

CHAN 3097(2)



THE THIEVING MAGPIE

CHAN 3097(2)

CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Lebrecht Collection

Gioachino Rossini

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

The Thieving Magpie

Melodrama in two acts

Libretto by Giovanni Gherardini after *La Pie voleuse*, by J.M.T. Badouin and Louis-Charles Caigniez

English translation by Jeremy Sams

Fabrizio Vingradito, a rich farmer	Jeremy White <i>bass</i>
Lucia, his wife.....	Susan Bickley <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Giannetto, their son, a soldier.....	Barry Banks <i>tenor</i>
Ninetta, a servant in their house.....	Majella Cullagh <i>soprano</i>
Fernando Villabella, Ninetta's father, a soldier	Russell Smythe <i>baritone</i>
Gottardo, the village mayor	Christopher Purves <i>baritone</i>
Pippo, a young peasant, in Fabrizio's service	Nerys Jones <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Isacco, a pedlar	John Graham-Hall <i>tenor</i>
Antonio, the jailer	Stuart Kale <i>tenor</i>
Giorgio, the mayor's servant	Toby Stafford-Allen <i>baritone</i>
Ernesto, friend of Fernando, a soldier	Nicholas Garrett <i>bass</i>
Judge.....	{ Darren Jeffery <i>baritone</i> Philip Tebb <i>bass</i>
Clerk	Daniel Slater
Magpie	Prunella Scales

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Philharmonia Orchestra

Gareth Hancock and Philip Walsh assistant conductors

David Parry

COMPACT DISC ONE

Overture

[1]	Maestoso marziale –	2:23	[p. 100]
[2]	Allegro	6:35	[p. 100]

Act I

Scene 1

[3]	‘What a day of celebration’ <i>Servants, Pippo, Magpie</i>	2:39	[p. 100]
[4]	‘Get moving – do something’ <i>Lucia, Pippo, Servants, Fabrizio, Magpie</i>	4:07	[p. 100]
[5]	‘I can see my beloved Giannetto’ <i>Fabrizio, Lucia, Pippo, Servants</i>	2:12	[p. 102]
[6]	‘Oh, my heart is full of joy!’	3:05	[p. 102]
[7]	‘Spring is returning’ <i>Ninetta</i>	3:15	[p. 102]
[8]	‘Dearest Ninetta, today’s a special day!’ <i>Fabrizio, Ninetta, Lucia</i>	0:59	[p. 102]
[9]	‘Penknives and needles, leather patches’ <i>Isacco</i>	1:09	[p. 103]
[10]	‘I thought so, it’s old Isacco’ <i>Pippo, Isacco</i>	0:29	[p. 103]
[11]	‘What’s that shouting?’ <i>Ninetta, Servants, Villagers, Pippo</i>	1:21	[p. 103]
[12]	‘Darling! Darling, let me embrace you’ <i>Giannetto, Villagers, Servants</i>	2:24	[p. 104]
[13]	‘Yes, even in the battle’ <i>Giannetto, Villagers</i>	2:35	[p. 104]

Time Page

[14]	‘Goodbye for now, my darling’ <i>Giannetto, Ninetta, Lucia, Fernando</i>	1:08	[p. 104]
[15]	‘Yesterday, just as the sun was setting’ <i>Fernando, Ninetta</i>	1:51	[p. 105]
[16]	‘I can be strong no longer’ <i>Ninetta, Fernando</i>	2:39	[p. 105]
[17]	‘Oh, daughter, let me embrace you’ <i>Fernando, Ninetta</i>	5:31	[p. 105]
[18]	‘Good morning, my pretty lady’ <i>Mayor, Ninetta, Giorgio, Fernando</i>	2:01	[p. 106]
[19]	‘THIS IS MOST URGENT’	2:27	[p. 107]
[20]	‘Thank heavens!’ <i>Ninetta, Mayor, Fernando</i>	3:21	[p. 108]
[21]	‘We’re alone here’ <i>Mayor, Ninetta, Fernando</i>	5:08	[p. 109]
[22]	‘Such madness and confusion’ <i>Fernando, Ninetta, Mayor</i>	2:14	[p. 110]

