – [2] Mrs Quickly raconte à Alice et à Meg le succès total de sa mission. [3] – [6] Elles se préparent à recevoir Falstaff: on apporte un panier à linge afin qu'au moment où Meg lancera la fausse alarme du retour imprévu de Ford à la maison, Falstaff puisse se cacher dedans; les serveurs emporteront ensuite le

panier pour le vider dans la Tamise. Alice remarque que sa fille ne partage pas la plaisanterie; apprenant que Nannetta est chagrinée de l'insistance de son père à vouloir la marier au Docteur Caius, Alice la rassure en lui déclarant qu'elle ne le laissera pas faire.

[7] – [11] Le plan des femmes fonctionne comme prévu jusqu'au moment où Mrs Quickly fait irruption et prévient que Ford arrive *réellement*, accompagné d'une bande de sympathisants (Caius, Fenton, Bardolph et Pistol), et qu'il est déterminé à trouver Falstaff et à humilier Alice pour son infidélité. [12] Cependant, les seuls amants démasqués sont Nannetta et Fenton, tandis que Ford, voyant Falstaff et le panier de linge sale dans le fleuve, reconnaît qu'il a eu tort de douter de la fidélité d'Alice.

#### Acte III

*A l'extérieur de l'Auberge de la Jarretière*

[13] Encore tout trempé, Falstaff injurie le monde pour son injustice. [14] Il n'est pas d'humeur à parler à Mrs Quickly, qui lui apporte une nouvelle invitation de la part d'Alice. D'abord réticent, il finit par lui céder. [15] Falstaff doit rencontrer Alice à minuit sous le chêne de Herne dans la forêt de Windsor.

Selon la légende populaire, Herne le Chasseur s'est pendu à cet arbre, et, son fantôme, paré de cornes, hante la forêt pendant la nuit. Afin d'effrayer quiconque pourrait le voir, Falstaff devra se déguiser lui-même comme le fantôme du chasseur en portant des cornes de cerf sur la tête. Falstaff ignore que les habitants de Windsor vont prendre part à cette nouvelle tromperie dont il va être la victime, et qu'ils seront également déguisés dans la forêt.

[16] Ford se réjouit d'avance de cette seconde possibilité de donner une leçon à Falstaff, d'autant plus que pendant la confusion qui régnera à minuit dans la forêt, il espère bien marier Nannetta au Docteur Caius. Mais Mrs Quickly surprend ses propos, et jure de contrarier le dessein de Ford (et de lui donner également une leçon) en déguisant quelqu'un d'autre avec le costume de Nannetta.

#### *La forêt de Windsor, la nuit*

[17] – [19] Les femmes se réunissent autour du chêne de Herne, et précisent à Fenton le moment où il devra disparaître avec Nannetta afin de contrecarrer les plans de Ford. Alice à l'intention de substituer Fenton à la place de Caius. [20] – [21] A minuit, Falstaff arrive

déguisé, et commence à faire la cour à Alice (ainsi qu'à Meg). [22] – [26] Mais les deux femmes se sauvent quand elles entendent des bruits apparemment surnaturels, et laissent seul leur soupirant qui est tourmenté par une bande de lutins et d'elfes. [27] La tromperie fonctionne parfaitement jusqu'au moment où Falstaff reconnaît le nez rouge de Bardolph.

[28] Ford se moque de Falstaff pour l'étendue de son propre aveuglement, et lui fait reconnaître l'erreur de sa conduite. Mais Falstaff a le dernier mot en proclamant être celui qui fait rire les autres. [29] Ford donne sa bénédiction à l'union des deux couples, convaincu que l'un est Caius et Nannetta tandis que l'autre lui est inconnu. [30] Quand les couples enlèvent leur masque, Ford découvre que non seulement Caius vient d'épouser Bardolph, mais que lui-même a béni l'union entre Nannetta et Fenton. Ford reconnaît qu'il a été aussi dupe que Falstaff.

[31] Les joyeuses commères ont triomphé des combines des hommes, et Falstaff réconcilie tout le monde en menant un dernier éclat de rire en forme de fugue.

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Traduction: Francis Marchal

**Andrew Shore** est considéré comme étant le plus remarquable baryton bouffe de Grande-Bretagne, et comme un acteur/chanteur exceptionnel. Il a travaillé à l'English National Opera, au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, à l'Opera North, au Glyndebourne Festival Opera, au Scottish Opera et au Welsh National Opera. A l'étranger, il s'est produit à l'Opéra de San Diego, au Nouvel Opéra d'Israël, à l'Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, à l'Opéra Comique, au Gran Teatre del Liceu de Barcelone, ainsi qu'à Lyon, Nantes, Santa Fe, Montpellier, Copenhague, Amsterdam, Vancouver et Ottawa.

Parmi les nombreux engagements d'Andrew Shore figurent les rôles titres dans *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* et *Don Pasquale*, ainsi que Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), le Roi Dodon (*Le Coq d'Or*), Leandro (*L'Amour des trois oranges*), Dikoy (*Káťa Kabanová*), le Docteur Kolenat (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*), Chichkov (*La Maison des morts*), Franck (*Die Fledermaus*), le Baron (*La Vie parisienne*), le Baron Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), Georges Wilson (*The Great Gatsby*), Alberich en versions de concert de *Das Rheingold*, Varlaam (*Boris Goudonov*) et Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Au disque, Andrew Shore a enregistré pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation le rôle titre dans *Don Pasquale*, Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), le Docteur Bartolo (*The Barber of Seville*), Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), le Sacristain dans *Tosca*, Faninal dans *Der Rosenkavalier* (extraits), et *La Bohème*.

Née à Sydney, **Yvonne Kenny** est l'une des plus remarquables sopranos de sa génération. Après avoir remporté la Kathleen Ferrier Competition, elle est entrée au Royal Opera de Covent Garden où elle a chanté les rôles de Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Liù (*Turandot*), Aspasia (*Mitridate*) et Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*).

Yvonne Kenny a conquis une réputation internationale dans les grands rôles de Haendel, notamment Semele et Alcina (à Covent Garden et à La Fenice de Venise), Romilda (*Xerxes*) à l'English National Opera et à l'Opéra d'Etat de Bavière, Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) et Armida (*Rinaldo*) à Sydney. Elle a également chanté à l'Opéra de San Francisco, à l'Opéra d'Etat de Vienne, à La Scala de Milan, à l'Opéra d'Etat de Berlin, au Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich, à l'Opéra de Paris, à Hambourg, Zurich, Washington et

Glyndebourne. Elle se rend fréquemment dans son pays natal, l'Australie, où elle a chanté de nombreux rôles. En 1989, elle a reçu le titre de Member of the Order of Australia for Services to Music.

Les nombreux enregistrements d'Yvonne Kenny incluent *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *The Kingdon d'Elgar*, *The Beggar's Opera* et *Gloriana* de Britten, *Deborah* de Haendel, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* de Dyson (pour Chandos), des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, et un album de la série Great Operatic Arias (pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation), et pour la série Opera Rara, *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'eremitaggio di Liverpool* et *Ugo, Conte di Parigi* de Donizetti, et *Il crociato in Egitto* de Meyerbeer.

Diplômé du Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester, **Barry Banks** s'est imposé comme l'un des plus remarquables ténors de sa génération grâce à ses prestations exceptionnelles à l'opéra et en concert. Il a chanté le rôle titre dans *The Rake's Progress* à l'English National Opera, Belfiore et Libenskof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) à Bologne, Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) à l'Opéra de Bâle, Oreste (*Ermione*) à l'Opéra de Santa Fe, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) au Théâtre

de La Monnaie de Bruxelles, à l'Opéra de Leipzig, au Scottish Opera et au Festival de Salzbourg, Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Tamino et le rôle titre dans *Le Comte Ory* avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) et Argirio (*Tancredi*) à l'Opéra de Franckfort, Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) au Metropolitan Opera de New York, Candide au Lyric Opera de Chicago, Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) à l'Opéra de San Francisco, Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) au Welsh National Opera.

Poursuivant également une importante carrière au concert, Barry Banks s'est produit dans la *Petite Messe solennelle* de Rossini, dans *Fidelio* avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra sous la direction de Walter Weller, dans le *Wär Requiem* de Britten et le *Requiem* de Bruckner avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras, et dans une exécution de *Armida* de Rossini donnée au Festival d'Edimbourg.

Pour le disque, Barry Banks a notamment enregistré le rôle de Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*) (tous pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation), *Paulus* de Mendelssohn (pour Chandos), *Un ballo in maschera*, *Trial by Jury*. Il figure également

dans les vidéos de *Billy Budd* et de *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

Lauréate du Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize 1994, **Susan Gritton** a d'abord étudié la botanique à l'Université d'Oxford et à celle de Londres avant d'entreprendre une carrière de chanteuse lyrique. Elle se produit régulièrement en Grande-Bretagne, et sa vaste expérience de concertiste l'a conduite au Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam, au Konzerthaus de Vienne, et à la Philharmonie de Berlin.

Parmi les rôles chantés par Susan Gritton figurent Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) et Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) au Festival de Glyndebourne et avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera; la Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) et Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*) sous la direction de Steuart Bedford à Snape Maltings; Marenka (*La Fiancée vendue*), Euridice (*Orfeo*), Thalie et Clarine (*Platée*), et Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*) et Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) au Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich; Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) au Deutsche Staatsoper de Berlin, et Marzelline (*Fidelio*) à l'Opéra de Rome. A l'English National Opera, où elle est "Company Principal", ses rôles incluent Atalanta (*Xerxes*), Caroline (*The Fairy Queen*), Constance (*The*

*Carmelites*), Xenia (*Boris Godunov*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Drusilla (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), le rôle titre dans *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) et Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Pour Chandos, Susan Gritton a enregistré *Ottone in Villa* de Vivaldi, *Sir John in Love* et *The Pilgrim's Progress* de Vaughan Williams, *Paulus* de Mendelssohn, les Messes de Haydn, et *Aida* (ce dernier titre pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation). Susan Gritton est membre de l'English National Opera.

**Ashley Holland** a fait ses études à l'Université de Warwick et au Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester où il a remporté la Webster Booth/Esso Competition et la Curtis Gold Medal, et où il a été boursier de la Peter Moores Foundation. Ashley Holland a remporté en 1998 le concours d'opéra Ranieri i Cestelli à Hambourg.

Ashley Holland est actuellement baryton principal à l'English National Opera où il a interprété les rôles de Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Sharpless (*Madam Butterfly*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Cecil dans *Mary Stuart* de Donizetti, Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*), Lescaut dans *Manon* de Massenet, Ottakar (*Der Freischütz*), Marcello



(*La Bohème*) et Escamillo (*Carmen*). Il a également chanté le rôle de baryton dans la co-production de l'English National Opera et du Mark Morris Dance Group de *L'Allegro* de Haendel. Parmi ses autres engagements figurent Junius (*The Rape of Lucretia*) à l'Opéra de Lausanne, Ford (*Falstaff*) à l'English National Opera, Sharpless à l'Opéra de Cincinnati, Antonio dans des versions de concert de *Linda di Chamounix* avec Mark Elder et l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Don Giovanni à l'Opéra de Calgary, des rôles dans *Candide* avec le London Symphony Orchestra sous la direction de Kent Nagano, dans *Der Protagonist* et *The Royal Palace* de Kurt Weill avec le BBC Symphony Orchestra sous la direction de Sir Andrew Davis, ses débuts à l'Opéra Bastille dans le rôle de Bosun (*Billy Budd*) et ses débuts au Semperoper de Dresde dans celui de Ford.

Les enregistrements d'Ashley Holland incluent le rôle de Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*) pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation.

**Alice Coote** a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres, au Royal Northern College of Music de

Manchester (où elle a reçu le soutien de la Peter Moores Foundation) et au National Opera Studio de Londres.

Elle a chanté les rôles de Cherubino, Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), Dorabella, Tamiri (*Il Re Pastore*) à l'Opera North; Fortuna et Valetto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) au Welsh National Opera; Cherubino au Scottish Opera; Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*) et le rôle titre dans *The Coronation of Poppea* à l'English National Opera; Page (*Salome*), Ruggiero (*Alcina*) à l'Opéra de Stuttgart et au Festival d'Edimbourg; l'une des Filles-Fleurs (*Parsifal*). Elle s'est produite à l'Opéra Bastille à Paris, à Nancy, Nantes et au Festival de Salzbourg. Ses débuts aux Etats-Unis dans le rôle de Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) au Lyric Opera de Chicago furent accueillis avec un très vif succès.

Le répertoire de concert d'Alice Coote comporte des oratorios de Bach et de Haendel, ainsi que des œuvres de Mahler, Debussy et Britten. Elle a ainsi chanté sous la direction de chefs tels que Nagano, Pesek, Menuhin, Salonen, Dohnányi et Christie, à Londres, Paris, Vienne, Amsterdam, Bruxelles, Madrid et Salzbourg. De plus en plus recherchée comme récitaliste, elle a donné des récitals au

Wigmore Hall de Londres et pour la BBC Radio 3. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent *The Choice of Hercules*.

**Clive Bayley** a été boursier de la Peter Moores Foundation. Il chante maintenant régulièrement avec les grandes compagnies lyriques un répertoire allant de Monteverdi à Verdi en passant par Puccini, Berg, Britten et Birtwistle. Il a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden dans la création mondiale de *Gawain* de Harrison Birtwistle, et par la suite y a chanté le rôle de Colline dans *La Bohème*. Il a remporté de très vifs succès à l'Opera North dans *Jerusalem* de Verdi, dans les rôles de Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), le Referee dans *Playing Away* de Benedict Mason, Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Arkel (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Wurm (Luisa Miller), le rôle titre dans *Le nozze di Figaro*, le Docteur (*Wozzeck*), Biterolf (*Tannhäuser*) et Antinous (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*). Il s'est également produit dans *Don Giovanni* à l'Opera Factory; à l'English National Opera dans *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck*, dans le rôle de Cadmus (*Semele*), les quatre incarnations du mauvais génie d'Hoffmann dans *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), et Pistol à (*Falstaff*). A l'étranger, Clive Bayley a chanté à

l'Opéra des Pays-Bas, à l'Opéra de Seattle, à Lisbonne et Lausanne. Parmi ses autres engagements, on citera le rôle du Fisherman dans *The Royal Palace* de Kurt Weill dans le cadre des BBC Promenade Concerts de Londres, et des représentations au Festival de Glyndebourne et avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

Les enregistrements de Clive Bayley pour Chandos incluent *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd*, et pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation *Madam Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Boris Godunov* (extraits), *Don Pasquale* et *Il trovatore*.

Salué dans le monde entier comme étant l'un des acteurs chanteurs les plus exceptionnels du monde de l'opéra, **Stuart Kale** maîtrise un immense répertoire allant de Monteverdi à Messiaen. Après avoir commencé sa carrière au Welsh National Opera, il devint membre de l'English National Opera où il travailla pendant huit ans, y chantant des rôles tels que Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (*Julietta* de Martinů), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) et Nanki-Poo dans la production de Jonathan Miller du *Mikado*.

Parmi ses engagements, on notera en particulier le rôle du Grand Prêtre (*Idomeneo*)

au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) à la Canadian Opera Company, à San Francisco, Genève, Zurich, Montpellier, Bordeaux et Bologne, Chouiski (*Boris Godounov*) à Strasbourg, Bordeaux et Montpellier, Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) avec l'English National Opera lors de la tournée de la compagnie en Russie en 1990, Truffaldino (*L'Amour des trois oranges*) à l'English National Opera, Zinoviev (*La Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*) à Toulouse et à Marseille, Idomeneo à Drottningholm, les trois rôles de ténor dans *Lulu* au Châtelet, Aegisth à Karlsruhe, *L'occasione fa il ladro* au Festival de Schwetzingen et à Cologne, Bob Boles à Covent Garden, à l'Opéra d'Etat de Munich, à Genova et Strasbourg, le Capitaine Vere (*Billy Budd*) à Cologne, Gregor (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*) et Herod, ces deux rôles dans de nouvelles productions données à Strasbourg.

La discographie de Stuart Kale inclut le rôle de Goro (*Madam Butterfly*), Chouiskl (extraits de *Boris Godounov*) et Roderigo (*Otello*), tous pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation.

Née à Londres, **Rebecca de Pont Davies** a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres où elle a remporté de nombreuses distinctions et un prix du

Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Elle a fait ses débuts sur scène dans *Death in Venice* de Britten avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera, et depuis s'est produite avec les grandes compagnies lyriques de Grande-Bretagne, et a effectué des tournées dans de nombreux pays d'Europe. Depuis ses débuts à l'English National Opera dans le rôle d'Emilia (*Otello*) en 1998, elle y a chanté de nombreux rôles, notamment Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Geneviève (*Pelléas and Mélisande*), Ottavia (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Flosshilde (*The Rhinegold*), Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*), la Princesse Marya (*War and Peace*), Mother Goose (*The Rake's Progress*), et Suzanne dans la création mondiale de *A Better Place* de Martin Butler. Elle est actuellement "Company Principal" à l'English National Opera.

Parmi les autres rôles de Rebecca de Pont Davies figurent Moksada (*Snatched by the Gods* de Param Vir) au Scottish Opera, Gaea (*Daphne*), Die alleswissende Muschel (*Die ägyptische Helene*) et Leda (*Die Liebe der Danae*) au Garsington Opera, le rôle titre dans *Flavio* de Haendel (Opera Theatre Company de Dublin). Rebecca de Pont Davies se produit également en concert, et a chanté avec de grands orchestres britanniques un répertoire

comportant les œuvres majeures de Bach et Haendel, la *Petite Messe solennelle* de Rossini, *Elijah* de Mendelssohn, le *Requiem* de Verdi, la Deuxième Symphonie de Mahler, les *Sea Pictures* et *The Dream of Gerontius* d'Elgar, et *A Child of our Time* de Tippett.

**Richard Roberts** a fait ses études à l'Université du Kansas, à New York à la Chataqua School of Music, et avec Anthony Laciura du Metropolitan Opera de New York, Audrey Langford, Felicity Palmer et Robert Dean.

En sa qualité de "Company Principal" à l'English National Opera, Richard Roberts a chanté de nombreux rôles, notamment Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Edmondo (*Manon Lescaut*), l'Abbé (*War and Peace*), l'Instituteur (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), Don Riccardo (*Ernani*), Bardolph (*Falstaff*) et Roderigo (*Otello*). Il a également chanté dans *Candide* à l'Eugene Opera (USA), le rôle de Jiri (*The Jacobin*) au Scottish Opera, Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) dans la production de Raymond Gubbay donnée au Royal Albert Hall de Londres, et Scaramuccio (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) avec le City of London Sinfonia sous la direction de Richard Hickox.

Richard Roberts possède également une grande expérience en concert, avec des

engagements incluant la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven au Dôme de Brighton, *Elijah* de Mendelssohn à la cathédrale de Sheffield, le *Requiem* de Mozart au Royal Festival Hall de Londres, *Carmina Burana* au Barbican Hall de Londres, le *Stabat Mater* de Rossini à St. John's, Smith Square (Londres), ainsi que des galas d'opéra dans les salles de concert de Cardiff, Dublin et Glasgow.

**Amanda Holden** a étudié la musique à Oxford, puis a obtenu une bourse pour poursuivre sa formation à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres où elle a par la suite enseigné le piano. Depuis 1987, elle a réalisé une cinquantaine de traductions pour le théâtre, les salles de concert et l'opéra. Beaucoup d'entre elles lui ont été commandées par l'English National Opera, l'English Touring Opera, l'Opera North et Raymond Gubbay. Elle est fondatrice et rédactrice de la collection *The Viking/Penguin Opera Guides*. Une nouvelle édition totalement revue, *The New Penguin Opera Guide*, a été publiée en 2001. Amanda Holden a également écrit le livret de l'opéra de Mark-Anthony Turnage, *The Silver Tassie*, pour lequel elle a reçu avec le compositeur un *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera* en 2001.

Salué autant par la critique que par le public, L'Orchestre de l'English National Opera, avec Barry Griffiths comme premier violon, s'est vu décerner ces dernières années plusieurs prix prestigieux comme le Prix de la *Royal Philharmonic Society* et un *Olivier Award* pour sa contribution exceptionnelle au monde lyrique. L'Orchestre est au cœur de la vie artistique de la Compagnie et outre les représentations lyriques au Coliseum à Londres, il se produit également en concert. De plus, de nombreux membres de l'Orchestre participent au Projet Baylis mis sur pied par la branche de la Compagnie chargée de l'éducation ainsi qu'au développement de nouveaux opéra avec l'English National Opera Studio, comme *The Silver Tassie* de Mark-Anthony Turnage dont la création mondiale eut lieu en février 2000. L'Orchestre a participé à de nombreux enregistrements pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, notons *Otello*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* et *Werther*.

Le Chœur de l'English National Opera est l'un des plus beaux atouts de cette compagnie lyrique. Remarquable autant pour la puissance de son chant que l'intensité de son jeu, cet

ensemble a enthousiasmé le public dans d'innombrables productions de l'English National Opera. Ces soixante-huit choristes, riches d'une vaste expérience et d'une multitude de talents, marquent de leur sceau toutes les représentations auxquelles ils participent. Le Chœur a triomphé entre autres dans *Guerre et paix* de Prokofiev, *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk* de Chostakovitch, *Billy Budd* et *Peter Grimes* de Britten, *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgsky, *Carmen* de Bizet et *Otello* de Verdi. Leur enregistrement de ce dernier opéra, dans une mise en scène de Jonathan Miller et sous la direction de Mark Elder, est sorti chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation, tout comme leur enregistrement combien célèbre du cycle du *Ring* dirigé par Sir Reginald Goodall. Ils ont aussi enregistré pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller) et *La traviata*.

Très recherché par les théâtres lyriques et les orchestres du monde entier, Paul Daniel est considéré comme étant l'un des chefs d'orchestre les plus talentueux et les plus passionnants de sa génération.

Il est invité à diriger de grands orchestres à travers le monde, notamment le Philharmonia, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, le Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, le BBC National Orchestra of Wales, le London Philharmonic Orchestra, le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, le Royal Scottish National Orchestra, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de la Radio des Pays-Bas, l'Orchestre National de Lyon, l'Orchestre de la Tonhalle de Zurich, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Göteborg, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, le Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, l'Orchestre Symphonique MDR de Leipzig, le Los Angeles Philharmonic, l'Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra et l'Orchestre de Cleveland.

En 1997, Paul Daniel a été nommé directeur musical de l'English National Opera où il a dirigé *The Flying Dutchman*, *Falstaff*, *From the House of the Dead*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Otello*, *Boris Godounov*, *La traviata*, *The Carmelites*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, la création mondiale de *The Silver Tassie* de Mark Anthony Turnage, *Nixon in China*, *Peter Grimes* (au Festival d'Aldeburgh), *Il trovatore*, *War and Peace*, des versions de concert de *La gioconda* de Ponchielli, et le

*Requiem* de Verdi. Avant sa nomination, il avait déjà beaucoup travaillé à l'English National Opera, dirigeant la création mondiale du *Mask of Orpheus* de Harrison Birtwistle, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Akhnaten* de Philip Glass, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, ainsi que des exécutions de *King Priam* dans le cadre des festivités marquant le quatre-vingt-dixième anniversaire de Michael Tippett.

De 1990 à 1997, Paul Daniel a été le directeur musical de l'Opera North où il s'est attiré la louange des critiques pour ses interprétations originales et passionnantes de *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* de Paul Dukas, *King Priam* de Tippett, *Don Giovanni*, *Der ferne Klang* de Schreker, *Boris Godounov*, *Don Carlos*, *Wozzeck*, *Gloriana*, *Il Trovatore*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, les créations mondiales de *Baa Baa Black Sheep* de Michael Berkeley et de *Playing Away* de Benedict Mason, qui a été créé à la Biennale de Munich et a remporté le prix de la meilleure production et celui du meilleur décor, *Jenůfa*, *Luisa Miller*, *Medea*, *Falstaff* et *Tannhäuser*. Paul Daniel a également été directeur musical de l'Opera Factory de 1987 à 1990.

Parmi ses enregistrements figurent la Troisième Symphonie d'Elgar/Payne avec

le Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, des œuvres de Thomas Armstrong (pour Chandos), et des extraits de *Boris Godunov* (pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation). En 1998, Paul Daniel a obtenu

un *Olivier Award* pour ses réalisations exceptionnelles dans le domaine de l'opéra, et en 2000, il a reçu le titre de commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE).



Scene in Windsor Forest from English National Opera's production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Rafferty



Ashley Holland as Ford and Clive Bayley as Pistol in English National Opera's production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Rafferty

## Verdi: Falstaff

*Falstaff*, coronamento del glorioso crepuscolo di Verdi, è un vero concentrato del suo straordinario genio creativo nell'arco di ben sei decenni di carriera teatrale. Tra tutti gli altri grandi, forse solo Haydn ebbe uno sviluppo altrettanto straordinario e fertile per stile e contenuto nella sua lunga attività di compositore. In questa vetta trionfale della vecchiaia, si riconosce appena il compositore dei cosiddetti anni di galera, che aveva adottato uno stile rispettoso della struttura e delle regole del tempo, per quanto anche dalle opere di quel periodo emergessero indizi del futuro cambiamento di direzione. All'epoca della composizione del suo ultimo capolavoro, Verdi aveva respinto praticamente tutti i legami formali e i metodi della giovinezza e aveva adottato uno stile di composizione totale, in cui recitativo e aria si fondono spontaneamente e naturalmente l'uno nell'altra.

L'impresa fu realizzata anche grazie all'enorme contributo del librettista e compositore Arrigo Boito. Adattando magistralmente alcuni brani di *Henry IV* e *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Boito presentò a Verdi, dopo debita consultazione, il testo ideale per

riaccendere l'ispirazione dell'anziano maestro. Alla penna di Boito si deve inoltre un testo molto diverso, quello dell'*Otello*, un rigoroso dramma ricavato dalla vasta tragedia del drammaturgo inglese. Ma il procedimento fu esattamente identico per quanto riguarda il libretto di *Falstaff*, che assume anch'esso un valore a se stante come opera di valore letterario.

Verdi ricavò una commedia che progredisce agevolmente attraverso tre atti succinti; non si trova una parola o una nota estranea alla costruzione, tutto è mirato al fine della narrazione e occupa un posto di diritto nel firmamento dell'opera. Verdi aveva composto solo una commedia all'inizio della sua carriera, *Un giorno di regno*, molto influenzata dall'esempio di Donizetti. Da allora, prima di *Falstaff*, aveva talvolta incluso episodi comici nelle opere serie, soprattutto forse ne *La forza del destino*, e aveva alleggerito lo stato d'animo di altre con personaggi allegri, come il paggio Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*. Di natura molto più leggera inoltre è la musica da balletto presente in numerose partiture, soprattutto quelle composte per Parigi. Eppure

niente di tutto ciò ci prepara per le tessiture trasparenti, gli arguti concettismi, la caratterizzazione abilmente divertente che si trova in *Falstaff*, un'opera tutta sui generis.

Fin dall'inizio Verdi dichiarò che componeva qualcosa di diverso da tutto quello che aveva tentato prima, la commedia che aveva voluto scrivere per tutta la vita ma non era stato in grado di fare per mancanza di un libretto adeguato. In un certo senso, come scrive Julian Budden, autore di illuminanti testi sulla lirica, "*Falstaff* doveva essere una spiritosaggine personale, che il pubblico poteva capire se lo desiderava." E certamente così è stato.

Fin dalle prime battute si delinea un Verdi nuovo: niente ouverture né introduzione. Ci troviamo subito immersi al centro della vicenda. Anzi, questo è il primo tocco di genio: ci sembra di essere trasportati immediatamente nella scena, mentre Falstaff e i suoi servi fanno baldoria all'Osteria della Giarrettiera (Garter Inn). Il successivo colloquio con il pedante, stizzoso Dottor Cajus che deride irosamente il socievole Sir John e i furfanti Bardolfo e Pistola, è un esempio brillante di spirito in musica, un antipasto adeguato al banchetto musicale che ci attende. Dopo la partenza di Cajus, Falstaff si lascia andare ad altre bonarie riflessioni,

incentrate prevalentemente sul denaro o sulla sua mancanza, che culminano nel peana "immenso/enorme Falstaff" (Hail, mighty Falstaff!) prima che il dono naturale di Verdi per il lirismo cominci ad imporsi. Falstaff rivela ai suoi compagni il suo progetto di seduzione con entusiasmo crescente, quando descrive il fascino di Alice Ford e Meg Page. Ma quando formula la sua richiesta, i due furfanti rifiutano di assumersi la parte di Pandaro, suscitando le ire del grasso cavaliere, che inveisce contro il loro concetto di onore in un famoso monologo. Qui Verdi combina recitativo ed aria in un tutto perfettamente integrato che rispetta il senso del testo, una sorta di distillazione, la prima nella sua opera, di tutta la sua esperienza in fatto di tecniche per musicare le parole, creando naturalmente anche un bel ritratto in musica di Falstaff.

Nella seconda scena, come nella prima, ancora una volta si ha l'impressione di assistere a una scena in svolgimento. Alice, Meg, Mistress Quickly e Nannetta, figlia dei Ford, sono impegnate in un'animata conversazione, mentre le due comari scoprono di aver ricevuto la stessa missiva amorosa da Falstaff. I loro sentimenti sono espressi nella maniera più vivace, con battute rapide e argute. Verdi sembra prendersi gioco dello stile appassionato

che aveva adottato in precedenza quando assegna ad Alice la frase “Il viso tuo su me splenderà” (Your radiant image will shed its light on me), mentre lei e Meg si fanno beffe della sicumera compiaciuta dell’anziano cavaliere. Le comari si accacciano dopo una serie di risate sgangherate miracolosamente inserite nella tessitura musicale. In un insieme compatto, iniziano a progettare la punizione di Falstaff.

La scena si approfondisce quando entrano in scena gli uomini per decidere sul da farsi contro Falstaff. Infallibilmente intrecciato in questo complesso nonetto è il motivo d’amore di Nannetta e dell’innamorato Fenton. I loro romantici scambi sembrano soffusi di un pizzico di melanconia, come se l’anziano compositore ricordasse i suoi amori passati. Il concertato per tutti i personaggi è un’intricata matassa di parole e musica che non ha corrispondenti in nessun altro brano di Verdi. Il clamore delle voci alla fine si smorza e, per concludere un meraviglioso atto, Alice ripete la sua frase lirica beffandosi di Falstaff.

La prima scena dell’Atto II consiste quasi interamente in due episodi a due – Falstaff e Quickly, Falstaff e Ford. La comicità del primo incontro è un’altra novità per il compositore. Bardolfo e Pistola si battono il petto con

comica contrizione, descritta graficamente nell’orchestra. Entra Quickly al suono di una sorta di regale minuetto, culminante in un inchino quasi onomatopeico sulla parola “Reverenza!” (Sir, your servant!). La donna adula Falstaff con una serie di commenti falsamente elogiativi, il più famoso dei quali fa pensare che il cavaliere sia un famoso seduttore. La risposta è: “Lo so. Continue” (I know. Continue), un pizzico di arroganza che Falstaff rimpiangerà alla fine, musicata con una sfumatura molto maliziosa. Altrettanto appropriata e concisa è la frase di Quickly, la quale comunica che Ford sarà fuori “dalle due alle tre” (From eleven till twelve), altra prova della brevità comica di Verdi. Quando Quickly ha descritto il desiderio che Meg nutre per Falstaff, il cavaliere esclama: “Alice è mia!” (Alice is mine!) e in un arioso breve, ma rivelatore, così tipico del nuovo ed esigente stile verdiano, si compiace mentre marcia per la strada, esultando del suo continuo potere sulle donne.

Adesso Bardolfo comunica a Falstaff che è arrivato un certo “Signor Fontana” (traduzione letterale del nome di Master Brook nella commedia di Shakespeare) – in realtà si tratta di Ford travestito – e desidera parlare con lui. L’omaggio di una damigiana di vino di Cipro

rende questo visitatore ancora più benvenuto. L’uomo ha bisogno dell’aiuto di Falstaff e per convincerlo colloca una borsa di denaro sul tavolo. Il colloquio che segue è un distillato dei tanti duetti verdiani nella sua sottile, spontaneamente naturale conversazione in musica. In toni apparentemente deferenti Ford gli racconta che una certa donna di Windsor è sorda alle sue lusinghe. È disposto a pagare in contanti (l’orchestra riproduce il tintinnio delle monete) perché Falstaff corteggi la signora per conto suo. L’orchestra si ferma improvvisamente quando Ford ha un moto di meraviglia nel sentire che Falstaff ha già un appuntamento con Alice. La malcelata rabbia di Ford è repressa a stento quando Falstaff, in termini musicalmente compiaciuti, dichiara che è disposto a cornificare Ford per conto di “Master Brook”. L’ironia e l’illusiva vanteria implicite nell’atteggiamento di Falstaff e nella furia di Ford sono suggerite durante tutto il loro incontro; Falstaff è pronto per la prossima sconfitta.

Il Verdi dell’*Otello* ricompare non appena Falstaff è uscito per abbigliarsi per il convegno del pomeriggio: in uno sfogo simile a quello di Iago, Ford medita sulla sua situazione di apparente sconfitta. Non è possibile che questo stia accadendo a lui: in una frase cupa, di

lungo respiro che inizia nel punto più basso del registro del baritono, svela l’intensità dei propri sentimenti. Quando è sul punto di esplodere, Falstaff ritorna vestito di tutto punto e la partitura riprende la sua normale leggerezza, un tocco ispirato da parte del compositore, ampliato con le divertenti cerimonie dei due al momento di uscire dalla porta. Così questa scena magistrale si chiude su una nota di pura comicità.

La scena successiva è il momento centrale dell’opera, in cui Falstaff finalmente riceve la sua iniziale punizione. Dopo la descrizione alle altre allegre comari dell’incontro con Falstaff da parte di Quickly, con una vivace imitazione del dialogo all’Osteria della Giarrettiera, tutti si combinano in uno scambio animato, mercuriale di idee su come affrontare l’imminente arrivo di Falstaff. Improvvisamente qualcuno lo vede avvicinarsi alla dimora dei Ford: tutti escono di scena, fatta eccezione per Alice che rimane a suonare il liuto. Entra Falstaff: la sua apparente galanteria e il suo crescente ardore, finemente descritti dall’orchestra, mentre inizia il suo corteggiamento e le risposte lemure di Alice sono recitativi accompagnati elevati a grande arte. Quando la donna fa un commento sul suo aspetto corpulento, il cavaliere, forse in

maniera inappropriata, si lancia nella deliziosa e lievissima arietta “Quand’era paggio” (When I was page), che ricorda il suo aspetto flessuoso ai tempi in cui era a servizio presso duca di Norfolk. È un altro esempio dell’estrema raffinatezza dell’arte verdiana in questo suo canto del cigno.

Quando Quickly entra frettolosamente, in falsa agitazione, per riferire dell’arrivo di Meg, Falstaff si nasconde. Meg riferisce che gli uomini si avvicinano in preda all’ira e lo vogliono morto. L’illustre studioso e analista Donald Tovey ha descritto “l’arigianato cinese” di quest’opera. Il resto di questa scena spiega il significato di quest’espressione: l’intrico musicale è fittamente intessuto, ma delicatissimo nell’effetto finale. Verdi ci presenta un incalzare di incidenti che culmina nel momento in cui Falstaff viene gettato nel Tamigi con la cesta della biancheria in cui si era nascosto per sfuggire alle ire di Ford e dei suoi compagni, con grande spasso delle allegre comari. I pochi momenti di riposo, inseriti perfettamente nella struttura della scena, sono lo scambio degli innamorati, nascosti da un paravento. In tutto il tradizionale concertato delle opere precedenti di Verdi viene sviluppato in maniera quasi irricognoscibile per soddisfare l’obiettivo della commedia.

L’atto III inizia con un breve, brillante preludio; troviamo un Falstaff afflitto dopo il bagno, in cupa meditazione sul suo triste destino. La sua descrizione dei momenti trascorsi in acqua ha dei tocchi onomatopeici. Il suo spirito si risollewa solo quando beve un boccale di vino. Descrive un grillo che vibra nelle vene di un uomo quando è brillo e fa risuonare il corpo con un trillo. Ecco un’idea meravigliosa: l’orchestra esegue un enorme trillo, descrizione del vino che attraversa il corpo di Falstaff e lo rianima. Ma quando il cavaliere sembra tornare se stesso, arriva Quickly e ripete la sua “Reverenza!” (Sir, your servant!), con grande costernazione dell’eroe. Comunque riesce a trarlo in inganno dicendogli che il disastro precedente non era opera di Alice e lo convince a incontrarla alla Quercia di Herne a mezzanotte.

In seguito in questa scena il mistero notturno sembra pervadere la partitura mentre fantasia e incanto illuminano la tessitura. Si fanno dei piani per ingannare Falstaff una seconda volta e per la mascherata nella foresta su uno sfondo traslucido. La trama viene delicatamente illustrata, compresa una chiara indicazione del fatto che si intende impedire allo stesso Ford di obbligare Nannetta a sposare il vecchio Cajus piuttosto che il suo

innamorato Fenton. Mentre la scena si conclude Nannetta, Alice e Quickly chiamano qualcuno fuori scena: magica conclusione di una scena magica.

L’ultima scena nella foresta di Windsor con al centro la Quercia di Herne è piena di suoni fatati. Inizia con il sonetto di Fenton, una sorta di tranquilla reminiscenza di tutti i brani d’amore per tenore delle precedenti opere verdiane. Il coronamento qui proviene dalla voce di Nannetta che completa l’ultimo verso. Ma Verdi respinge il sentimentalismo e Alice interrompe il convegno con il compito di assegnare a ciascuno il suo travestimento. L’ingresso di Falstaff, piuttosto trepidante, viene descritto vividamente mentre conta i rintocchi della mezzanotte, prima che Nannetta canti la sua delicata, poetica canzone di fata, con un accompagnamento diafano e una melodia raffinata. Da ora in poi Verdi produce una serie di idee nuove, compresa una buffa litania; mentre Falstaff viene schernito da tutti coloro che lo circondano, Verdi propone persino una parodia della propria Messa da requiem.

Quando a Bardolfo scivola la maschera, il complotto è svelato. Falstaff si rende conto di essere stato tratto ancora una volta in inganno. I coniugi Ford spiegano come hanno fatto a

prendersi poco cortesemente gioco di lui. Il cavaliere non è troppo sconcertato, e sottolinea di essere lui la causa dell’arguzia negli altri. Adesso è il turno di Ford di essere tratto in inganno: Cajus scopre di aver sposato Bardolfo travestito, mentre l’altra coppia mascherata, Nannetta e Fenton, ha ricevuto l’involontaria benedizione di Ford. Alice convince il marito a rassegnarsi all’inevitabile e ad accettare il nuovo genero. Tutti si preparano ai festeggiamenti con Falstaff, ma non prima che Verdi ci regali un brillante finale con una complessa fuga intonata da Falstaff, conclusione adeguatamente ispirata di quest’opera unica e della carriera operistica di Verdi.

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### Trama

*La vicenda si svolge a Windsor*

COMPACT DISC ONE

### Atto I

*All’Osteria della Giarrettiera*

□ Sir John Falstaff ha appena richiuso due lettere quando sopraggiunge il dottor Cajus, che lo investe di accuse, lamentandosi del fatto che Bardolfo e Pistola, seguaci del corpulento

cavaliere, lo abbiano ubriacato per derubarlo. Tutti si prendono gioco di lui, che esce impetuosamente dall'osteria. <sup>[2]</sup> Falstaff studia il suo conto settimanale all'osteria e, vedendo di essere seriamente a corto di quattrini, si infuria e se la prende con i due servi spendaccioni.