Scene 2

[23]	‘Penknives and needles, leather patches’ <i>Isacco, Ninetta, Pippo, Lucia, Mayor, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Magpie</i>	3:20	[p. 111]
[24]	‘This morning in the house of Fabrizio Vingradito’ <i>Mayor, Giannetto, Ninetta, Fabrizio, Lucia, Pippo</i>	6:08	[p. 113]
[25]	‘Did somebody want me?’ <i>Isacco, Mayor, Giannetto, Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio, Ninetta</i>	2:04	[p. 115]
[26]	‘Grief and calamity tumble around me’ <i>Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Mayor, Giannetto, Fabrizio</i>	5:14	[p. 116]

	Time	Page
[27] 'Someone is coming'	0:29	[p. 116]
<i>Giannetto, Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio</i>		
[28] 'Take this girl away and throw her into prison!'	3:06	[p. 117]
<i>Mayor, Giannetto, Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio, Servants, Villagers, Isacco</i>		

TT 79:58

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II (71:04)

Scene 1

[1] 'She's shut up in that dark and dismal dungeon'	2:15	[p. 119]
<i>Antonio, Ninetta, Giannetto</i>		
[2] 'Maybe one day you'll forgive me'	5:34	[p. 119]
<i>Ninetta, Giannetto</i>		
[3] 'You'd better go, and quickly'	1:21	[p. 120]
<i>Antonio, Giannetto, Ninetta, Mayor</i>		
[4] 'You're so lovely, your eyes are sparkling'	3:44	[p. 120]
<i>Mayor, Ninetta, Villagers</i>		
[5] 'When you hear the sentence'	3:21	[p. 121]
<i>Mayor, Villagers, Ninetta, Court</i>		
[6] 'Mr Mayor, Mr Mayor – what are you up to?'	0:59	[p. 122]
<i>Antonio, Pippo, Ninetta</i>		

	Time	Page
[7] 'Just think that tomorrow, even today'	0:37	[p. 123]
[8] 'No, no, I beg you to take it'	5:43	[p. 123]
[9] 'Lest my darling should forget me'	3:24	[p. 123]
<i>Ninetta, Pippo</i>		
[10] 'By unanimous verdict – we find her guilty'	3:06	[p. 124]
<i>Judge, Giannetto, Fabrizio</i>		
[11] 'The wheels of justice will crush the guilty'	4:40	[p. 124]
<i>Court</i>		
[12] 'Most unhappy of women, your fate is in the balance'	0:39	[p. 124]
<i>Judge, Ninetta</i>		
[13] 'God protect her!'	3:19	[p. 125]
<i>Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor, Ninetta</i>		
[14] 'But, your Honours, you're mistaken'	1:24	[p. 125]
<i>Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor, Court, Ninetta, Judge, Fernando</i>		
[15] 'Release her!'	3:14	[p. 126]
<i>Fernando, Ninetta, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor, Court</i>		
[16] 'A chasm of sorrow is yawning before me'	3:46	[p. 126]
<i>Ninetta, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor, Fernando, Court</i>		
[17] 'If I cried, I would weep forever'	3:42	[p. 128]
<i>Ninetta, Giannetto, Fernando, Fabrizio, Mayor, Court</i>		

Scene 2

[18] 'What a dump of a village!'	1:37	[p. 128]
<i>Ernesto, Pippo, Giorgio, Antonio</i>		

		Time	Page
[19]	'Bitter torment burns within you' <i>Villagers</i>	2:06	[p. 129]
[20]	'God in heaven, Oh, God of justice' <i>Ninetta, Villagers</i>	5:26	[p. 129]
[21]	'Giorgio! Giorgio! Ah, we're so happy!' <i>Pippo, Antonio, Giorgio, Giannetto, Lucia, Fabrizio, Villagers, Mayor</i>	2:36	[p. 129]
[22]	'Oh, God preserve us' <i>Lucia, Mayor</i>	1:06	[p. 130]
[23]	'We can see her, she is coming!' <i>Pippo, Antonio, Villagers, Mayor, Giorgio, Lucia, Giannetto, Fabrizio</i>	1:14	[p. 120]
[24]	'Though I hear your cries of gladness' <i>Ninetta, Lucia, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Fernando, Pippo, Villagers, Mayor, Fernando, Antonio</i>	3:29	[p. 131]
[25]	'Now that the storm is over' <i>Ninetta, Lucia, Antonio, Fabrizio, Villagers, Mayor, Pippo, Giannetto, Fernando</i>	2:39	[p. 132]

TT 71:04



Keith Saunders

Majella Cullagh as Ninetta and Christopher Purves as the Mayor in Garsington Opera's production of *The Thieving Magpie*

The Thieving Magpie: A Version

The version of Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie* (*La gazza ladra*) presented in this recording is based on the production which Daniel Slater (director) and I made for Garsington Opera in 2002. We had two aims: to present a tight and viable theatrical event and to retain the very best music. The opera, performed complete, is very long: it seems that audiences in Rossini's day were used to more leisurely evenings in the theatre than modern audiences are. Several of his operas, especially the serious operas, are almost unfeasibly long and tend to sprawl dramatically. *The Thieving Magpie* is described as *Opera semi-seria*, which is to say that, although it contains comic elements, it is to be taken as a serious drama. Indeed, the story would end tragically but for the post-Enlightenment equivalent of the appearance of a *deus ex machina* in the form of the king's representative. It seemed to us, though, that, despite the apparent unwieldiness of the dramatic structure of the opera, it is fundamentally an important and theatrically viable and engaging drama which it was our job to present in a form which a modern audience would recognise and enjoy.

We started with these tenets: the recitatives with piano, which are probably by a pupil of Rossini and are certainly musically inferior, could be radically cut to provide a tight 'book'; the musical numbers which we performed would, for the most part, be given without cuts; and we would select, as far as possible, the musically superior and the dramatically essential pieces.

I have always felt strongly that it is a mistake to try to reduce operas of the early nineteenth century to an acceptable length by performing all the musical numbers with a great many short internal cuts. This is an attempt somehow to give a taste of each one; but it seems to me to destroy the pacing and undermine the impact of the climaxes, an unsettling experience for the audience, and at the same time fails to make the whole work seem shorter: indeed, often it will seem *longer* because it is most common to cut repetitions of final fast sections, with the result that there is a false preponderance of slow music.

So we opted to omit entire numbers. Our choices were eased by the fact that the weak musical numbers and the dramatically

inessential ones seem to coincide. The major omissions are: the first aria of the mayor, a conventional entrance aria which simply weakens the impact of the character's first appearance; the Act Two aria of Fernando, in which he resolves to go to his daughter's aid, again an aria which is musically uninteresting, composed, one would imagine, simply because such a major rôle (and, therefore, major artist) was expected to be given an aria, and which weakens the impact and the element of surprise at Fernando's appearance in the trial scene immediately following it; finally, Lucia's aria, which is in every way dull. We did make two carefully considered internal cuts: in the opening duet of Act Two for Ninetta and

Giannetto, the prolonged 'I must hurry away/you must hurry away' of the final fast section, which seemed to us comic in an unconstructive way at such a serious juncture and is only mildly interesting as music; and a brief cut in the final section of the duet of Ninetta and Pippo from the same act.

The aim, both at Garsington and for this recording, was to reveal to the audience the essential core of what is a masterpiece of that generosity of the human spirit which Rossini is able to convey so vividly. The combination of humour and seriousness in the work somehow encapsulates his range and, for me, the opera is one of his greatest achievements.

© 2003 David Parry

Rossini: The Thieving Magpie

When Rossini's friend, the novelist Honoré de Balzac first heard *La gazza ladra* in Paris in 1821, he surrendered himself to the experience. 'The man smells of drink!' crowed a woman in the seat behind him, but Balzac – who had, indeed, taken the precaution of drinking a bottle of wine and smoking two cigars prior to turning up at the Théâtre Italien – was able to ignore her jibe. Rossini's music was his new intoxicant.

How very different things were on the other side of the Channel. When that most conservative of English music-lovers, Lord Mount Edgumbe, heard the opera in London earlier that same year, he grizzled and groused:

Its finales and many of its numerous *pezzi concertati* are uncommonly loud, and the lavish use made of the *noisy* instruments appears to my judgment singularly inappropriate to the subject, which though it might have been rendered touching, is far from calling for such warlike accompaniments.