<sup>[3]</sup> Adesso rivela il suo piano per superare le proprie difficoltà finanziarie: vuole sedurre due donne, Alice Ford e Meg Page, mogli di due ricchi mercanti del posto. <sup>[4]</sup> Consegna ai suoi compagni le lettere d'amore che ha preparato e ordina di consegnarle subito. <sup>[5]</sup> Quando i due si rifiutano di lasciarsi coinvolgere in uno stratagemma disonorevole, Falstaff offeso si lancia in un sermone sul loro "onore" e poi li caccia via.

#### *Il giardino della casa di Ford*

<sup>[6]</sup> – <sup>[9]</sup> Alice e Meg scoprono di aver ricevuto due lettere d'amore identiche e decidono di dare una lezione al loro spasimante. Una vicina, Mistress Quickly, si dichiara disposta a fungere da intermediaria per attirare Falstaff a un appuntamento. Nel frattempo Pistola e Bardolfo, ormai licenziati, rivelano a Ford il piano di Falstaff, nella speranza di ricevere una ricompensa in denaro. Ford decide di mettere alla prova la fedeltà di sua moglie facendo visita a Falstaff travestito e fingendo di

chiedere il suo aiuto per sedurla. <sup>[10]</sup> – <sup>[14]</sup> La figlia di Ford, Nannetta, si incontra di nascosto con Fenton, suo innamorato; Ford è contrario alle loro nozze, perché desidera che sia il dottor Cajus a sposare Nannetta.

#### **Atto II**

##### *All'Osteria della Giarrettiera*

<sup>[15]</sup> Fingendo di essere pentiti, Bardolfo e Pistola chiedono scusa a Falstaff per il loro comportamento precedente. <sup>[16]</sup> Arriva Mistress Quickly per consegnare la risposta di Alice e Meg. Falstaff viene invitato a far visita ad Alice tra le undici e le dodici; <sup>[17]</sup> – <sup>[18]</sup> Meg non può dargli appuntamento. <sup>[19]</sup> – <sup>[22]</sup> Falstaff è ancora più contento quando uno sconosciuto, Fontana (Master Brook – Ford travestito), gli offre del denaro per convincere Alice per conto suo seducendola. <sup>[23]</sup> – <sup>[24]</sup> Quando il cavaliere esce per prepararsi all'appuntamento amoroso con Alice, Ford inveisce contro Falstaff e Alice, che immagina colpevole di infedeltà.

#### COMPACT DISC TWO

##### *A casa di Ford*

<sup>[1]</sup> – <sup>[2]</sup> Mistress Quickly riferisce ad Alice e Meg che la sua missione ha avuto successo. <sup>[3]</sup> – <sup>[6]</sup> Si fanno preparativi per ricevere

Falstaff; viene portato un cesto di biancheria per potervi nascondere Falstaff quando Meg darà il falso allarme dell'arrivo imprevisto del marito; i servi quindi potranno gettare il contenuto nel Tamigi. Alice si accorge che la figlia non prende parte allo scherzo; quando viene a sapere che Nannetta è triste perché il padre insiste a farle sposare il dottor Caius, Alice la rassicura. Non permetterà che questo accada.

<sup>[7]</sup> – <sup>[11]</sup> Il piano delle donne si svolge come previsto finché Mistress Quickly entra precipitosamente per avvertire Alice che Ford sta arrivando *veramente*, accompagnato da un gruppo di simpatizzanti (Cajus, Fenton, Bardolfo e Pistola), deciso a trovare Falstaff e svergognare l'infedele Alice. <sup>[12]</sup> Ma gli unici amanti smascherati sono Nannetta e Fenton, mentre Ford, vedendo Falstaff e la biancheria sporca nel fiume, ammette che i suoi sospetti sulla fedeltà di Alice erano infondati.

#### **Atto III**

##### *Davanti all'Osteria della Giarrettiera*

<sup>[13]</sup> Falstaff, che si è ripreso dal bagno nel fiume, se la prende con il mondo intero per la sua ingiustizia. <sup>[14]</sup> È di cattivo umore anche con Mistress Quickly, che porta un altro invito

di Alice, ma la donna riesce a vincere la sua iniziale riluttanza. <sup>[15]</sup> Falstaff dovrà incontrare Alice a mezzanotte nel bosco di Windsor presso la quercia di Herne; secondo una leggenda popolare Herne, il Cacciatore nero, si era impiccato qui e il suo spettro si aggira nottetempo nella foresta. Per spaventare chiunque possa vederlo, Falstaff dovrà travestirsi da spettro portando corna di cervo in testa. Il cavaliere non sa che tutti a Windsor sono coinvolti in un altro scherzo e lo attenderanno travestiti nel bosco.

<sup>[16]</sup> Ford degusta avidamente una seconda possibilità di dare una lezione a Falstaff, soprattutto perché nella confusione notturna della foresta spera di sposare Nannetta e il dottor Cajus. Mistress Quickly casualmente ascolta questo piano e giura di ribaltare il progetto di Ford (per dare una lezione anche a lui) facendo indossare il costume di Nannetta a qualcun altro.

##### *Parco di Windsor, di notte*

<sup>[17]</sup> – <sup>[19]</sup> Le donne si riuniscono accanto alla quercia di Herne per dare istruzioni a Fenton sul momento giusto per scomparire con Nannetta e sventare i piani di Ford. Alice vuole mettere Fenton al posto di Cajus. <sup>[20]</sup> – <sup>[21]</sup> A mezzanotte Falstaff, nel suo



travestimento, arriva e inizia a corteggiare Alice (e anche Meg). [22] – [26] Ma le due donne fuggono via sentendo dei rumori apparentemente soprannaturali, lasciando da solo lo spasimante, nelle mani di folletti ed elfi. [27] Il trucco funziona finché Falstaff non riconosce il naso rosso di Bardolfo.

[28] Ford si fa beffe di Falstaff che si è illuso e gli fa ammettere il proprio errore, ma Falstaff ha l'ultima parola sostenendo di essere l'artefice del riso negli altri. [29] Ford benedice l'unione di due coppie, una delle quali presume sia formata da Cajus e Nannetta. [30] Quando le coppie si tolgono la maschera, Ford scopre che Cajus ha sposato Bardolfo e che lui stesso ha benedetto l'unione di Nannetta e Fenton. Anche Ford è stato giocato abilmente, come Falstaff. [31] Le allegre comari hanno trionfato sugli intrighi degli uomini e Falstaff guida tutti in un ultimo scoppio di risa.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

**Andrew Shore** è ritenuto il miglior *buffo* in Gran Bretagna ed è uno straordinario cantante/attore. Ha lavorato con la English National Opera, la Royal Opera House, Opera North, la Glyndebourne Festival Opera, la

Scottish Opera e la Welsh National Opera e si è esibito all'estero con l'Opera di San Diego, la New Israeli Opera, l'Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, l'Opéra Comique, il Gran Teatre del Liceu di Barcellona, a Lione, Nantes, Santa Fe, Montpellier, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver e Ottawa.

I suoi numerosi impegni lo hanno visto interpretare il ruolo di protagonista in *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* e *Don Pasquale*, oltre a *Dulcamara* (*L'elisir d'amore*), *Don Alfonso* (*Così fan tutte*), *Figaro* (*Le nozze di Figaro*), *Papageno* (*Il flauto magico*), *re Dodon* (*Le Coq d'or*), *Leandro* (*L'amore delle tre melarance*), *Dikoy* (*Kat'a Kabanová*), *Dr Kolenaty* (*L'affare Makropulos*), *Shishkov* (*Da una casa di morti*), *Frank* (*Die Fledermaus*), il barone (*La Vie parisienne*), il barone Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), *George Wilson* (*The Great Gatsby*), *Alberich* in alcune interpretazioni di *Das Rheingold* in concerto, *Varlaam* (*Boris Godunov*) e *Faninal* (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

La discografia include il ruolo di protagonista nel *Don Pasquale*, *Leporello* (*Don Giovanni*), *don Bartolo* (*The Barber of Seville*), *Dulcamara* (*The Elixir of Love*), il sagrestano in *Tosca*, *Faninal* in *Der Rosenkavalier* (momenti salienti), e

*La Bohème*, tutti per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

**Yvonne Kenny** è nata a Sydney ed è uno dei più illustri soprani della sua generazione. Dopo la vittoria al concorso intitolato al nome di Kathleen Ferrier è entrata a far parte della Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove è stata *Pamina* (*Die Zauberflöte*), *Ilia* (*Idomeneo*), *Susanna* (*Le nozze di Figaro*), *Adina* (*L'elisir d'amore*), *Liù* (*Turandot*), *Aspasia* (*Mitridate*) e *Donna Anna* (*Don Giovanni*).

Si è conquistata una reputazione internazionale per i grandi ruoli del repertorio handeliiano, soprattutto *Semele* e *Alcina* (Covent Garden e La Fenice) *Romilda* (*Xerxes*) per English National Opera l'Opera nazionale della Baviera, *Cleopatra* (*Giulio Cesare*) e *Armida* (*Rinaldo*) a Sydney. Ha cantato anche all'Opera di San Francisco, all'Opera di Vienna, alla Scala di Milano, alla Berlin Staatsoper, l'Opera di Monaco, l'Opéra di Parigi e poi ad Amburgo, Zurigo, Washington e Glyndebourne. Spesso fa ritorno nel suo paese d'origine, l'Australia, dove ha interpretato numerosi ruoli. Nel 1989 è stata nominata Member of the Order of Australia for Services to Music.

La ricca discografia di Yvonne Kenny comprende *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Entführung*

*aus dem Serail*, *The Kingdom* di Elgar, *The Beggar's Opera* e *Gloriana* di Britten, *Deborah* di Handel, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* di Dyson (per Chandos), momenti salienti dal *Rosenkavalier* e un disco di Great Operatic Arias (Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation), e per Opera Rara *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'eremitaggio di Liverpool* e *Ugo, Conte di Parigi* di Donizetti, e *Il crociato in Egitto* di Meyerbeer.

**Barry Banks** ha conseguito il diploma presso il Royal Northern College of Music e si è affermato tra i migliori tenori della propria generazione per le sue straordinarie interpretazioni in teatro e in concerto. I ruoli comprendono il protagonista in *The Rake's Progress* per English National Opera, *Belfiore* e *Libenskof* (*Il viaggio a Reims*) a Bologna, *Don Ramiro* (*La Cenerentola*) per l'Opera di Basilea, *Oreste* (*Ermione*) per l'Opera di Santa Fe, *Tamino* (*Die Zauberflöte*) al teatro La Monnaie, all'Opera di Lipsia, alla Scottish Opera, e al festival di Salisburgo, *Tom Rakewell* (*The Rake's Progress*), *Tamino* e il protagonista in *Le Comte Ory* per la Glyndebourne Touring Opera, *Nemorino* (*L'elisir d'amore*) e *Argirio* (*Tancredi*) per l'Opera di Francoforte, *Flute* (*A Midsummer*

*Night's Dream*) alla Metropolitan Opera, *Candide* per la Lyric Opera di Chicago, Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) per l'Opera di San Francisco, Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) per la Welsh National Opera.

Barry Banks è impegnato anche nei concerti e ha eseguito la *Petite Messe solennelle* di Rossini, *Fidelio* con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra diretta da Walter Weller, il *War Requiem* di Britten, il *Requiem* di Bruckner con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra diretta da sir Charles Mackerras, e *Armida* di Rossini, eseguita al Festival di Edimburgo.

La discografia comprende Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*) (per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation), *St Paul* di Mendelssohn (per Chandos), *Un ballo in maschera* e *Trial by Jury*, oltre a registrazioni su videocassetta di *Billy Budd* e *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

**Susan Gritton** ha studiato botanica presso le università di Oxford e Londra prima di intraprendere la carriera di cantante. Nel 1994 ha vinto il Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize e ha esordito come solista in un recital presso la Wigmore Hall. Svolge una regolare attività concertistica in tutta la Gran Bretagna e

all'estero; si è esibita al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam, alla Konzerthaus di Vienna e alla Philharmonie di Berlino.

I ruoli operistici di Susan Gritton comprendono Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) per la Festival Opera e la Touring Opera di Glyndebourne; la Governante (*The Turn of the Screw*) e Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*) per la direzione di Steuart Bedford a Snape Maltings; Marenka (*The Bartered Bride*), Euridice (*Orfeo*), Thalie e Clarine (*Platée*), e Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*) per la Royal Opera; Romilda (*Xerxes*) e Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) per l'Opera di Monaco; Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) alla Deutsche Staatsoper di Berlino; Marzelline (*Fidelio*) con l'Opera di Roma. Presso English National Opera, dove è solista, i suoi ruoli comprendono Atalanta (*Xerxes*), Caroline (*The Fairy Queen*), Constance (*The Carmelites*), Xenia (*Boris Godunov*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Drusilla (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), il ruolo di protagonista in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) e Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

La discografia per Chandos comprende *Ottone in Villa* di Vivaldi, *Sir John in Love*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *St Paul* di Mendelssohn, alcune Messe di Haydn e *Aida* (quest'ultima

con la Peter Moores Foundation). Susan Gritton è membro della English National Opera.

**Ashley Holland** ha studiato presso l'università di Warwick e il Royal Northern College of Music, dove ha vinto il concorso Webster Booth/Esso e una Curtis Gold Medal, e ha ottenuto una borsa di studio di Peter Moores. Nel 1998 ha vinto il concorso lirico Ranieri i Cestelli di Amburgo.

Il baritono è attualmente solista presso l'English National Opera, dove ha interpretato i ruoli di Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Sharpless (*Madam Butterfly*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Cecil nella *Mary Stuart* di Donizetti, Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*), Lescaut nella *Manon* di Massenet, Ottakar (*Der Freischütz*), Marcello (*La Bohème*) ed Escamillo (*Carmen*). Ha inoltre interpretato il ruolo del baritono in una coproduzione dell'*Allegro* di Handel (English National Opera e Mark Morris Dance Group). Altri impegni comprendono Junius (*The Rape of Lucretia*) per l'opera di Losanna, Ford (*Falstaff*) per English National Opera, Sharpless per l'Opera di Cincinnati, Antonio in alcune esecuzioni in concerto della *Linda di Chamounix* con Mark Elder e l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Don Giovanni per

l'Opera di Calgary, alcuni ruoli nel *Candide* con la London Symphony Orchestra/Kent Nagano e in *Der Protagonist* di Weill e *The Royal Palace* con la BBC Symphony Orchestra diretta da sir Andrew Davis, l'esordio all'Opéra Bastille nelle vesti di Bosun (*Billy Budd*) e quello con la Semperoper Dresden in quelle di Ford.

La discografia comprende Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*) per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

**Alice Coote** ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama, il Royal Northern College of Music (con il contributo della Peter Moores Foundation) e il National Opera Studio.

I suoi ruoli operistici comprendono Cherubino, Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), Dorabella, Tamiri (*Il Re Pastore*) per Opera North; Fortuna e Valetto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) per la Welsh National Opera; Cherubino per la Scottish Opera; Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *The Coronation of Poppea* per la English National Opera; Page (*Salomé*), Ruggiero (*Alcina*) per l'Opera di Stoccarda e il festival di Edimburgo; Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*) e interpretazioni all'Opéra

Bastille di Parigi e a Nancy, Nantes, e al Festival di Salisburgo. Il suo esordio statunitense alla Lyric Opera di Chicago nelle vesti di Hansel (*Hansel e Gretel*) ha riscosso grande successo.

Le sue apparizioni in concerto vanno da brani di repertorio tratti dagli oratori di Bach e Handel alle opere di Mahler, Debussy e Britten, interpretate sotto la direzione di Nagano, Pesek, Menuhin, Salonen, Dohnányi e Christie a Londra, Parigi, Vienna, Amsterdam, Bruxelles, Madrid e Salisburgo. È sempre più richiesta come interprete di recital e ha svolto serate presso la Wigmore Hall e per il terzo canale radiofonico della BBC. Le registrazioni comprendono *The Choice of Hercules*.

**Clive Bayley** ha vinto una borsa di studio Peter Moores e canta regolarmente con le principali compagnie liriche in un repertorio che va da Monteverdi a Verdi, Puccini, Berg, Britten e Birtwistle. Ha esordito con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden, nella prima del *Gawain* di Harrison Birtwistle e in seguito ha vestito i panni di Colline nella *Bohème*. Ha riscosso significativi successi con Opera North in *Jerusalem* di Verdi, nei ruoli di Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Referee in *Playing Away* di Benedict Mason, Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), Arkel (*Pelléas e*

*Mélisande*), Wurm (*Luisa Miller*), il ruolo di protagonista ne *Le nozze di Figaro*, il Dottore (*Wozzeck*), Biterolf (*Tannhäuser*) e Antinoo (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*); con Opera Factory è comparso in *Don Giovanni*; per English National Opera è stato *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck*, Cadmus (*Semele*), le quattro personificazioni del cattivo genio (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) e Pistola (*Falstaff*). All'estero Clive Bayley è comparso nei teatri lirici dei Paesi Bassi, Seattle, Lisbona e Losanna. Altri impegni comprendono il Pescatore in *The Royal Palace* di Kurt Weill, in occasione dei concerti serie Promenade della BBC e interpretazioni con la Festival Opera e la Touring Opera di Glyndebourne.

La discografia per Chandos comprende *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd* e, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Madam Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Boris Godunov* (momenti salienti), *Don Pasquale* e *Il trovatore*.

**Stuart Kale** è considerato uno dei migliori cantanti-attori della lirica a livello internazionale e il suo ricchissimo repertorio va da Monteverdi a Messiaen. Ha iniziato con la Welsh National Opera e la sua carriera è proseguita presso la English National Opera, dove è rimasto per otto anni, interpretando tra

l'altro il ruolo di Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (*Julietta* di Martinů), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) e Nanki-Poo nell'allestimento del *Mikado* con la regia di Jonathan Miller.

Gli impegni di maggior rilievo comprendono l'Alto sacerdote (*Idomeneo*) al Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) per la Canadian Opera Company e a San Francisco, Ginevra, Zurigo, Montpellier, Bordeaux e Bologna, Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) a Strasburgo, Bordeaux e Montpellier, Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) per la tournée russa del 1990 della English National Opera, Truffaldino (*L'Amour des trois oranges*) per ENO, Zinoviev (*Lady Macbeth*) a Tolosa e Marsiglia, Idomeneo a Drottningholm, e i tre ruoli tenorili della *Lulu* allo Châtelet, Egisto a Karlsruhe, *L'occasione fa il ladro* al festival di Schwetzingen e a Colonia, Bob Boles al Covent Garden, all'Opera di Monaco e a Genova e Strasburgo, Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) a Colonia, Gregor (*L'affare Makropoulos*) ed Erode, in alcuni nuovi allestimenti a Strasburgo.

La discografia comprende Goro (*Madam Butterfly*), Shuisky (momenti salienti del *Boris Godunov*) e Roderigo (*Otello*), per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

**Rebecca de Pont Davies** è nata a Londra e ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama, dove si è aggiudicata numerosi premi e un riconoscimento del Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Ha esordito in teatro con la Glyndebourne Touring Opera in *Death in Venice* di Britten e da allora lavora con importanti compagnie britanniche e svolge numerose tournée in Europa. Dal 1998, anno in cui ha interpretato il ruolo di Emilia (*Otello*) per English National Opera, ha affrontato molti altri ruoli per la stessa compagnia, tra cui Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Geneviève (*Pelléas and Mélisande*), Ottavia (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Flosshilde (*The Rhinegold*), Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*), la principessa Marya (*War and Peace*), Mother Goose (*The Rake's Progress*), e Suzanne in occasione della prima rappresentazione mondiale di *A Better Place* di Martin Butler. Attualmente è solista della English National Opera.