One wonders what Mount Edgumbe imagined the work to be about. An opera, set in a time of revolution, which includes among

its principal characters an army deserter and which has in its final act a march to the scaffold, surely has some right to the occasional 'warlike accompaniment'. The fact is, Mount Edgumbe disliked noise. To him, and other like-minded English amateurs, Rossini was the Heavy Metal of his age.

At the first performance in Milan on 31 May, 1817, the audience had thrilled to the overture's opening summons on the snaredrum and the imposing *maestoso marziale* which follows. What that first-night audience could not have known, however, was how well tailored the overture was to the events which were about to unfold on stage. This was not one of Rossini's famous self-borrowings – a previously written piece dug out of his portmanteau at the dress-rehearsal – but a bespoke composition, several of whose themes recur in the main body of the opera.

In a letter to his mother written at the time of the Milan commission in March 1817, Rossini remarked:

I'm writing an opera *The Thieving Magpie*. The story's been versified by a newcomer and as a consequence I'm being driven crazy; however, it's

a most beautiful subject and I hope (God willing) we'll be able to create a Fine Fiasco.

The 'beautiful subject' was taken from an actual occurrence in which a French peasant girl was convicted and hung for thefts later discovered to have been the work of a thieving magpie. The event had stimulated a substantial body of fiction, including a so-called *mélo-historique* or *mélodrame de boulevard* entitled *La Pie voleuse* which Théodore Badouin d'Aubigny and theatre-manager Louis-Charles Caigniez ('the Racine of the boulevards') had staged at Paris's Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in April 1815. Rossini's French biographer, Stendhal, was quick to sneer:

And to make matters worse, it would seem that this disgusting little anecdote is based on reality; a poor servant girl was in fact hanged at Palaiseau and in her memory a Mass, later to be known as *The Magpie Mass* was instituted.

Stendhal's remark reflects the more or less unbridgeable gap which existed in France at the time between these melodramatic plays with music to which the middle and lower classes flocked in their thousands, and works staged at the Paris Opéra which were the preserve of the aristocracy and the *haute bourgeoisie*.

The Italians were less hidebound. With dozens of Italian opera houses looking to stage two or three new operas a season, plausible storylines were a valued commodity. Nor was Italian intellectual opinion averse to dabbling in the stuff of popular literature. The 'newcomer' Giovanni Gherardini (1778–1861), the man who turned *La Pie voleuse* into an Italian opera libretto, was very grand indeed. A doctor by training, but a poet, translator and philologist by inclination, he earned his living as editor-in-chief of the *Giornale Italiano*, the Kingdom of Italy's official newspaper, a position to which he had been appointed in 1806 at the age of twenty-eight.

It is an earnest of Gherardini's artistic and intellectual curiosity that his reworking of *La Pie voleuse* (pompously retitled *A Warning to the Judges*) was prepared as a submission to a libretto-writing competition organised by La Scala, Milan in 1816. He didn't win. The 1000 Austrian Lire first prize (about £800 in today's money) went to a rising young star of the Italian theatre, Felice Romani. However, La Scala's plan to offer the libretto to Rossini quickly ran into trouble. After an exchange of letters in the winter of 1816–17 between Rossini and Angelo Petracchi, the impresario of La Scala, the Gherardini was chosen. We

know from a letter written by one of the judges, Romani's mentor, Vincenzo Monti, that the Gherardini had been well thought of by the panel – not least for its orderliness at a time when, according to Monti, libretti were threatening to become little more than 'monstrous coagulations of nothing but senseless words'.

Gherardini's orderliness was a particular virtue in the case of the story of *La gazza ladra*. Like Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*, which also marries high-spirited adventure with prison scenes of unusual grimness, it provides us with a wide range of characters, sympathetically, sentimentally, and occasionally quirkily drawn. The story centres on a country community, subject to the king but dominated by its bustling, sadistic mayor, a kind of rustic Scarpia. At the heart of the community are the genial, wine-bibbing tenant farmer, Fabrizio Vingradito, his wife, Lucia, and their son, Giannetto, recently returned from the wars. (Monti thought the role of Giannetto undercharacterised – 'one might perhaps wish for a bit more resolution and military zeal' – a criticism with which it is difficult to disagree.)