Altri ruoli comprendono Moksada (*Snatched by the Gods* di Param Vir) per Scottish Opera, Gaea (*Daphne*), Die alleswissende Muschel (*Die ägyptische Helene*) e Leda (*Die Liebe der Danae*) per l'opera di Garsington, il ruolo di protagonista in *Flavio* di Handel, (Opera Theatre Company, Dublino). Rebecca de Pont Davies è anche molto impegnata nei concerti e

ha cantato con importanti orchestre britanniche in un repertorio che comprende le opere principali di Bach e Handel, la *Petite Messe solennelle* di Rossini, *Elijah* di Mendelssohn, il *Requiem* di Verdi, la Sinfonia N. 2 di Mahler, *Sea Pictures* e *The Dream of Gerontius* di Elgar e *A Child of our Time* di Tippett.

**Richard Roberts** ha studiato presso l'Università del Kansas, la Chatauqua School of Music di New York e con Anthony Laciura della Metropolitan Opera, Audrey Langford, Felicity Palmer e Robert Dean.

In qualità di solista per English National Opera, Richard Roberts ha interpretato numerosi ruoli tra cui Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Edmondo (*Manon Lescaut*), l'abate (*War and Peace*), l'insegnante (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), Don Riccardo (*Ernani*), Bardolfo (*Falstaff*) e Roderigo (*Otello*). Altri impegni hanno compreso *Candide* per la Eugene Opera dell'Oregon, Jiri (*Il Giacobino*) per la Scottish Opera, Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) nell'allestimento di Raymond Gubbay presso la Royal Albert Hall e Scaramuccio (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) con la City of London Sinfonia diretta da Richard Hickox.

Richard Roberts ha al suo attivo una quantità di concerti e i suoi impegni comprendono la

Nona sinfonia di Beethoven al Brighton Dome, *Elijah* di Mendelssohn nella cattedrale di Sheffield, il *Requiem* di Mozart alla Royal Festival Hall, *Carmina Burana* al Barbican, lo *Stabat Mater* di Rossini presso St John's, Smith Square, e serate di gala nelle sale concertistiche nazionali di Cardiff, Dublino e Glasgow.

**Amanda Holden** ha studiato musica ad Oxford e poi ha vinto una borsa di studio per la Guildhall School di Londra, dove ha successivamente insegnato pianoforte. Dal 1987 in poi ha scritto circa cinquanta traduzioni per allestimenti in teatro, sale da concerto e teatro lirico, molte delle quali commissionate da English National Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera North e Raymond Gubbay. È fondatrice-redattrice delle guide alle opere Viking/Penguin; una nuova edizione completamente riveduta, *The New Penguin Opera Guide*, è stata pubblicata nel 2001. Amanda Holden è inoltre autrice del libretto di un'opera di Mark-Anthony Turnage, *The Silver Tassie* per cui, con il compositore, ha ricevuto il premio *Olivier* per il 2001 (Outstanding Achievement in Opera).

Acclamata dalla critica e dal pubblico, l'**Orchestra di English National Opera**, primo

violino Barry Griffiths, ha ricevuto negli ultimi anni diversi premi prestigiosi, tra cui il *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* e un *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. L'Orchestra è al centro della vita artistica dell'Opera e, oltre a esibizioni liriche al Coliseum di Londra è stata anche vista sul palco in concerto. Inoltre molti dei musicisti partecipano al lavoro del Baylis Programme del dipartimento di educazione e "outreach" dell'Opera e con l'English National Opera Studio allo sviluppo di nuove opere, in particolare *The Silver Tassie* di Mark-Anthony Turnage che è stata uscita in prima mondiale nel febbraio 2000. L'Orchestra appare in numerose registrazioni per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation: *Otello*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* e *Werther*.

Il **Coro di English National Opera** è una delle migliori risorse dell'Opera. In innumerevoli produzioni della English National Opera ha entusiasmato le platee con il potere del canto e l'intensità della recitazione. Si tratta di sessantotto coristi e l'ampia gamma di capacità ed esperienza che portano nelle esibizioni costituiscono il tratto distintivo di ogni

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

**Paul Daniel** è considerato uno dei direttori d'orchestra di maggior talento della sua generazione ed è molto richiesto dalle compagnie liriche e dalle orchestre di tutto il mondo.

Come direttore ospite è comparso con importanti orchestre, tra cui la Philharmonia, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, la Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, la BBC National Orchestra of Wales, la London Philharmonic Orchestra, la Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, la Royal Scottish

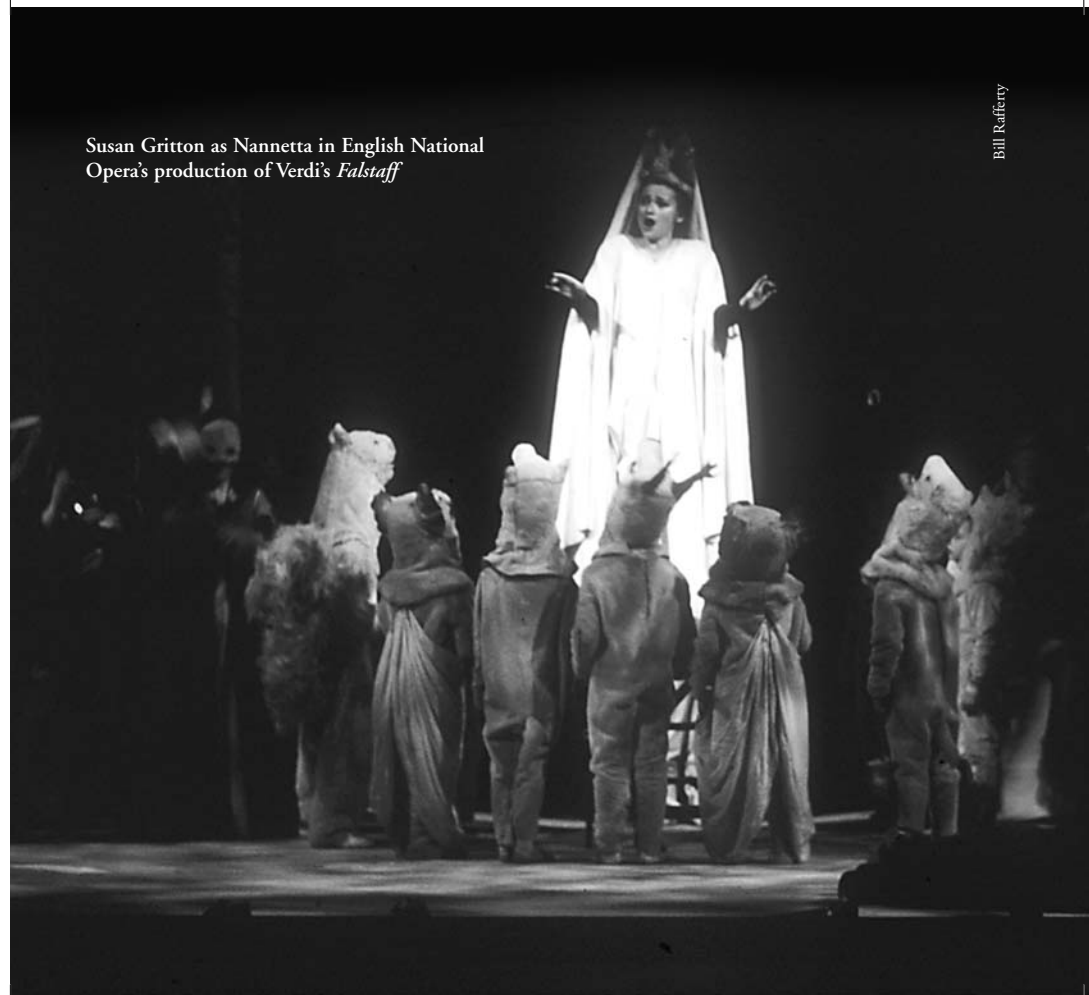
National Orchestra, la Filarmonica della radio dei Paesi Bassi, l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, l'Orchestre National de Lyon, la Tonhalle di Zurigo, l'Orchestra sinfonica di Göteborg, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, la Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, l'orchestra sinfonica MDR di Lipsia, la Los Angeles Philharmonic, l'orchestra sinfonica di Indianapolis e l'Orchestra di Cleveland.

Nel 1997 è diventato Direttore musicale della English National Opera, dove ha diretto *The Flying Dutchman*, *Falstaff*, *From the House of the Dead*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Otello*, *Boris Godunov*, *La traviata*, *The Carmelites*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, la prima mondiale di *The Silver Tassie* di Mark Anthony Turnage, *Nixon in China*, *Peter Grimes* (al festival di Aldeburgh), *Il trovatore*, *War and Peace* ed alcune esecuzioni in concerto della *Gioconda* di Ponchielli e del *Requiem* di Verdi. Prima della nomina aveva già lavorato molto con la compagnia ad allestimenti tra cui vanno ricordati la prima mondiale di *The Mask of Orpheus* di Harrison Birtwistle, *Figaro's Wedding*, *Akhmaten* di Philip Glass, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto* ed alcune esecuzioni di *King*

*Priam* nell'ambito dei festeggiamenti per il novantesimo compleanno di Tippett.

Dal 1990 al 1997 Paul Daniel è stato direttore musicale di Opera North, suscitando l'apprezzamento della critica per le entusiasmanti e moderne esecuzioni di *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* di Dukas, *King Priam* di Tippett, *Don Giovanni*, *Der ferne Klang* di Schreker, *Boris Godunov*, *Don Carlos*, *Wozzeck*, *Gloriana*, *Il trovatore*, *Pelleas and Melisande*, le prime mondiali di *Baa Baa Black Sheep* di Michael Berkeley e *Playing Away* di Benedict Mason; quest'ultima, presentata alla Biennale di Monaco, si è aggiudicata il premio per migliore allestimento e design, *Jenůfa*, *Luisa Miller*, *Medea*, *Falstaff* e *Tannhäuser*. Paul Daniel è stato direttore musicale di Opera Factory dal 1987 al 1990.

La discografia comprende la Sinfonia N. 3 di Elgar/Payne con la Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, opere di Thomas Armstrong (per Chandos), e momenti salienti del *Boris Godunov* (Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation). Nel febbraio 1998 Paul Daniel ha ricevuto un Olivier Award per i notevoli risultati raggiunti nell'opera e l'onorificenza di Commander of the British Empire nel 2000.

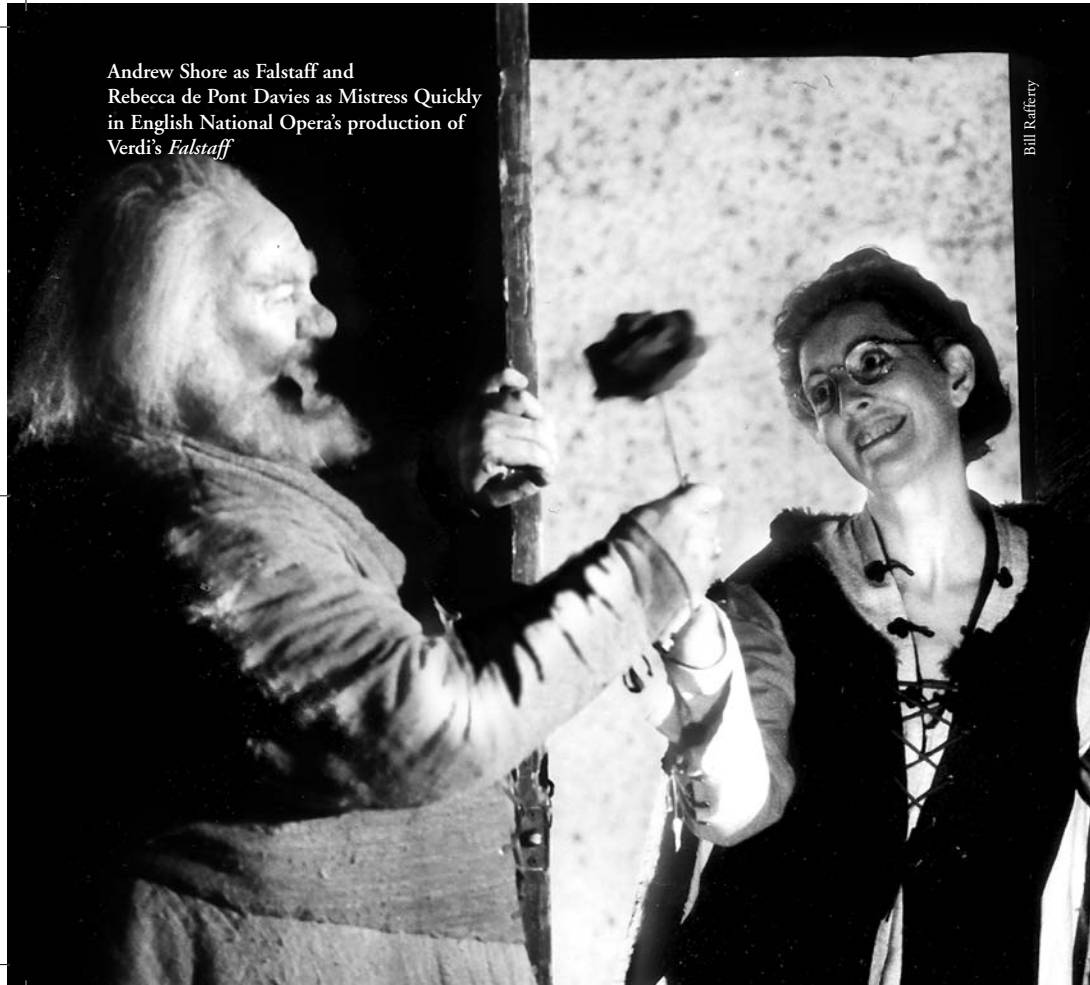


Susan Gritton as Nannetta in English National Opera's production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Rafferty

Andrew Shore as Falstaff and  
Rebecca de Pont Davies as Mistress Quickly  
in English National Opera's production of  
Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Raftery



Stuart Kale as Dr Caius in  
English National Opera's  
production of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Bill Raftery



COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

Scene One

*The Garter Inn*

**Dr Caius**

☐ Falstaff!

**Falstaff** (*taking no notice of Dr Caius, calling to the Landlord*)

Hey there!

**Dr Caius**

Sir John Falstaff!

**Falstaff** (*to Dr Caius*)

Oh! What's this shouting?

**Dr Caius**

You have thrashed all my servants.

**Falstaff**

Landlord! Another bottle of sherry.

**Dr Caius**

Then you rode my grey mare until she staggered.

You broke into my house, sir!

**Falstaff**

But not into your housemaid.

**Dr Caius**

Oh, I'm grateful! Poor old thing must be ninety.

Master Colossus, if you had twenty titles,

John Falstaff, high and mighty,

I'd still insist you answer me.

**Falstaff**

Well, you may have my answer.

The plea of this defendant...

**Dr Caius**

Is what?

**Falstaff**

Is that he's guilty.

**Dr Caius**

Then, monsieur, I shall see you in court.

**Falstaff**

Very unwise, sir,

for you'll be made a fool of.

Leave well alone, I advise, sir.

**Dr Caius**

That will not do, sir.

**Falstaff**

To hell with you!

**Dr Caius**

And Bardolph!

**Bardolph**

Yes, good doctor.

**Dr Caius**

Last night you took me drinking.

**Bardolph**

Indeed sir! How I regret it!

I'm sick. Prescribe some pills to make me better.

I have an aching stomach.

A curse on landlords who lace their sack with

brimstone!

See this bright shining comet?

**Dr Caius**

I see it.

**Bardolph**

You'll find it glows a rosier red in the evening.

**Dr Caius**

Well, I prescribe they hang you.

You made me drink, you rascal, while he...

(*pointing at Pistol*)

...made foolish speeches.

Soon I was drunk, beyond recall,

then you burgled my breeches.

**Bardolph**

Not I.

**Dr Caius**

Then who?

**Falstaff**

Pistol!

**Pistol**

Master?

**Falstaff**

Could it be you who has picked the Doctor's

pockets?

**Dr Caius**

Yes, it was you! Observe him!

That look will get him nowhere,

his ugly face betrays him.

I know that I had two silver shillings in my pocket,

and six golden half-sovereigns.

Now they've completely vanished.

**Pistol** (*to Falstaff*)

Sir John, if I am guilty, have me beaten up and

banished.

(*to Dr Caius*)

You're a liar!

**Dr Caius**

You peasant, beware how you address me.

**Pistol**

Idiot!

**Dr Caius**

You beggar!

**Pistol**

Varlet!

**Dr Caius**

Dog!

**Pistol**

Pig!

**Dr Caius**

You scarecrow!

**Pistol**

Midget!

**Dr Caius**

Your odour is so poisonous!

**Pistol**

Who?

**Dr Caius**

You!

**Pistol**

You mean it?

**Dr Caius**

Yes!

**Pistol**

By thunder!

**Falstaff**

Hey stop! Pistol, don't fire your guns in here. Bardolph, who was it rifled this gentleman's breeches?

**Dr Caius**

It must be one of them!

**Bardolph**

He was drinking, more than he ought to. Then when he'd lost his senses, he invents something plausible, which he had dreamt while lying asleep, under the table.

**Falstaff** (*to Dr Caius*)

Hear that? You must control yourself. The truth is now established. Your claims are quite unfounded, so go and sin no more.

**Dr Caius**

Right, then! If in future you wish to drink with Dr Caius,

I swear you must be honest, sober, well-mannered and pious.

(*Exit.*)

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Amen.

**Falstaff**

Spare me the counterpoint, that awful intertwining.

Artists respect this axiom:

'One steals with grace and good timing.'

You are such clumsy craftsmen.

**Bardolph and Pistol**

A...

**Falstaff**

Sshh!

**Landlord**

<sup>[2]</sup> Your bill, sir.

**Falstaff** (*looking at the bill*)

Six pullets: six shillings.

Thirty bottles of sherry: two pounds. Three turkeys...

(*to Bardolph*)

Count the funds in my purse there.

A brace of pheasants, and an anchovy.

**Bardolph**

A groat, a groat, a penny.

**Falstaff**

Rummage!

**Bardolph**

I have rummaged.

**Falstaff**

Rummage!

**Bardolph**

Look if you don't believe me.

**Falstaff**

Thanks to you, I am ruined!

I spend at least ten pounds a week to keep you, you tosspot!

Ambling along each evening, from tavern to tavern,

with your glowing nose so luminous, I need no other beacon.

But what that saves in candles, you squander without blinking.

It is thirty long years since first I subsidised your drinking.

You don't earn it.

(*to Pistol*)

You're no better!

(*shouting*)

Landlord, another bottle!

(*to Bardolph and Pistol*)

You're devouring my substance.

If Falstaff were more slender, he'd not be me, and who would love him?

My belly's ringing,

with a chorus of voices, who praise my name in singing!

**Pistol**

Hail, mighty Falstaff!

**Bardolph**

All hail, great Falstaff!

**Falstaff**

This is my empire, it grows and grows.

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Almighty Falstaff!

**Falstaff**

But now, we must have our wits about us.

**Bardolph and Pistol**

We have them here.

**Falstaff**

<sup>[3]</sup> Are you acquainted with a merchant whose name is Ford?

**Bardolph**

Yes!

**Pistol**

Yes!

**Falstaff**

A man who's made of money.

**Pistol**

He's wealthier than Croesus.



**Bardolph**

Quite so.

**Falstaff**

His wife's perfection.

**Pistol**

And spends his money.

**Falstaff**

Exactly! Oh, love! Sparkling her eyes,  
swan-like her neck, her lips like...

a flower that blooms in laughter.

Her name is Alice.

One morning as I was passing by,  
she was at her window, smiling.

Desire sprang up from the depths of my heart.

The goddess shot so blinding a glance of passion  
at me,

at me, this manly figure of fine proportion,  
this well-turned leg, this noble bearing, stately,  
imposing.

And I could see from deep within her eyes how  
much she loved me,  
that they seemed to say 'I'm waiting for you,  
Falstaff'.

**Bardolph**

Full stop!

**Falstaff**

New chapter. Another.

**Bardolph**

Another?

**Pistol**

Another?

**Falstaff**

And this one's name is Marguerita.

**Pistol**

They call her Meg.

**Falstaff**

She's another who's insisting I meet her,  
and she's another wife who spends the money.

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Spends the money.

**Falstaff**

These beauties shall soon become my bankers  
and my Eldorado.

Together we shall enjoy a spell of smiling  
weather,  
my Indian summer.

[4] So now, convey these scorching letters.

(*to Bardolph*)

You take this one to Meg; her virtue is untried.

I see your eager nose burns with excitement.

(*to Pistol*)

And you carry this one to Alice.

**Pistol**

I am an honest soldier, I won't be cast as  
Pandarus.

No, never.

**Falstaff**

Hoity-toity!

**Bardolph**

Sir John, you won't persuade me to play the part  
of go-between.

I have my...

**Falstaff**

What?

**Bardolph**

My honour.

**Falstaff** (*calling his page*)

Hey, page boy!

(*to Bardolph and Pistol*)

You two, go hang yourselves, but not on me.

(*to Robin*)

Two letters, take them to these two ladies.

Run off like lightning.

Hurry, run quickly, go, quickly, go, go, go!

(*to Bardolph and Pistol*)

[5] Your honour? Vermin!

You are forbidden by your honour, you?

You stink of pure hypocrisy,  
when you both know full well,  
we all have human failings.

We all do, yes, I do, I do.

Sometimes I choose to wander,  
risking the wrath of heaven,

and find myself astray without my honour.

My stratagem is being equivocal, enigmatic and  
elusive.

But you, you tattered scroungers,  
with your offensive, twisted and catlike glances,

and ghastly sneering laughter, can boast of honour.

Honour indeed! What honour?

What nonsense! What humbug!

Can this honour put a meal in your belly? No.

Can it mend an arm or a leg that is broken? Not so.

An ankle? No. A finger? No. Or a whisker? No.

Then honour's not a surgeon.

What is it? It's an expression.

And what is in this expression? Just a passing  
impression. Most ingenious.

Does honour help him who died last

Wednesday? No.

Lives it with the living? That neither,  
because it's falsely puffed up by human flattery.

It is pride that corrupts it, and calumny pollutes it.

As for me, I don't want it. No!

But getting back to you, you villains,

I've had enough now, I'll do without you.

Get out! Quickly, quickly, at the double, at the  
double!

It's the rope that will suit you the best.

Quickly, quickly, at the double, at the double!

Villains! Villains! Villains! Villains!

Out you go! Out you go!

**Scene Two**

*The garden of Ford's house*

**Meg**

[6] Dear Alice!

**Alice**

Meg!

**Meg**  
Nannetta!

**Alice**  
I had to find you,  
to share a little joke.  
(*to Mistress Quickly*)  
Good day, dear neighbour.

**Quickly** (*to Nannetta*)  
May good fortune be with you,  
my pretty rosebud.

**Alice**  
You won't believe this.  
The strangest thing has happened to me today.

**Meg**  
And to me.

**Quickly**  
What?

**Nannetta**  
What is it?

**Alice**  
Tell us your story.

**Meg**  
Tell us yours.

**Nannetta and Quickly**  
Tell us, tell us.

**Alice**  
You swear not to breathe a word?

**Meg**  
Well, would I?

**Quickly**  
My dear, how could I?

**Alice**  
Well then, if I were tempted to entertain  
proposals from the devil,  
I might achieve a title,  
as a knight's fair lady.

**Meg**  
Me too.

**Alice**  
You're joking!

**Meg**  
Don't waste the morning.  
Come over here and I'll tell you about it.

**Alice** (*bringing out a letter*)  
I've a letter here...

**Meg** (*also producing a letter*)  
...and me too.

**Nannetta and Quickly**  
Oh!

**Alice and Meg** (*handing each other their letters*)  
Read it.

**Meg**  
[7] 'Heavenly Alice, let me love you...'  
Good gracious! What does he mean?  
But for the names there is no difference.

**Alice**  
'Heavenly Meg, let me love you...

**Meg**  
...and adore you.'

**Alice**  
Here 'Meg', there 'Alice'.

**Meg**  
Identical phrases.  
'Don't ask the reason why, but say you...

**Alice**  
...love me.'  
I've never given him cause.

**Meg**  
This is a strange situation.

**Quickly**  
Let's read them calmly.

**Meg**  
The same exactly.

**Alice**  
Ink in the same colour.

**Quickly**  
Writing no different.

**Nannetta**  
Nor is the paper.

**Alice and Meg**  
'You are merry and charming,  
I'll be your merry companion,  
and we will make a lovely couple.'

**Alice**  
Ah!

**Nannetta**  
Him, her, you!

**Quickly**  
*Ménage à trois!*

**Alice**  
'Let us be coupled in an affair of laughter:  
a lovely lady, a man...

**All**  
...of such virility.'

**Alice**  
'Your radiant image will shed its light on me,  
just as the starlight, just as the starlight on infinity.'

**All**  
Ha, ha, ha!

**Alice**  
'From your inamorata, John Falstaff, Knight of  
the Garter.'

**All**  
[8] Monster!

**Alice**  
He needs a lesson.

**Nannetta**  
We'll teach it to him.

**Alice**  
And find a way to catch him.

**Nannetta**

Oh, yes! Undo him!

**Quickly**

How exciting!

**Meg**

Then dispatch him!

**Alice**

That barrel, that vandal,  
that mountain of batter,  
by trying to flatter,  
he's causing a scandal.  
The sweat must be dripping out,  
in rivulets running,  
while he goes on tripping out,  
his verses and punning.  
It's best that we let him  
continue his prattling,  
and then when we rattle him,  
we'll easily net him.  
You'll see how I wind him in,  
that monster of sin,  
as fast as a bobbin-pin,  
and faster, yes, I'll make him spin.

**Nannetta**

If you plan to tease him,  
let's do it together.  
I'm sure we can seize him,  
by cunning endeavour.  
The trap that we're setting him,  
will soon have him muddled.

We're half-way to getting him  
completely befuddled.  
In your clever coaxing,  
I have every confidence,  
and he'll get his recompense,  
when we've done our hoaxing.  
And if we talk cleverly,  
he'll be taken in.  
We'll see him sweat heavily,  
from that greasy skin.

**Meg**

In Windsor a gale  
has mysteriously blown up.  
A great, greedy whale  
has been suddenly thrown up.  
His cannon is loaded,  
the battle's beginning,  
but we shall be winning,  
when it has exploded.  
He'll find he's a laughing-stock,  
with senses diminished.  
He'll fall on our stumbling block,  
and he will be finished.  
And as we beguile him,  
with singing and dances,  
we'll subtly smile at him,  
with flirtatious glances.  
With bird-lime we'll smother him,  
right up to his chin,  
and when we uncover him,  
you'll see it, the fun will begin.

**Quickly**

His cannon is loaded,  
the battle's beginning.  
In Windsor a gale  
has mysteriously blown up.  
A great, greedy whale  
has been suddenly thrown up.  
But we will reward him,  
his grossness we'll shatter,  
we'll find we have floored him,  
with chirping and chatter.  
Four tongues going faster,  
with trilling and nattering,  
will cause him a shattering  
and final disaster.  
Our laughing and jollity  
will make quite a din,  
with cheerful frivolity.  
I'm sure we can win.

*(They move off. Enter Dr Caius, Bardolph, Fenton,  
Pistol and Ford.)*

**Dr Caius**

He's a scoundrel, thief and vandal!  
He's a Turk, a cheat, a hooligan.  
Yesterday he caused a scandal,  
when he made me look a fool again.  
If I file a law-suit on this day,  
it will be as I've predicted.  
He will find himself convicted,  
and the devil he will have to pay.  
And those rascals who stand beside you,

are not saints, I think you'll find,  
though they say they're flowers of  
virtue,  
they are people of his kind.

**Bardolph**

It is you that Falstaff's mocking,  
I must try to make it clear to you.  
He has planned a thing I'd fear to do,  
something bad and rather shocking.  
I'm a man of ammunition,  
and can't bear to see him drag you down.  
I would never, even for a crown,  
leave my honourable position.  
Master Ford, respect my warning,  
try to trap that man depraved.  
You must make your plans this  
morning,  
as you're only now half-saved.

**Fenton**

If you like I will not hesitate,  
to insist he mends his fences,  
or I'll bring him to his senses,  
with a blow he will not tolerate.  
It will be extremely comical,  
he'll be shaking like a jelly,  
when we rupture that huge belly,  
of proportions astronomical.  
With advice or with my dagger,  
when I meet him face to face,  
he'll retreat without that swagger,  
or I'll put him in his place.

**Pistol**

Sir John Falstaff has decided,  
to attempt to bring you to your knees,  
and above your honest forehead,  
hangs the dreadful sword of Damocles.  
Master Ford, I was his bodyguard,  
so I lost my reputation.  
Now I'm penitent and on my guard,  
hoping for my soul's salvation.  
Now you know the awful story,  
mark my words, for heaven's sake.  
Be alert, alert, alert!  
For your honour is at stake.

**Ford**

All around me I hear guzzling,  
swarms of wasps and hornets grumbling,  
and above this whirling, buzzing,  
great black thunder clouds are rumbling.  
In my head a drunken stuttering  
feels like fearful loud percussion,  
I'm surrounded by the muttering  
of conspirators' discussion.  
Four men talk and this one listens.  
Which of them shall I believe?  
If you wouldn't talk together,  
then perhaps I'd understand.

<sup>9</sup> Again, please.

**Pistol**

To put it briefly,  
the glutton's lust is chiefly  
for dark and devious doings.

He'll penetrate your palace,  
and ravish Mistress Alice,  
and... smash your bed into pieces!

**Dr Caius**

Scandalous!

**Ford**

Help me, God!

**Bardolph**

And he's written a letter.

**Pistol**

Which I was to deliver. I refused.

**Bardolph**

I refused.

**Pistol**

You must beware.

**Bardolph**

Be careful!

**Pistol**

His appetite's voracious,  
for anything curvaceous,  
young girls or married ladies.

**Bardolph**

Housemaids.

**Pistol**

Widows.

**Bardolph**

Virgins.

**Pistol and Bardolph**

Women.

**Bardolph**

Even now I can see the crown that Actaeon wore,  
sprouting from your forehead.

**Ford**

What do you mean by that?

**Bardolph**

The horns.

**Ford**

Terrible thought!

**Dr Caius**

He'll gobble the lot, if he can.

**Ford**

I'll keep a watch on Alice.  
I'll look out for that Falstaff.  
I'll keep my household free  
from lechery and sin.

*(The four women re-enter.)*

**Fenton**

It's her!

**Nannetta**

It's him!

**Ford**

It's her!

**Alice**

It's him!

**Dr Caius**

It's her!

**Meg**

It's him!

**Alice**

If he discovered...

**Nannetta**

Trouble!

**Alice**

He really mustn't see us.

**Meg**

Ford's very jealous?

**Alice**

Extremely!

**Quickly**

Quiet!

**Alice**

We must away.

*(Exeunt all except Fenton and Nannetta.)*

**Fenton**

<sup>10</sup> Pst, pst, Nannetta. Come here.

**Nannetta**

Sshh! Quiet! What is it?

**Fenton**

Two kisses.

**Nannetta**  
Then hurry.

**Fenton**  
I'll hurry.

**Nannetta**  
Lips that are burning...

**Fenton**  
Lips that are flowers...

**Nannetta**  
Lips that are learning  
Love's magic powers.

**Fenton**  
Lips that delight me,  
laughing and smiling,  
sweetly beguiling,  
how they excite me!  
Kisses so tender...

**Nannetta**  
Mischievous fingers!

**Fenton**  
Ah, let me linger,  
and then surrender.  
I love you!

**Nannetta**  
No, you mustn't, no!

**Fenton**  
Yes, two kisses.

**Nannetta**  
Stop it!

**Fenton**  
Ah, how I love you!

**Nannetta**  
They're coming!

**Fenton**  
Kisses may fade, but the memory lingers.

**Nannetta**  
Ever returning as the moon to heaven.

*(They separate as the women re-enter.)*

**Alice**  
<sup>11</sup> Falstaff has dared to mock me!

**Meg**  
And he deserves to suffer.

**Alice**  
Maybe I'll write an answer.

**Nannetta**  
A messenger would be better.

**Alice, Nannetta and Quickly**  
Yes!

**Alice (to Quickly)**  
You go and see him, alone.  
I think we'll offer him a secret encounter with me.

**Quickly**  
That is the answer.

**Nannetta**  
Yes, very funny.

**Alice**  
First you can flatter him,  
and sweetly captivate him.

**Nannetta**  
And then?

**Alice**  
And then we will deflate him nicely.

**Quickly**  
We'll merrily frustrate him.

**Alice**  
That schemer!

**Meg**  
Unscrupulous blasphemer!

**Alice**  
In one move check-mate him!

**Meg**  
We'll have him at our mercy.

**Alice**  
He's a glutton who's blown up by his inflated  
boasting.

**Nannetta**  
We'll chuck him in the water.

**Alice**  
We'll give him quite a roasting!

**Nannetta**  
How funny!

**Alice**  
We'll enjoy it!

**All**  
Enjoy it, enjoy it!

**Meg (to Quickly)**  
Make sure the woodcock falls into the gin-trap.

**Quickly**  
Who's coming?

**Meg**  
I think there's someone watching.  
*(Exeunt Alice, Meg, and Quickly. Fenton joins Nannetta.)*

**Fenton**  
<sup>12</sup> Back to the jousting...

**Nannetta**  
Back to the tilting. Attack me!

**Fenton**  
Parry!

**Nannetta**  
The target's higher.  
Ah love, the agile one in battle,  
he has decided the fragile one  
conquers the stronger.

**Fenton**  
Love is an archer,  
who never misses.

**Nannetta**  
Lips are his bow strings.

**Fenton**

His shafts are kisses.  
Careful, I'm aiming my fatal caresses,  
swift as an arrow, at your fair tresses.

**Nannetta**

Now I have caught you.

**Fenton**

Now let me kiss you.

**Nannetta**

I can't resist you,  
but you're my captive.

**Fenton**

Forgive, forgive,  
I beg you for mercy,  
and then...

**Nannetta**

...and then?

**Fenton**

Perhaps, back to the fighting!

**Nannetta**

Sweet are the battles,  
that soon are over.  
Stop now!

**Fenton**

But I love you.

**Nannetta**

They're coming! No more now.  
*(She runs off.)*

**Fenton**

Kisses may fade, but the memory lingers...

**Nannetta** *(offstage)*

Ever returning as the moon to heaven.

*(Enter Ford, Dr Caius, Bardolph and Pistol.)*

**Bardolph**

<sup>13</sup> You'll gather from his boasting,  
he's certain no one's smarter.

**Ford**

You know where I can find him?  
Tell me.

**Pistol**

You'll find him at the Garter.

**Ford**

You two must introduce me,  
but with a different surname.  
You'll see him falling headlong,  
into the trap that's waiting.  
But you must keep it secret.

**Bardolph**

Rely on my discretion,  
or my name isn't Bardolph...

**Pistol**

...or my name isn't Pistol.

**Ford**

We're agreed, then.

**Bardolph**

Your secret is safe with us.

**Pistol**

I won't say nothing.

**Ford**

You know what to do?

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Yes.

**Ford**

Here's my hand.

**Dr Caius**

It may be that your predicament  
is a problem that's unthinkable.  
My advice you'll have to follow,  
if you want to know the truth.  
As it is with a medicament,  
that's so bitter it's undrinkable.  
If you take a swig and swallow,  
it provides you with the proof.

**Bardolph**

Master Ford, you are in danger,  
and you face a great calamity.  
Fat Sir John pursues your lady,  
in a manner far from right.  
That revolting, drunken stranger,  
that huge barrel of depravity,  
has been plotting something shady,  
and he's spoiling for a fight.

**Pistol**

Be prepared to take a demi-john,  
and to fill his tankard steadily.  
When you've got him drunk and merry,

he'll reveal his secrets readily.

As a willow bends to water,  
so Sir John inclines to wine.  
When his paunch is full of sherry,  
you'll discover his design.

**Fenton**

Here a group of men is muttering,  
there's an ill wind darkly blowing.  
There's a flock of women chattering,  
and there's mystery in the air.  
But Nannetta, my heart is fluttering,  
how my love is overflowing.  
We shall be like stars that shine in the heavens,  
with our true love to share.

**Ford**

You will watch me as I wilfully  
trap that object of derision.  
I'll find out his plan so skilfully,  
that I will avoid suspicion.  
If I swindle him successfully,  
it will not have been in vain.  
I'll maintain my good position,  
and I'll make him cry in pain.

*Alice (to Quickly)*

<sup>14</sup> Enough of this chattering.

*Nannetta (to Quickly)*

Run off and prepare your part.

*Alice*

I want him yowling like an amorous tom-cat.  
Remember!

**Quickly**

Yes!

**Nannetta**

We're ready.

**Alice**

Till later... Good day, Meg.

**Quickly**

Nannetta, good day!

**Nannetta and Meg**

Good day!

**Alice**

You'll see how that belly, that billowing belly...

**All**

...is blown up until it bursts!

**Alice**

'My radiant image will shine for all to see,  
just as the starlight on infinity.'

**All**

Just as the starlight on infinity.

Ha, ha, ha!

**Act II**

**Scene One**

*The Garter Inn*

**Bardolph and Pistol**

<sup>16</sup> We're converted, we've reverted.

**Falstaff**

Rascals return to vice like cats to the larder...

**Bardolph and Pistol**

And we're returning to your service.

**Bardolph**

Sir John, here at the door a certain lady is waiting,  
hoping you will receive her.

**Falstaff**

Admit her.

**Quickly** (*entering*)

<sup>16</sup> Sir, your servant!

**Falstaff**

Good morning, my good woman.

**Quickly**

Sir, your servant!

If it should please your worship,  
I'd like, perhaps in private,  
to give you a little message.

**Falstaff**

And I will hear you.

(*to Bardolph and Pistol*)

Skedaddle!

**Quickly**

Sir, your servant!

I'm sent by Mistress Ford.

**Falstaff**

Oh, yes?

**Quickly**

Alas! Lord, how she suffers!

You're a mighty seducer!

**Falstaff**

I know. Continue.

**Quickly**

Alice is suffering from a desperate passion for you.  
She told me she had received the note you sent.

I'm here to thank you, and to tell you her  
husband

is always out from eleven till twelve.

**Falstaff**

From eleven till twelve.

**Quickly**

And at that time of the morning,  
your grace may freely enter,  
and Alice will receive you into her chamber.

Lord, how she suffers!

You won't believe she's so unhappy!

Master Ford is so jealous!

**Falstaff**

From eleven till twelve.

Tell the lady I await that hour with impatience.

Where duty calls, I never fail.

**Quickly**

That's perfect.

<sup>17</sup> I've another commission to bring your worship.

**Falstaff**

Tell me.

**Quickly**

The lovely Meg, an angel all men adore when  
they see her,

and she too sends me here with such tender,  
loving greeting.

But since her husband's seldom out, she can't  
arrange a meeting.

Lord, how she suffers, that pure white lily of  
sweetness and truth!

How you bewitch all women!

**Falstaff**

I weave no magic spell,

but find I charm them easily, as I am.

Tell me, do they know about each other?

**Quickly**

Oh no! We women can conceal things,  
don't you worry.

**Falstaff**

Let me now repay my debt.

**Quickly**

The sower of bounty shall reap true love.

**Falstaff** (*giving her money*)

Take this, mercurial messenger.

Please greet my two admirers.

**Quickly**

With pleasure.

(*Exit Quickly. Enter Bardolph, Pistol and then Ford.*)

**Falstaff**

<sup>18</sup> Alice is mine!

Go, old Sir Jack, go, follow your calling.

This ancient battered body can still arise,  
to answer the voice of love.  
Beautiful women everywhere desire me,  
and risk their lives for me.  
Good body of Sir John, how well I've fed you,  
go, I am grateful.