Giannetto plans to marry the demure and charming servant-girl, Ninetta, the heroine of

the opera and an obvious variant of the Cinderella archetype in which Rossini was clearly interested. (Negotiations with La Scala over *La gazza ladra* coincided with his writing and rehearsing *La Cenerentola* for Rome's Teatro Valle.) Ninetta herself is surrounded by a bevy of minor characters, including the servant-boy, Pippo, and the pedlar, Isacco, whose whining cavatina provoked Stendhal into inveighing against Polish Jews in terms which nowadays would have him locked up. (Trabuco in Verdi's *La forza del destino* is an obvious descendent of Isacco.) There is also the striking figure of Ninetta's father, Fernando Villabella, an army deserter, though through no fault of his own. One can only guess at the impression the humbling of this powerful and compassionate man made on Rossini when he read the libretto. His own father, a voluble republican as honest as the day was long, had been arrested and imprisoned by the Austrians in Bologna in 1800.

The scale on which Rossini was now building his music-dramas allowed him to set Gherardini's text in a manner grand enough to match even La Scala, Milan's heightened expectations. The house itself reciprocated by sparing no expense on the production. A distinguished cast was assembled, headed by

Filippo Galli as Fernando, and designs were commissioned from Alessandro Sanquirico, one of the most innovative designers of the age. His setting for the Tribunal Scene was particularly imposing.

There are times when by recognising its roots in French *mélodrame*, *La gazza ladra* ends up anticipating the Italian *verismo* style. Ninetta herself is precisely the kind of sweet, wronged woman we might expect to find in one of Puccini's operas; and it is she who is central to one of the opera's most striking sequences. In Act One, with Ninetta and her father standing before him, the Mayor receives a letter which provides a full description of the army deserter. As he has left his spectacles behind, the Mayor asks Ninetta to read the description, which she does – speech over a simmering orchestral accompaniment – altering it as she reads. Alexander Pushkin, who saw *La gazza ladra* in Odessa in 1823–24, has a more or less identical scene in his play *Boris Godunov*, where the False Dmitry avoids arrest by altering the details of an arrest warrant which an illiterate guard has given him to read. Mussorgsky included the scene in his opera *Boris Godunov*, though it has to be said that his declamatory setting of the letter-reading is a good deal less effective

than Rossini's revolutionary resort to plain speech. Perhaps it is not surprising that *La gazza ladra*'s return to the stage in the 1940s and '50s owed a good deal to a free-wheeling adaptation (Pesaro, 1941) by Riccardo Zandonai, an avant-garde *verismo* composer whose tastes turned towards the end of his life to Rossini-inspired neoclassicism.

In most other respects, *La gazza ladra* is an opera formulated on classical lines. There are no flights of musicological fancy for the eponymous magpie, nor are Rossini's own forms – duets, trios, set-piece finales and the like – sacrificed to short-term considerations of realism. With the Mayor imminent, Ninetta and her father still have their *cabaletta*; an expression as much of Rossini's instinct for order as for any lazy compliance with the forms he himself had helped initiate. Throughout the opera, it is through the music itself – through rhythm in particular – that feelings of ecstasy, liberation, confusion or entanglement are expressed. When the kindly jailer, Antonio, tries to part Ninetta and Giannetto lest the Mayor should discover Antonio's having allowed Ninetta a few moments outside her cell, the situation is identical to that in Act Two of *The Barber of Seville* where Figaro is reduced to sly mockery

of the dallying lovers. Not only is the scene from *La gazza ladra* bereft of comedy, the very motion of the rhythms and the militaristic ostinato which underpins the lovers' voices tell an altogether grimmer tale.

The portrait of the Mayor is similarly controlled. First impressions are of a comic character but these are modified in the great Trio which follows the letter-reading. Later, in the prison scene in Act Two, as the Mayor is called away to the tribunal, the overture's second subject – snare-drum to the fore – colours the *stretta* in a way which is both brilliant and threatening.