**Bardolph**

<sup>19</sup> Sir John, outside there is a certain Master Brook,  
who is anxious to speak with you.  
He's brought you a handsome demi-john of  
sherry,  
in the hope that you will agree to see him.

**Falstaff**

Did you say Master Brook?

**Bardolph**

Yes.

**Falstaff**

Bring him in, such brooks are always welcome,  
that overflow with sparkling liquor. Get him!  
Go, old Sir Jack, follow your calling.

**Ford** (*entering*)

<sup>20</sup> Good sir, may God be with you!

**Falstaff**

I hope He is with you too, sir.

**Ford**

I hope you'll forgive this indiscretion,  
and I ask for your pardon if, somewhat  
unexpectedly,

I venture to approach you without further  
formality.

**Falstaff**

You are extremely welcome.

**Ford**

In me, you see a man who has a great abundance  
of every worldly treasure.

A man who is prepared to spend and squander  
his money,  
just... just as his fancy takes him.  
Master Brook at your service.

**Falstaff**

Dear Master Brook, I greet you.  
I desire to make your excellent acquaintance.

**Ford**

Dearest Sir John,  
I'd like to have a word with you in private.

**Bardolph** (*to Pistol*)

Look, Pistol!

**Pistol** (*to Bardolph*)

Quiet!

**Bardolph**

Watch him! We'll get him,  
into the ambush that we have set him!

**Pistol**

He won't get out of it.

**Bardolph**

Quiet!

**Pistol**

Quiet!

**Falstaff** (*to Bardolph and Pistol*)

You two, shog off!  
(*to Ford*)

I'm listening.

**Ford**

Sir John, if I may be so bold,  
let me quote you a proverb old as Time;  
'To the man that has money every door opens.'  
For money's like a lucky charm,  
and he who has it conquers all.

**Falstaff**

Money's an excellent captain,  
who's first into battle.

**Ford**

Well said, sir. This bag is full of money,  
which frankly weighs me down.  
Sir John, would you agree,  
to help me bear this heavy burden?

**Falstaff**

With pleasure, but I'm not sure,  
why I deserve to be your porter?

**Ford**

I'll tell you why.

<sup>21</sup> In Windsor there's a lady, lovely and so  
enchanting.  
Her name is Alice, her husband, a certain Ford.

**Falstaff**

I'm listening.

**Ford**

I love her, she does not love me.  
I write to her, she won't answer.  
I watch her, she ignores me,  
pursue her, and she avoids me.  
I've squandered half my fortune,  
on her I've lavished treasure.  
I have devised with trepidation,  
whatever might give pleasure.  
Alas, all came to nothing.  
I loiter on her doorstep,  
neglected and empty-handed,  
and sing a madrigal.

**Falstaff**

'Ah love, ah love, that will give no respite,  
until this life is over.'

**Ford**

...over.

**Falstaff**

Love's like a shadow...

**Ford**

He who flees it...

**Falstaff**

Pursues it...

**Ford**

And who pursues it...



**Falstaff**

Flees it.

**Ford and Falstaff**

Ah love...

**Ford**

This madrigal I sing her I've learnt at bitter cost.

**Falstaff**

And that's the price of living for him who's loved and lost.

**Ford**

'Oh love, oh love, that will give no respite...'

**Falstaff**

She sent you no promise of satisfaction?

**Ford**

No.

**Falstaff**

Then why do you confide in me?

**Ford**

I'll tell you why.

You are a man of breeding, charming, quick-witted and gallant.

You are a fearsome fighter, you are a man of talent.

Yes, I mean it, and offer you this sack of money.

Spend all of it, go and spend it and squander it,

I offer you my fortune!

You'll be rich, you'll be happy. But you must earn it.

Do all you can to conquer Alice.

**Falstaff**

Curious request.

**Ford**

I mean it.

[22] This cruel beauty has a reputation, of true innocence and chastity. And as I watch her flaunt her impregnable morality, this paragon of virtue seems to say, 'No, do not touch me!'

But if you would seduce her, then maybe I could hope.

For one fall brings another, and then...

What do you say?

**Falstaff**

Well, first of all, without a hesitation,

I will accept your money.

Then, gentleman's word of honour,

Here's my hand, sir.

I shall succeed where you have failed!

You, I'm sure, will enjoy the wife of Master Ford.

**Ford**

Thank you!

**Falstaff**

I know I'll be successful.

I see no need to keep this from you,

in half-an-hour these arms will be around her.

**Ford**

Who?

**Falstaff**

Your Alice. Only just now she sent a message, discreetly,

to tell me that her stupid blockhead of a husband is absent from eleven till twelve.

**Ford**

From eleven till twelve!

And do you know him?

**Falstaff**

I hope the devil will take him to hell, to join Menelaus, his ancestor!

That idiot, you'll see, you'll see!

Yes, I will cuckold him neatly, neatly!

If he disturbs me, a hurricane of blows between the horns will send him reeling.

That Master Ford is a donkey,

you'll see how I shall trick him.

Yes, I shall cuckold him neatly, that idiot!

But it's late. You wait for me here.

I must prepare my person.

*(Exit.)*

**Ford**

[23] I'm dreaming! Or is this true? Two ghastly horns are bursting out of my forehead.

I'm dreaming! Master Ford! Sleeping?

Rouse yourself, quick, get going!

Your wife's unfaithful, destruction stalks your household,

and your name and your honour, even your bedroom.

The hour is decided; she means to betray you.

You are mocked and derided!

My friends will tell me,

that a husband who's jealous is a madman.

Behind my back, slander and scandal follow, dogging my footsteps, murmuring and sneering.

Who would be married? What madness!

Woman, I curse you!

Trust in your wife and you'll soon be proved an idiot.

Would I entrust my beer to a German?

Open my larder to a Belgian glutton?

Unlock my cellar to an Irish drunkard? No!

My wife can't be trusted. A filthy scandal!

And it's here in my heart that word re-echoes: a cuckold! Donkey, old goat, how could she do it!

Ah, a cuckold! But you will not escape, no!

Lecher, glutton, be damned, you hulk of mutton!

First let them couple.

I'll catch them at it, they'll couple.

I'll catch them! I'm choking!

I will avenge this outrage!

I swear with all my heart,

I'm thankful evermore that I am jealous.

**Falstaff** *(entering)*

[24] How do I look? I'm ready.

So, shall we go together?

**Ford**

I'll show you where to find her.

**Falstaff**

After you.

**Ford**

After you.

**Falstaff**

No, no, you're a guest in my house. I'll follow.

**Ford**

You go.

**Falstaff**

It's late though, my rendezvous is urgent.

**Ford**

Of course, I understand.

**Falstaff**

You first!

**Ford**

Please!

**Falstaff**

All right.

**Ford and Falstaff**

We'll go together.

COMPACT DISC TWO

**Scene Two**

*Ford's house*

**Alice**

- I think we should propose a bill, down at the House of Commons, for a tax on fat men.

**Quickly** (*entering*)

Hello there!

**Alice**

You're back!

**Meg**

Success?

**Quickly**

It will be easy!

**Alice**

Brava!

**Quickly**

We'll teach him how to cut a caper.

**Alice and Meg**

Splendid!

**Quickly**

He fell headlong into our booby trap.

**Alice**

Tell us what happened, tell us.

**Meg**

Tell us.

**Alice**

Tell us.

**Quickly**

- I hurry down the river to the Garter, and I ask to be shown into the room of our Cavalier, on confidential business.

Sir John himself graciously deigns to see me.

He welcomes me in a pompous condescending fashion:

'Good morning, my good woman.'

'Sir, your servant!'

And then I curtsyed, giving my obsequious greeting,

then gave the tempting invitation.

The bait was swallowed, you should have seen him,

bursting with anticipation.

- It's really very simple; he's utterly persuaded that you are both besotted, with his enormous assets. And soon you'll have him falling at your feet.

**Alice**

When?

**Quickly**

This morning, here, from eleven till twelve.

**Meg**

From eleven till twelve.

**Alice**

It's that already!

**Meg**

From eleven till twelve.

**Alice**

From eleven till twelve.

**Quickly**

From eleven till twelve.

**Alice**

Come here! Ned! Will!

(*to Quickly*)

I've planned it out already.

(*calling out to the servants*)

Bring in that basket full of dirty linen.

**Quickly**

We'll catch him good and proper.

**Alice**

Nannetta, why aren't you laughing?

What's wrong? You're weeping.

What's wrong? Come, tell your mother.

**Nannetta**

My father...

**Alice**

Well, what?

**Nannetta**

My father tells me I have to marry Dr Caius.

**Alice**

That pompous pedant?

**Quickly**

Oh, no!

**Meg**

Not that bonehead!

**Alice**

He's so boring!

**Nannetta**

And much too old for me!

**All**

No, no!

**Nannetta**

I'd rather die of suffocation...

**Alice**

...under a mountain of smelly old turnip heads!

**Quickly**

That's settled!

**Meg**

Brava!

**Alice**

Don't you worry.

**Nannetta**

Thank heavens.

To Dr Caius, I shall answer 'No!'

**Alice** (*to the servants with the basket*)

Put it down there. Then when you hear me call you, collect the basket and empty it in the river.

**Nannetta**

Yes!

**Alice**

Quiet.

(*to the servants*)

That's all now.

**Nannetta**

Windsor will be flooded!

**Alice**

Set the scene for the seduction.

Put the chair there.

**Nannetta**

Use my lute.

**Alice**

The screen looks better open.

That's perfect, like that! A little wider.

The comedy is only just beginning!

Witty young women of Windsor, the time has come!

Time to raise the roof with torrents of laughter. Laughter that bubbles and crackles and dances; that blazes so brightly with darts and with lances.

Witty young women, you sisters in laughter, banish grimaces, brighten your faces.

Get to your places, the moment has come, the fireworks are starting, the fun has begun!

(*to Meg*)

Now Meg, you must do it all, just as we planned it.

**Meg**

I hope you'll be safe, with your great paramour!

**Quickly**

I'll be on the look-out.

**Alice** (*to Quickly*)

Come quick if I whistle.

**Nannetta**

I'll wait on the stairs, keeping watch by the door.

**Alice**

It's time we showed these men that honest women gently provoke them only for honest reasons. But the woman who won't join in the joking, she is the wife who's cheating.

**Nannetta and Meg**

<sup>4</sup> Witty young women of Windsor...

**Alice**

Women of Windsor...

**Nannetta, Meg and Alice**

We'll raise all the rafters with torrents of laughter.

**Quickly**

Off you go! He's here!

**Alice**

You're sure?

**Quickly**

Just at the corner.

**Nannetta**

Hurry!

**Quickly**

He's about to come up.

**Alice** (*to Nannetta*)

You, in there.

Meg, in there. Get ready!

**Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

Get ready!

(*They hide. Enter Falstaff.*)

**Falstaff**

<sup>5</sup> At last I've caught you, my heavenly jewel, I've caught you! Were I to die now, I'd be happy. I need to live no longer, after this single hour of ecstasy.

**Alice**

Oh, my dearest Sir John!

**Falstaff**

My lovely Alice!

I am lacking in elegance.

I cannot flatter with flowery phrases, but there's one wicked thought which I'll confess to you.

**Alice**

Which is?

**Falstaff**

Which is...

I wish that Master Ford was on his way to heaven.

**Alice**

But why?

**Falstaff**

But why? You know why. So you might be my Lady, and Falstaff be your Lord.

**Alice**

Pitiful Lady indeed!

**Falstaff**

Fit for a king! I see you now,  
emblazoned with my coat of arms,  
decked out with pearls and rubies,  
to enhance your snow-white breasts.  
The fire that flashes in your eyes  
is brighter to me than diamonds.  
Those little feet so delicate,  
peeping from velvet slippers.  
You'd shine for me more dazzlingly  
than any shooting star.

**Alice**

I know that precious jewels don't suit me,  
and gold's a power that I abhor.  
I'll wear this veil so resolutely,  
perhaps a flower,  
I ask no more.

**Falstaff**

Enchantress!

**Alice**

You are too bold!

**Falstaff**

We are alone, and no one can disturb us.

**Alice**

And so?

**Falstaff**

I love you!

**Alice**

Adultery is sinful!

**Falstaff**

To be in love is not a sin, you know it.

**Alice**

Sir John!

**Falstaff**

And I am not afraid to show it.  
I love you! And at last I've found you.

**Alice**

If I could only get my arms around you.

**Falstaff**

6 When I was page to the noble Duke of York,  
I was so tender.

I was a vision, a mirage, a spirit so slender.  
Those were the days of merriment and splendour,  
those were the days I happily remember.  
I was so quick and so supple and nimble,  
that I could have hidden myself in a thimble.  
When I was young I was tender, so tender,  
I was a vision, a mirage, a spirit so slender.

**Alice**

You're making fun of me!  
I fear I cannot trust you.  
You love another.

**Falstaff**

Who?

**Alice**

Meg.

**Falstaff**

Not Meg! I cannot bear the sight of her.

**Alice**

Don't deceive me, Sir John.

**Falstaff**

It seems I've waited all these years to hold you.  
I love you!

**Alice**

Please let me go!

**Falstaff**

Angel!

**Quickly (offstage)**

Oh, Mistress Alice!

**Falstaff**

Who is that?

**Quickly**

Oh, Mistress Alice!

**Alice**

I'm here!

**Quickly (entering)**

7 Mistress Alice,  
it's Mistress Meg, she wants to see you.  
Huffing, puffing, in a panic...

**Falstaff**

Talk of the devil!

**Quickly**

She's coming up. I did my best to stop her.

**Falstaff**

Where can I hide?

**Alice**

Quick, behind that screen.

*(Falstaff hides behind the screen. Quickly signals to Meg to come in, then leaves.)*

**Meg (entering)**

Oh, Alice! You are shamed,  
overthrown, undone for ever.  
You dare not lose a moment, quickly!

**Alice**

O God in heaven!  
What's happened?

**Meg**

Your husband's on his way.  
He's ranting and raving, saying...

**Alice (aside)**

Speak a bit louder.

**Meg**

He'll hunt him down and kill him!

**Alice (aside)**

Stop laughing!

**Meg**

And he is possessed by furious, burning  
indignation,  
cursing loudly all the daughters of Eve!

**Alice**

Oh, God in heaven!

**Meg**

He says you're entertaining a lover.  
He knows you have a man in your room!

**Quickly** (*coming back*)

Oh, Mistress Alice!  
Your husband's here! Go, save yourself!  
He's raging like a tempest!  
Billowing, screaming, bellowing!  
He's gone out of his mind.  
He says you have a lover!

**Alice**

You mean it or you're joking?

**Quickly**

I mean it.

8 He jumped the hedge, and he trampled the  
hydrangea.  
Behind him there's a great crowd of people.  
You are in danger.  
Indeed, I think I hear his arrival.

**Ford** (*offstage, shouting*)

Bloody villain!

**Falstaff**

The devil's on the war-path,  
I fear for my survival.

(*Enter Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton, Bardolph, Pistol  
and Nannetta.*)

**Ford**

Lock all of the doorways and bolt all the  
windows.

Come, follow me quickly and track down the  
vermin!

Run after the fox and destroy him!  
Search all of the passages!

**Bardolph and Pistol**

We'll catch him!

**Ford**

Don't let him escape!  
Put a man at the doorway.

**Alice**

My dear, are you crazy?  
What's wrong?

**Ford**

Who's hiding in the basket?

**Alice**

It's the laundry.

**Ford**

You harlot, you trollop!  
(*to Dr Caius*)  
You, take all my keys.  
Go and empty the cupboards.  
(*to Alice*)

You have deceived me!  
To hell with the laundry!  
Lock all of the gates in the garden!  
Suspenders... and stockings...  
(*He pulls all the laundry out of the basket.*)

Just you wait till I catch you!  
Dirty napkins, out! Out!

Dirty nightshirts... I'll get him!  
The bedclothes...  
Disgusting old nightcaps...not here!

**Alice, Meg and Quickly**

What a whirlwind!

**Ford**

Let's search in the kitchen,  
the cellar, the attic, the parlour, the chimneys,  
the bedroom!

**Alice**

He's delirious!

**Quickly**

Now's our chance.

**Alice**

How is he going to escape?

**Meg**

In the basket.

**Alice**

No! I think he would break it.  
He's much too heavy.

**Falstaff** (*coming out from behind the screen and  
running to the basket*)

Let's see, yes, that's it, that's it!

**Alice**

I'll run and fetch the servants.

**Meg**

Sir John! What's this? You?

**Falstaff** (*getting into the basket*)

Darling! You and you only! Rescue me!

**Quickly**

Hurry!

**Meg**

Help him!

**Quickly**

Push him!

**Meg**

Shove him!

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow! I'm in. Now cover me.

**Quickly**

Hurry! Fill up the basket.

**Nannetta** (*to Fenton, quietly*)

9 Come here!

**Fenton**

A riot!

**Nannetta**

Mad as a hatter!  
This way, but quiet.

**Fenton**

Madmen don't matter.

**Nannetta**

Passion around us, passion above.  
They're mad with fury...

(*They hide under the table.*)

**Fenton**

...and we with love.

**Nannetta**

This way, but slowly.

**Fenton**

They'll never find us.

**Nannetta**

We're safe in our harbour!

**Fenton**

Our lovers' arbour.

**Nannetta**

Stay quiet, I've told you.

**Fenton**

Come, let me hold you.

**Nannetta**

Here we may hide as my arms enfold you.

**Nannetta and Fenton**

...my arms enfold you.

*(Enter Ford, Dr Caius, Bardolph, Pistol and townspeople. Quickly and Meg are beside the basket where Falstaff is hidden.)*

**Dr Caius**

<sup>10</sup> I'll kill him! I'll slaughter him!

**Ford**

Where's that vandal? I'll kill him.

Yes?

**Pistol**

No.

**Ford**

Well?

**Bardolph**

Not yet, no.

**Ford**

Search through the house, top to bottom.

**Dr Caius**

There's no one up here.

**Ford**

I'll swear that he's hiding right under our noses. I know it!

**Dr Caius**

Sir John, I'll be happy to have the last laugh, when you hang from the gallows.

**Ford**

Come out, you seducer, or I'll tear up the floorboards!

**Dr Caius**

Surrender!

**Ford**

Come out, you fat coward, we're waiting.

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Can't find him!

**Ford**

Well, carry on looking!

Surrender, you dungheap!

Not here!

**Dr Caius**

You've had it! Not here!

Bloody drunkard! Fat pig! We are near!

**Ford**

You scoundrel! You bastard!

**Dr Caius**

You scoundrel! You bastard!

**Ford**

You scoundrel! You dog!

**Dr Caius**

You scoundrel! You dog!

*(During the uproar, Nannetta and Fenton, under the table, have been exchanging tender endearments. Now, as it dies down for a moment, the sound of a kiss is clearly heard.)*

**Nannetta and Fenton**

*(They kiss.)*

**Dr Caius and Ford**

There!

**Ford**

<sup>11</sup> When I catch you...

**Dr Caius**

I'll unseat you.

**Ford**

When I snatch you...

**Dr Caius**

How I'll beat you.

**Ford**

You'll regret it.

**Dr Caius**

I will whip you like a dog.

**Ford**

I'll smash your face in.

**Dr Caius**

Say your prayers.

**Ford**

I'll make you sorry!

**Quickly**

Though we are pretending to sort out the linen, we'll keep a sharp eye on the man we're defending.

**Meg**

Among the confusion, we'll keep him protected, but if we're suspected, keep calm and collected.

**Quickly**

If Ford can discover the truth of the game, we'll laugh at his madness and put him to shame.

**Meg and Quickly**

Until we are sure that the game has been won, the greater the danger, the greater the fun.

**Dr Caius**

On your guard! Take care!

**Ford**

Take care! Prepare for the last battle.

**Dr Caius**

Beware!

**Ford**

I'll unseat you...

**Dr Caius**

When I catch you...

**Ford**

How I'll beat you...

**Dr Caius**

When I snatch you!

**Bardolph** (*running in with Pistol*)  
I can't find him.

**Pistol**

He has vanished.

**Ford**

Sshh! Come closer. I have found him!  
(*pointing to the table*)  
He's in there with Mistress Alice.

**Bardolph**

Dirty, godforsaken drunkard!

**Dr Caius, Pistol and Ford**

Silence!

**Ford**

Save that for later.

**Falstaff**

I'm gasping!

**Quickly**

Get back there!

**Ford**

Can't you hear their lustful kisses?

**Meg**

He's got to stay under!

**Quickly**

You're risking your neck if you surface.

**Bardolph**

We can catch the greedy glutton,  
while he's gobbling up your Missus!

**Falstaff**

I'm roasting!

**Meg**

Stay under! Stay under!

**Quickly**

Get back there!

**Ford**

Let us think.

**Fenton**

When you are smiling at me so sweetly,  
you are completely divine, beguiling.  
I fell in love with you at first sight,  
and in your smile both our hearts unite.

**Nannetta**

While all the others battle around us,  
we can be kissing while they surround us.  
Here with our love, we're deaf to confusion.  
In our seclusion we'll fly to heaven above.

**Ford**

I won't attack him till I've made a plan of battle.

**Bardolph, Pistol and Chorus**

Bravo!

**Dr Caius**

We'll shoot the elephant,  
when we catch him *in flagrante!*

**Ford**

With one masterly transaction,  
we will see him fall in action.  
(*to Pistol and some servants*)  
You approach them from the far side,  
(*to Bardolph and Dr Caius*)  
while we three can hold the nearer.  
(*to the others*)  
And you others go behind them,  
so they're finished when we find them.

**Fenton**

I wish this moment would last for ever.

**Nannetta**

Then we could spend every day together.

**Bardolph, Pistol and Chorus**

What a wonderful tactician!

**Dr Caius**

We are ready in position.

**Falstaff**

I'm roasting! I'm melting!

**Meg and Quickly**

Stay under!

**Dr Caius, Bardolph, Pistol and Chorus**

Into battle!

**Meg**

He is gasping for someone to fan him.

**Falstaff**

I'm sweating so much that I fear I will drown.

**Quickly**

If you don't keep quiet, I'll gag you!

**Meg and Quickly**

Down!

**Nannetta**

Among this madness, sighing and laughter,  
though I am smiling, my heart is sighing.

**Fenton**

I see your dark eyes beneath their lashes.  
Their wondrous beauty sparkles and flashes.

**Ford**

Listen, come a little nearer.  
What pathetic, love-sick murmurs.  
Soon a thunderbolt will tumble,  
on that nest of nightingales.

**Bardolph** (*to Pistol*)

They're canoodling, and they're warbling,  
you can hear their love duet.

**Dr Caius** (*to Ford*)

Listen, listen, I can hear them,  
and now I'm certain, yes, I'm positive,  
women are the worst deceivers.

**Pistol** (*to Bardolph*)

We will teach him such a lesson,  
when we catch him in the act.  
This sweet song won't last much longer.  
He will have to change his tune.

**Chorus**

When he falls he won't escape us,  
we have caught the infidel.  
When he runs into the devil,  
he'll be on his way to hell.

**Meg**

We'll speak *sotto voce*, ignoring his cries,  
while he bubbles over in front of our eyes.

**Quickly**

He's dirtied himself with so loathsome a deed,  
to give him a wash will be mercy indeed.

**Nannetta**

Softly we'll murmur our love.

**Fenton**

Tell me you love me.

**Nannetta**

So much I love you, love you.

**Ford**

Quiet, look out! This is the moment.  
Quiet, get ready. Ready to strike!

**Falstaff**

Pouff! This stinking laundry!  
I'm dying! Please take me away!

**Alice**

Be quiet!

**Meg and Quickly**

Our whale's getting restless.  
He's steaming with frustration.

**Dr Caius**

Give the word!

**Falstaff**

Help! Help! Help!

**Ford**

One... two... three!

*(They overturn the table.)*

**Dr Caius**

<sup>12</sup> It's not him!

**Alice, Meg and Quickly**

You are defeated!

**Bardolph, Ford, Pistol and Chorus**

We have been cheated!

**Nannetta, Fenton and Dr Caius**

Ah!

**Ford** (*to Nannetta*)

I cannot trust my daughter!  
*(to Fenton)*

Get out to save your life!  
How often must I tell you?  
She'll never be your wife!

**Bardolph**

He's there, stop him!

**Ford**

Where?

**Pistol**

There on the staircase.

**Ford**

Get hold of him!

**All the Men and Chorus**

We'll catch him!

**Quickly**

You'll catch him in Hades!

*(The men run off.)*

**Alice**

Ned! Will! Tom! Alexander! Come, quickly,  
quickly!

Take the basket and tip it out of the window,  
and into the river.

There, by that group of women down on the bank,  
who are washing out their linen.

**Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

Yes, yes, yes, yes!

**Nannetta** (*to the servants, struggling with the basket*)

We have a lot of washing.

**Alice**

Run down and call my husband.

*(to Meg)*

Then we can prove that we were only joking.  
So when he sees poor Falstaff cold and soaking,  
he'll know he has no reason to be jealous.

**Quickly**

Heave-ho!

**Alice and Meg**

Together.

**Nannetta**

The bottom's going to crack!

**Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

Heave!

**Alice**

He's going!

**Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

He's going! Ha, ha!

**Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

He's going!

*(The men return. Alice leads her husband to the window. They watch as Falstaff, the basket and the laundry go tumbling into the river.)*

**All**

What a crash!



Act III

Scene One

*Outside the Garter Inn*

Falstaff

<sup>13</sup> Hey! Landlord!

Dreadful world! Treacherous world! Evil world!  
(*to the landlord*)

Landlord, bring me a pint of mulled wine.

Appalling that, after years of adventure,  
a knight so bold, and so distinguished,  
should find himself trussed up inside a basket,  
to be swathed in foul linen while silly women  
titter,  
and flung into the river like some mongrel's  
litter.

Without this mighty belly, which floated to the  
surface,

I would have perished. Brutal ending, bloated to  
bursting.

Evil world, where is virtue now? Your world is  
crumbling.

Go, go, old Jack, go. You must continue,  
keep stumbling towards your tombstone.

With you, the last great flower  
of true English chivalry will vanish.

Oh, what a day of blackness. Oh, help me, God!  
I'm far too fat. I am growing old.

I'll mix a pint of wine with this barrel of river  
water.

Better, to drink good wine,  
and take one's ease in the sunshine.

Sweet employment! For good wine dispels  
all the gloomy vapours of our depression,  
brightens the eye, sharpens the wit.  
From the mouth, it flies to the brain,  
and there wakes a little demon cricket who is  
trilling.

Its first vibration brings us exhilaration.

Trilling with heart and soul the air about us  
thrills with expectation.

Then with mad elation, the trill travels through  
every nation  
till music fills the world!

(*Enter Mistress Quickly. Alice, Nannetta, Meg,  
Ford, Dr Caius and Fenton hide at the back.*)

Quickly (*curtseying*)

<sup>14</sup> Sir, your servant!  
Good Mistress Ford...

Falstaff

To hell with you and with Mistress Ford!  
I was thrown into the ford! My belly's full of ford!

Quickly

You are mistaken.

Falstaff

A plague on you! I can still hear the ranting,  
of that mad, jealous husband.

My body's black and blue and aching,  
from being twisted and pushed and pummelled  
about,

squashed up double under that dirty, stinking  
laundry.

Think of that! Think of that! A man of my  
proportion,  
reducing just like butter in the heat of such  
contortion.

Then, when I was nicely sweating,  
and toasting and almost roasting,  
I was dumped in the river.  
Those bitches!

Quickly

Ah, do not blame her. You are mistaken.

Falstaff

Off with you!

Quickly

You ought to blame those stupid, hamfisted  
servants!

Alice is weeping, wailing, prays to the virgin.  
Lord, how she suffers! She loves you.

(*hands him a letter*)

This letter...

Alice and Ford

He's reading.

Nannetta

He'll take another tumble.

Alice

Men never learn their lessons!

Meg

Conceal yourself!

Dr Caius

Still reading.

Ford

Still reading. We've caught him.

Falstaff (*reading*)

'I shall wait for you at midnight in Windsor  
Great Park.

You must come disguised as the Black Huntsman...  
to Herne's oak tree.'

Quickly

How love loves the mysterious!

Alice has made a plan for your meeting,  
using a tale that old wives tell.

At that oak, the witches hold their Sabbaths.

There Herne the Hunter hanged himself,  
upon its ancient branches.

There are those who believe that he haunts it still.

Falstaff

Come with me. Inside we can talk more freely.  
Tell me the whole story.

(*Falstaff leads Quickly into the inn.*)

Quickly

<sup>15</sup> Just as the chimes of midnight are resounding,  
echoing through the dark and silent gloom,  
up come the spirits from their graves and wander...

Ford

We've got him!

Alice (*continuing the story*)

Just as the chimes of midnight are resounding,  
echoing through the dark and silent gloom,  
up come the spirits from their graves and wander;

then, through the park,  
comes the ghost of Herne himself.  
He glides along so slowly, slowly, slowly,  
with the lethargic step of one who's sleeping.  
His face is colourless...

**Nannetta**  
Oh, I'll be frightened!

**Meg**  
I am already shivering with fear.

**Alice**  
It's only a fairy tale, that nannies  
tell children at bedtime,  
to settle them, and to send them to sleep.

**Alice, Nannetta and Meg**  
Beware, for our vengeance will make grown men  
weep!

**Alice**  
His face is colourless, and as he approaches the  
tree,  
on which he breathed his final farewell,  
fairies surround him, and upon his forehead,  
the antlers rising, rising.

**Ford**  
Splendid! How the sight of those antlers  
will delight me.

**Alice**  
Careful! You should apologise.  
I let you off too lightly.

**Ford**  
Forgive me, I have suffered for my jealousy.

**Alice**  
Beware, lest you're discovered,  
searching in manic fury,  
every nook, every cranny of the house,  
for an imaginary lover.  
The sun is setting.  
It's time to get things ready.

**Meg**  
What's the plan?

**Fenton**  
We should decide on our disguises.

**Alice**  
Nannetta.

**Nannetta**  
What shall I wear?

**Alice**  
You will appear,  
as the Queen of all the Fairies,  
white as a lily, with a veil,  
and a gown circled with roses.

**Nannetta**  
And I shall sing a song sweetly harmonious.

**Alice (to Meg)**  
You'll be dressed all in green, as nymph of the  
forest.  
And what shall we make Quickly? Give her a  
broomstick.

**Nannetta**  
That will do nicely!

**Alice**  
You bring the Windsor children,  
to join our merry party.  
Dress them up as elves and pixies,  
imps and devils and hobgoblins.  
And when they see the ghost of Herne the  
Hunter,  
they'll jump on him and mock him.

**Nannetta, Meg and Fenton**  
Mock him, mock him.

**Alice**  
They'll tease him and torment him,  
until he has confessed,  
and agreed to mend his ways.  
Then we'll reveal ourselves to him,  
and when the dawn is breaking,  
our happy band of fairies  
hurries off home to bed.

**Meg**  
It's twilight, we should go.

**Alice**  
Remember, meet by the oak tree at midnight.

**Fenton**  
We'll be there.

**Nannetta**  
Oh yes, we'll be there.  
What a scary adventure!

**Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Fenton**  
Till midnight.

**Alice**  
<sup>16</sup> Don't you forget the lanterns.

*(Exeunt Alice, Meg, Nannetta and Fenton.  
Quickly comes out of the inn and, seeing Ford and  
Dr Caius in conversation, stays in the doorway to  
eavesdrop.)*

**Ford (to Dr Caius)**  
Caius, my friend, soon you shall have my  
daughter.  
Do you remember what she will be disguised as?

**Dr Caius**  
Queen of the Fairies, with a garland made of roses.

**Alice (offstage)**  
Don't you forget the costumes.

**Meg (offstage)**  
Of course not, don't you forget the rattles.

**Ford**  
I have already devised my triumph.  
When the fooling is over, you come to me.  
But keep your faces covered,  
she with the veil, you hooded like a friar.  
And I will bless you both as bride and bridegroom.

**Dr Caius**  
We'll be married!  
*(They leave.)*

**Quickly** (*aside*)

That's what you think.

Nannetta, hey! Nannetta, hey!

(*Exit Quickly.*)

**Nannetta** (*offstage*)

What now? What now?

**Quickly** (*offstage*)

The fairy song, do you know it already?

**Nannetta** (*offstage*)

Of course I know it.

**Alice** (*offstage*)

Do not be late.

**Quickly** (*offstage*)

Whoever's first must wait.

## Scene Two

*Windsor Forest, night*

[17] [Introduction]

**Fenton**

[18] From lover's lips a happy song is flying,  
through the still of the night it glides to heaven.  
And from another's lips the song re-echoes,  
responding with the same ecstatic sighing.

And then the song which is alone no longer,  
vibrates with joy in secret celebration,  
it fills the scented air with sweetest passion,  
returning faithful to its first inspiration.

So it begins once more, but its sole purpose  
is to ever unite all that's discordant.  
Thus have I kissed the lips of my beloved.  
Kisses may fade, but the memory lingers.

**Nannetta** (*offstage*)

Ever returning as the moon to heaven.

**Fenton**

The song soon dies on lips that are united.

(*Nannetta enters. They embrace. Enter Alice,  
undisguised, then Quickly, dressed as a witch, and  
Meg in green.*)

**Alice**

[19] Master Fenton, put on this friar's habit.

**Fenton**

What's going on?

**Nannetta**

Do as she tells you.

**Alice**

The hood, too.

**Nannetta**

He looks exactly like a truant Trappist.

**Alice**

Now that we know the betrayal which Ford has  
planned,  
we'll turn it around to our advantage.

**Fenton**

Explain yourself.

**Alice**

Trappists don't ask questions, be silent.

When opportunity comes knocking, take it.

(*to Quickly*)

Who will pretend to be Nannetta?

**Quickly**

A rogue with a purple nose who despises Dr Caius.

**Meg**

I have hidden the goblins in the hedgerows.

We're ready.

**Alice**

Listen! Those are fat man's footsteps.

**Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Quickly**

Vanish!

(*Enter Falstaff, with a pair of antlers on his head.  
Midnight is striking.*)

**Falstaff**

[20] One, two, three, four, five, six, seven chimes;  
eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve; it is midnight.  
This is the oak tree. Help me, O you ancient Gods.  
Jupiter! You, who transformed yourself into a bull,  
for love of fair Europa, you wore the horns too.  
I'm happy to follow your example.  
For love transforms a man,  
into a rampant beast of passion.

[21] I hear a nimble footstep...

Alice! Your lover's calling!  
Come then, love has no fear.

**Alice** (*entering*)

Sir John!

**Falstaff**

You are my dearest!

You are my deer.

**Alice**

What sparkling wit, my buck!

**Falstaff**

Come then, trembling and fervent...

**Alice**

Sir John!

**Falstaff**

...I am your servant!

I am the dish served up before you,  
with a garnish of truffles, radishes and borage.  
For they shall be my fodder, and love my forage.  
We're alone here.

**Alice**

No. There in the woods behind me,  
I can see Meg.

**Falstaff**

A double assignation! Bring her as well!  
Divide me up, just like a haunch of venison.  
Dismember me!  
At last the God of Love rewards me!  
I love you!

**Meg** (*offstage*)

Oh, help me!

**Alice**

What screaming, alas!

**Meg** (*offstage*)

Here come the goblins!

**Alice**

Alas! Escape them!

**Falstaff**

Save me!

**Alice** (*rushing off*)

Oh God, have mercy! Do not blame me!

**Falstaff**

The devil surely will not come to claim me!

**Nannetta** (*appearing in her disguise as Queen of the Fairies*)

<sup>22</sup> Wood-nymphs, elfins, naiads, leprechauns and sirens!

See how the star of sorcery is now ascending,  
Awaken, shadowy creatures!

**Women**

Wood-nymphs, naiads, and sirens!

**Falstaff**

Here come the fairies, it is death to see them.

(*Enter Alice with girls dressed as fairies.*)

**Alice**

Follow me.

**Nannetta**

He is there.

**Alice**

On the ground.

**Nannetta**

He is rigid with fear.

**Fairies**

He's not looking.

**Alice**

Don't you laugh.

**Fairies**

We won't laugh.

**Nannetta**

I am ready to sing. Gather round.

**Fairies**

In a ring.

**Nannetta**

<sup>23</sup> Upon a fragrant breath of night,  
come spirits gently gliding.  
See how the moon, with silver light,  
summons you out of hiding.  
With dancing, your nimble footsteps  
will echo the song we sing,  
and with our elfin magic,  
we'll mark our fairy ring.

**Fairies**

The woods are sleeping,  
and full of strange enchantment.  
Within the fragrant stillness,  
the shade is deep as any sea.

**Nannetta**

It's past the hour of midnight.  
Your queen bids you attend her.  
Gather your flowers by moonlight,  
perfume they will surrender.  
Bring lilies, roses and violets,  
and weave them into garlands.  
Writing a secret message,  
in words unknown to mortals,  
read their concealed inscriptions.  
Written in words of gold.  
Sweetest enchantment,  
the secrets that never can be foretold.

**Fairies**

We glide with silent footsteps,  
footsteps of elfin folk,  
follow the Queen of Fairies,  
to Herne the Hunter's oak.

(*Nannetta and the fairies approach. Enter Alice, Meg, Quickly, Fenton, Bardolph, Pistol, Dr Caius, Ford and townspeople in various disguises.*)

**Bardolph**

<sup>24</sup> Who goes there?

**Pistol**

Who would dare?

**Falstaff**

Have pity!

**Quickly**

A man!

**Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Fairies**

A man!

**Ford**

He's antlered like a reindeer!

**Pistol**

He's paunchy as a pumpkin!

**Bardolph**

Gigantic as a galleon!

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Up you get! Come on!

**Falstaff**

You'll need a block and tackle! I cannot.

**Ford**

He's much too heavy.

**Quickly and Fairies**

He's corrupted!

**Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Fairies**

And perverted!

**Bardolph**

I'll exorcise the devil!

**Alice** (*aside to Nannetta*)

Here you are in great danger,  
for Dr Caius is after you.

**Nannetta**

We'll find a place to hide in.

**Quickly**

You must return here quickly when I call you.

**Bardolph** (*continuing his exorcism*)

Apparitions! Hobgoblins!  
Jack o'lanterns and vampires!  
Poisonous bats, infernal spirits, come hither.  
come and glare at him!  
Sting him and swear at him!  
Tweak him and tear at him,  
with your sharp nippers!

**Falstaff**

Oh God! You stink!  
You stink like an elephant!

**Fairies**

Rattle him!

**Alice, Meg and Quickly**

<sup>25</sup> Pinch him and burn him,  
and turn him about,  
until candles and starlight  
and moonlight be blotted out.

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow!

**Fairies**

We'll poke him and prickle him,  
provoke him and batter him,  
explode him and shatter him,  
attack him and tickle him.  
We'll jump up and land on him.  
We'll dance on his belly,  
and then we'll abandon him,  
when he's turned to jelly.  
With spiders and bats,

to bombard him and fling him,  
mosquitoes and gnats,  
to attack him and sting him.

**Alice, Meg and Quickly**

Pinch him and burn him,  
and turn him about,  
until candles and starlight  
and moonlight be blotted out.

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow!

**Alice, Meg, Quickly and Fairies**

Thump him and thrash him,  
and tear with your claws at him.  
Bump him and bash him,  
and bite with your jaws at him.  
Nip him and knock him,  
and tighten your grip on him.

**Spirits and Imps**

Attack him! Rattle him!

**Dr Caius and Ford**

<sup>26</sup> Buffoon!

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Baboon!

**Dr Caius and Ford**

Buffoon!

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Baboon!

**Dr Caius and Ford**

Balloon!