It is sometimes said that Ninetta is too palely drawn, but this is to miss her artlessness and the aptness of the music Rossini provides for her. Her *cavatina* is wonderfully fresh-faced, with its unencumbered, rhythmically spontaneous *cabaletta*. There is the major-key pathos of her response to Isacco's revelations in the Act One Finale, and the exquisite prison duet in which Pippo adds his own touching rejoinders. There is also her prayer at the start of the final scene, framed by an eerily scored march to the scaffold. Though in no sense a star 'vehicle', the role attracted singers such as Colbran and Pasta. Malibran was, by all accounts, a memorable Ninetta, deliberately

and bewitchingly rustic, the realistic and idealistic elements fused in a way which must have struck Rossini as the ideal embodiment of his musical and dramatic vision.

Those looking for the sounding of a deeper note can look to Ninetta's relationship with her father. Like Verdi, Rossini was easily stirred by the emotion of parental love and in *La gazza ladra* it is Fernando who gives the opera much of its fundamental power and appeal. His Act One duet with Ninetta and his intervention in the trial scene are pointers to the kind of thing we shall hear in middle-period Verdi.

Rossini's move to Naples in 1815 had drawn him to serious subjects and grand canvasses. *La gazza ladra* develops this trend, albeit with more 'bourgeois' subject-matter than the Neapolitans would have countenanced. The unbuttoned mood of the pastoral scenes looks forward to the variety of choral and dance movements in Rossini's next opera *Armida* and his last opera *Guillaume Tell*. There is also evidence of a growing range and added care in the orchestral writing. The reprise of Ninetta's march to the scaffold creates a complex ensemble as the procession winds through the village: *fortissimo* strings and snare-drum, woodwinds and

pizzicato strings, horns and clarinets *smorzando*.

The discovery of the magpie's nest of treasures and Ninetta's last-minute reprieve make for a jubilant close. It may not be as stirring as the end of Beethoven's *Fidelio* but it brings to a triumphant conclusion an opera which celebrates – as do all Rossini's mature masterpieces, *buffa* or *semiseria* – the bonds of human affection and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of a disorderly world.

* * * * *

The huge success of *La gazza ladra* in Milan in 1817 produced a most interesting after-effect: a production of the opera, supervised by Rossini himself for the gala opening of a new opera house in his birthplace, Pesaro, in June 1818.

Letters survive – the only letters we have detailing Rossini's involvement in the staging of one of his own operas – which confirm what informed Rossinians have always known but which the public image of Rossini the idle *bon vivant* has always wilfully obscured: his huge capacity for work and his obsessive attention to detail.

The correspondence allows us to pick up the story on 27 January, 1818 with a letter Rossini writes to the project's organisers, Giulio

Perticari and Antaldo Antaldi. In it, he confirms that he is trying to engage the services of two stars of the Naples Opera, Colbran and Nozzari, with a view to staging his newest Neapolitan opera, *Armida*. The negotiations drag on for two months during which time it becomes clear that Pesaro can neither afford such celebrities nor give any clear indication as to when they will be required. Eventually, *La gazza ladra* is chosen, though this proves almost as difficult to cast and even more expensive to stage, not least because Rossini is insisting on employing not only Sanquirico, but his even more famous teacher, Paolo Landriana, to oversee the designs.

When a plea to his old friend Rosa Morandi to sing Ninetta comes to nothing, Rossini engages the eighteen-year-old Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis and, at a reduced fee, her husband, Giuseppe De Begnis, as the Mayor. The savings made on the De Begnises enable him to engage his protégé, the tenor Alberico Curioni, as Giannetto and Raniero Remorini as Fernando. Discovering that he is the lynchpin of the show, Remorini proves to be both expensive and difficult. 'He has put me through three days of hell. Oh, what trouble!' exclaims Rossini, referring to Remorini's insistence on having an additional solo.

This is nothing, however, to the trouble Rossini himself is taking over the production. Every inch the obsessive perfectionist, he insists on nominating and acquiring the finest local instrumentalists. The layout of the orchestra is specified, including the measurement of the spaces between the players and how the music-stands should best be lit. The co-ordination of designers and stage machinists is set in train. A reminder is issued about the whereabouts of the fake magpie.

The effort took its toll. The gala opening on 10 June was a triumph, though shortly afterwards Rossini was struck down with 'a severe inflammation of the throat'. His death was noised abroad as far afield as Naples and Paris. Happily, he survived, nursed back to health at the Villa Perticari.