**Bardolph and Pistol**

Poltroon!

**Dr Caius, Bardolph, Pistol and Ford**

Now, meet your doom!

**Ford**

Monstrous offender!

**Alice**

Wicked pretender!

**Bardolph**

Mountainous bubble!

**Quickly**

Maker of trouble!

**Pistol**

Sedulous drinker!

**Meg**

Gluttonous winker!

**Dr Caius**

Stealer of chattels!

**Ford**

Causer of battles!

**Bardolph, Pistol, Alice, Meg and Quickly**

Are you repentant?

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow! I'm repentant!

**Men**

We won't forget it!

**Women**

Are you repentant?

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow! I'm repentant!

**Men**

Say you regret it!

**Women**

Are you repentant?

**Falstaff**

Ow! Ow! I'm repentant!

**Men**

Buffoon! Baboon! Balloon!

**Falstaff**

I swoon!

**Bardolph**

No longer play the dandy!

**Falstaff**

Get off! You stink of brandy!

**Women**

Lord, never grant him requiem!

**Men**

Monstrous offender!

**Falstaff**

But Lord, preserve my abdomen!

**Fairies**

Prickle him! Prickle him!

**Women**

Lord, never save his soul from sin!

**Men**

Wicked pretender!

**Falstaff**

But Lord, preserve my abdomen!

**Fairies**

Stickle him! Stickle him!

**Women**

Lord, never liberate him!

**Men**

Sedulous drinker!

**Falstaff**

But Lord, preserve my abdomen!

**Fairies**

Tickle him! Tickle him!

**Women**

Lord, truly castigate him!

**Men**

Gluttonous winker!

**Ford**

But Lord, preserve my abdomen.

**Fairies**

Prickle, him, stickle him, tickle him!

**Men**

Mountainous lump of fat, your answer!

**Falstaff**

You are right!

**Men**

Monstrous seducing rat, your answer!

**Falstaff**

You are right!

**Men**

Lustful deceiving cat, your answer!

**Falstaff**

Yes, so be it!

**Bardolph**

King of the gobblers!

King of the squabblers!

**Falstaff**

Away! You stinker!

**Men**

Dirty old deadbeat!

We'll make you mincemeat!

**Bardolph**

Now all you furies, consign him to hell fire!

**Falstaff**

Sulpher! Fire and brimstone!

That's no devil, it's Bardolph!

<sup>27</sup> Nose incandescent!

Nozzle rubescent!

Phosphorous handle!

Blistering candle!

Salamander!

*Ignis fatuus!*

Snout of damnation!

Proboscis of carnation!

Fire of St Elmo!

Scarlet volcano!

Rubiginous snorter!

Crimson poker!

Blood sucker!

I've spoken,

and if I wrong him, may every bone

in this great frame be broken!

**All**

Bravo!

**Falstaff**

Enough! I'm exhausted. Let me rest.

**Quickly** (*to Bardolph*)

Bardolph, I will disguise you with a veil.

**Ford**

And now, while you recover from your nightmare,

Sir John, tell me, which of us wears the horns?

**Meg**

Do you?

**Alice**

Do you?

**Meg**

Does he?

**Alice**

Does he?

We're waiting for your answer.

**Falstaff**

Dear Master Brook, I greet you.

**Alice**

Sir John, you are mistaken.

This is Ford. He's my husband.

**Quickly**

Sir, your servant!

**Falstaff**

Sir, your servant!

**Quickly**

Could you think that two ladies were so foolish,  
and so deluded, to fall, body and soul,  
into the hands of the devil,  
for one who's balding, drunk and rather shabby?

**Meg and Quickly**

A man so unattractive...

**Alice, Meg and Quickly**

...so fat and flabby.

**Ford**

Well said, ladies.

**Falstaff**

It begins to occur to me,  
I've behaved like a donkey.

**Alice**

A donkey...

**Ford**

...with antlers.

**Alice, Meg, Quickly, Pistol and Chorus**

Ha, ha!

**Ford, Alice, Meg, Quickly, Pistol and Chorus**

A mammoth monster. Ha, ha!

**Falstaff**

- <sup>28</sup> So the commonest rabble have collected,  
to mock me, and they enjoy it.  
But, thanks to me, I think you will observe,  
that life can be a lot more fun than you expected.  
It's I, it's I, it's I who make the running.  
My wit inspires you,  
I am the source of your cunning.

**Women and Chorus**

Well said, sir!

**Ford**

And if I had not been laughing,  
I'd have struck you down!  
Enough, though, now lend your ears to my  
proposal.  
I shall conclude our masquerade this evening,  
with the betrothal of the Queen of all the Fairies.

- <sup>29</sup> Now the bride is approaching with her bridegroom.  
How charming!

*(Dr Caius, masked, and Bardolph, dressed as the  
Fairy Queen, approach hand-in-hand.)*

**Falstaff and Chorus**

How charming!

**Ford**

Look at her!

A crown of roses surrounds the veil,  
which hides her radiant beauty.  
Ready beside her bridegroom,  
he whom I have chosen.  
Gather round them, you fairies.

*(Alice presents Nannetta and Fenton. Nannetta is  
entirely concealed by a thick veil and Fenton is  
masked.)*

**Alice**

Another couple have asked  
if they may join us.  
They, too, wish to be married,  
hoping you'll bless their betrothal.

**Ford**

With pleasure, we'll have a double wedding.  
Bring over all the lanterns.  
May heaven bless you!  
Now take off your disguises.  
Apotheosis!

*(Both couples remove their disguises so that their  
true identity is revealed.)*

**Women, Falstaff, Pistol and Chorus**

- <sup>30</sup> Ha, ha!

**Dr Caius**

Disaster!

**Ford**

You've deceived me!

**Falstaff, Pistol and Chorus**

Apotheosis!

**Ford**

Fenton with my daughter!

**Dr Caius**

I am married to Bardolph! Disaster!

**Others**

Ha, ha!

**Women**

A triumph!

**All**

Stupendous!

**Dr Caius**

Disaster!

**Ford**

I'm quite bewildered!

**Alice**

A man may fall into the trap  
he's set just for his own wicked purpose.

**Falstaff**

Dearest, good Master Ford, my turn to ask you,  
who's the foolish one now?

**Ford** *(pointing to Dr Caius)*

Him.

**Dr Caius** *(pointing to Ford)*

You.

**Ford**

No.

**Dr Caius**

Yes.

**Bardolph** *(to Ford and Dr Caius)*

You.

**Fenton**

Them.

**Dr Caius**

Us.

**Falstaff** *(to Ford and Dr Caius)*

Both together.

**Alice**

No! All three of you.

*(to Ford)*

Look on these children and pity their  
confusion.

*(indicating Nannetta and Fenton)*

**Nannetta**

Dearest father, forgive us.

**Ford**

A man who receives his just deserts,  
must accept them with good grace.

Dear children, I embrace you,  
and I give you my blessing.

**All**

God bless you!

**Falstaff**

One final song, if we are able...

**Ford**

Then with John Falstaff, we'll rejoice at table.

**Falstaff, then All**

<sup>31</sup> Life is a burst of laughter,  
so, be happy hereafter.

Your mind is a tempest whirling,  
always this way and that.  
Everyone mocks you, whether you're thin,  
or whether you're fat.  
But it is best for him who has  
the last laugh of all!

*(Curtain)*

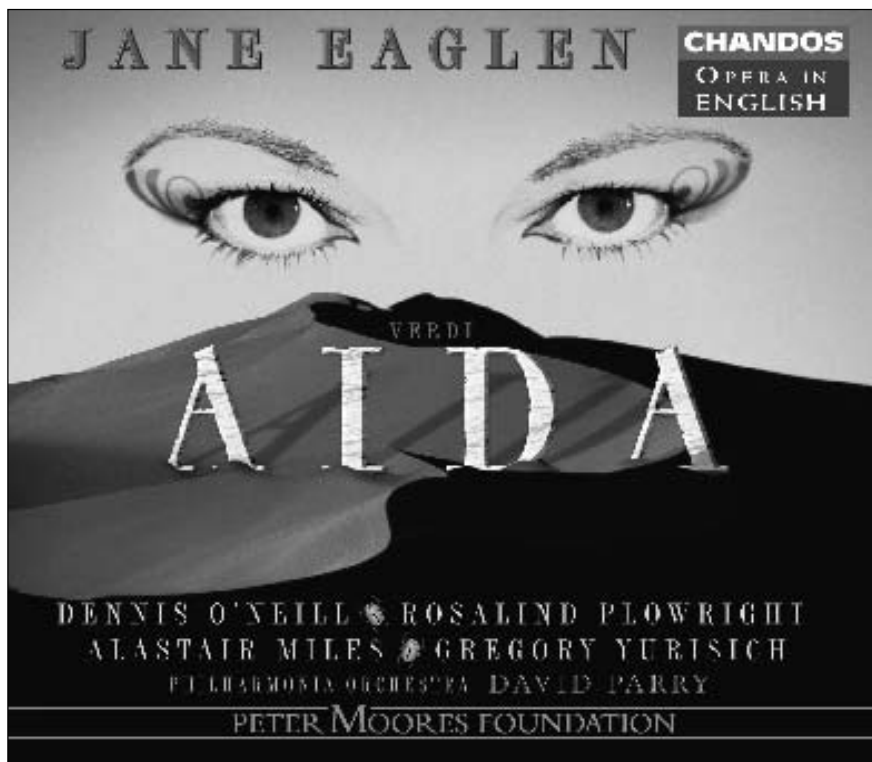
translation by Amanda Holden,  
© 1987, revised 1997

Andrew Shore as Falstaff,  
disguised as Herne the Hunter,  
from English National Opera's  
production of Verdi's *Falstaff*



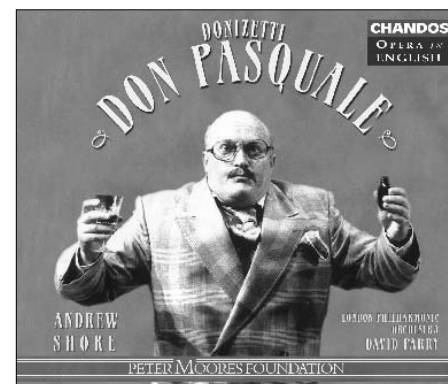


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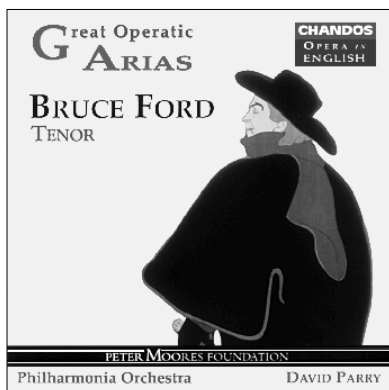


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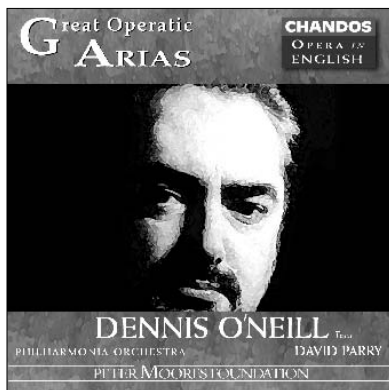


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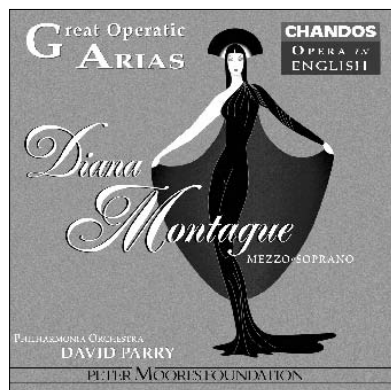
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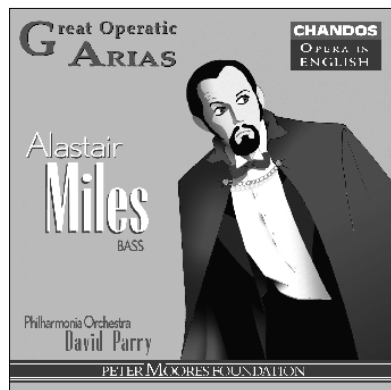
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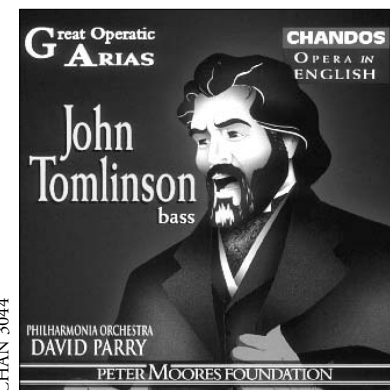


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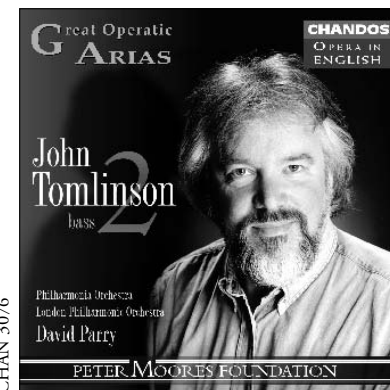


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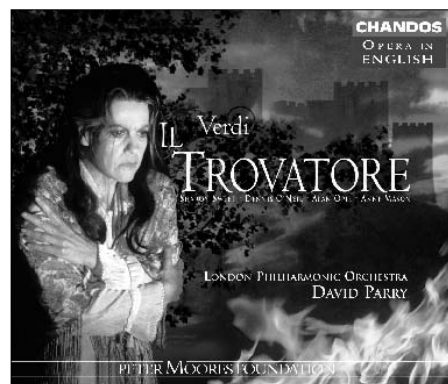


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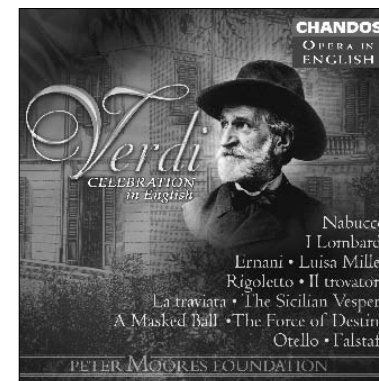
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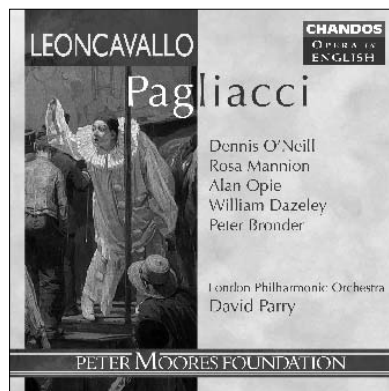


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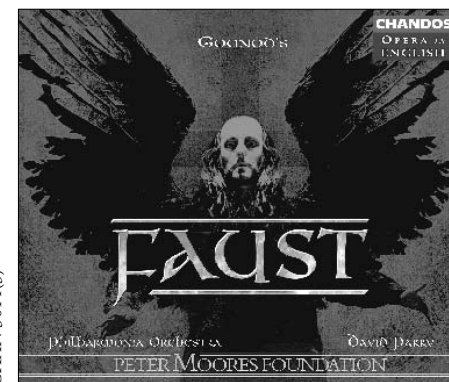
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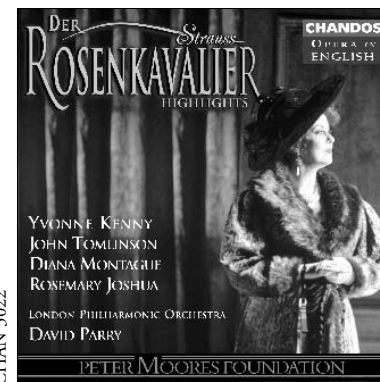
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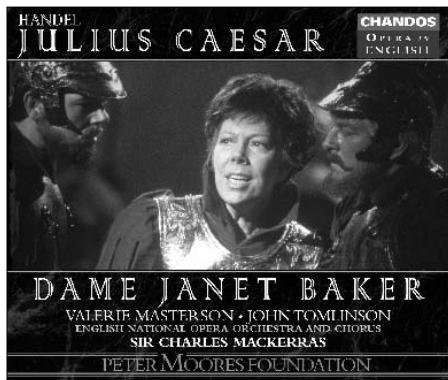
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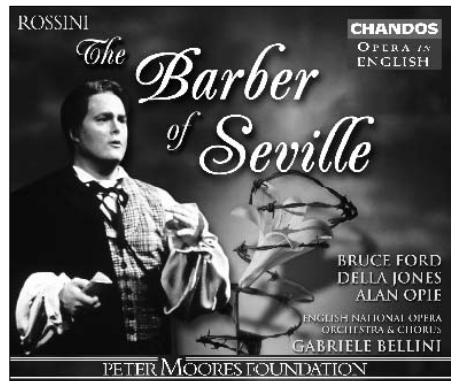
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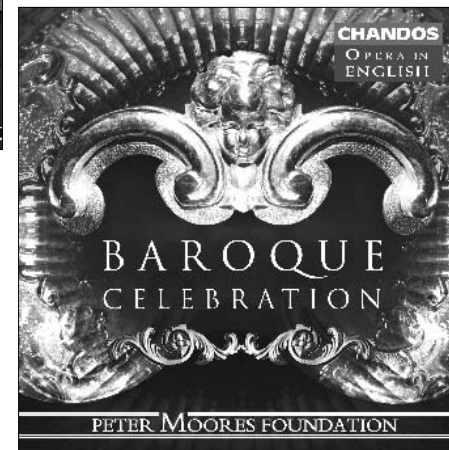


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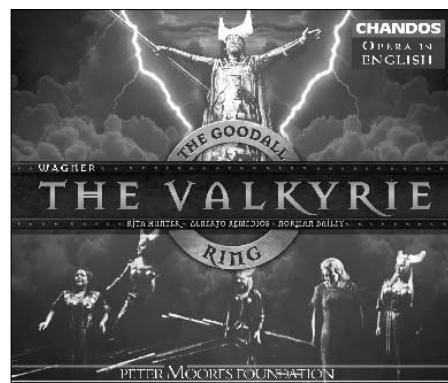
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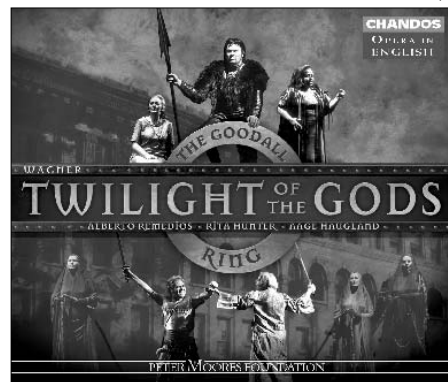
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CHAN 3065(16)

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Vocal and language consultant: Ludmilla Andrew

Recording producer Brian Couzens  
Sound engineer and editor Jonathan Cooper  
Assistant engineer Christopher Brooke  
Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

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Front cover Photograph of Andrew Shore as Falstaff in Opera North's production. Photograph by Donald Cooper

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VERDI: FALSTAFF

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Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

**Falstaff**

Comic opera in three acts

Libretto by Arrigo Boito after Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV*  
English translation by Amanda Holden

Sir John Falstaff.....	Andrew Shore <i>baritone</i>
Mrs Alice Ford.....	Yvonne Kenny <i>soprano</i>
Ford, Alice's husband.....	Ashley Holland <i>baritone</i>
Nannetta, their daughter.....	Susan Gritton <i>soprano</i>
Fenton, her suitor.....	Barry Banks <i>tenor</i>
Dr Caius.....	Stuart Kale <i>tenor</i>
Mistress Quickly.....	Rebecca de Pont Davies <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Mrs Meg Page.....	Alice Coote <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Pistol.....	Clive Bayley <i>bass</i>
Bardolph.....	Richard Roberts <i>tenor</i>



COMPACT DISC ONE  
58:12

COMPACT DISC TWO  
67:24

(DDD)

English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus  
Paul Daniel

CHANDOS

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