Cheered by the reception *La gazza ladra* had been accorded, Rossini returned to Pesaro the following May only to be hounded out of town by thugs in the pay of Bartolomeo Bergami, the lover of Caroline, Princess of Wales, the estranged wife of the English Prince Regent. Rossini was twenty-seven, and though he survived into his seventy-sixth year, he never set foot in Pesaro again.

© 2003 Richard Osborne

Synopsis

A long time ago in a small French town...

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] – [2] Overture

Act 1

Scene One

[3] – [5] Great excitement in the house of Fabrizio and Lucia Vingradito: today their son, Giannetto, is due to return from the war. A huge party is planned, and it seems that all the townsfolk are lending a hand. [6] – [8] No one is more excited than the Vingraditos' servant, Ninetta, deeply in love with Giannetto. It is widely assumed that they will marry (even the household magpie choruses its agreement), but Lucia opposes the match, seeming to blame Ninetta for the recent disappearance of a silver fork. [9] The local pedlar, Isacco, passes and inquires after Ninetta, [10] but another servant, Pippo, sends him on his way. [11] – [13] Then, the moment all have been awaiting: Giannetto arrives! Drinks all round. Lucia whisks her son off for family visits, leaving Ninetta to lay up for the party. [14] No sooner has her lover left, than Ninetta's father, Fernando Villabella –

also back from the war – turns up. [15] – [17] But he doesn't bring welcome news: after a fight with his captain, he finds himself condemned to death, and a deserter. [18] Penniless, he gives his daughter two pieces of family silver to sell for him, to cover the cost of his escape. Matters grow more complicated when the Mayor enters, determined to win Ninetta's favours. She pretends her father is a passing tramp. The Mayor's assistant, Giorgio, brings an arrest order for Fernando: [19] – [21] as he has forgotten his glasses, the Mayor asks Ninetta to read it to him. She describes someone as unlike her father as possible, but when the Mayor continues to press his unwanted claims on her, Fernando is so outraged he nearly gives the game away. [22] As the three depart, the magpie flies down and steals one of Lucia's silver spoons.

Scene Two

[23] Isacco passes again, and Ninetta sells him her father's silver. Giannetto and his family return and he is introduced to the Mayor. Lucia discovers that a spoon is missing, prompting the Mayor to insist on an instant investigation. He warns that the law deals strictly with domestic theft: the punishment is death. [24] Due to the combined efforts of

Lucia and the jealous Mayor, the finger of suspicion points at Ninetta. In her confusion, she drops the money that she raised from Isacco. [25] The pedlar is summoned: though he's already sold the fork and spoon, he recalls that they were inscribed with the initials F.V. [26] – [27] Those are also Fernando's initials, but Ninetta's desperation to protect her father renders her incapable of protesting her innocence. [28] On the Mayor's orders she is taken to jail.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II

Scene One

[1] – [2] The kindly prison warder, Antonio, takes pity on Ninetta: he promises to pass a message to Pippo, and he allows Giannetto to pay a visit. She convinces her lover of her innocence, [3] – [4] but their interview is cut short by the arrival of the Mayor. He comes to offer Ninetta a simple deal: she will be set free if she accepts his advances. Her reply is unequivocal: she would rather die than be his. [5] The Mayor is summoned to court before he can argue his case further, [6] but Antonio has overheard and decides to help Ninetta in any way he can. Ninetta asks Pippo to put

some money for her father in an agreed hiding place. [7] – [9] She tries to sell him the cross at her neck, but he insists on lending her the money. They bid each other a painful farewell.

[10] – [14] Ninetta is brought to trial, found guilty, and condemned to death.

[15] – [17] Fernando bursts into the courtroom to try to save his daughter's life, but it is too late. He is sent to prison, and she to the scaffold.

Scene Two

[18] Out of the blue Ernesto appears. He is an army friend of Fernando's, looking for the Mayor's house, bearing a royal pardon for Ninetta's father. Pippo gives him directions and receives a new silver coin for his trouble. But the magpie snatches it from his grasp and flies with it up to the belfry. Pippo and Antonio climb after the thief. [19] – [20] Meanwhile, Ninetta is being led to execution, the crowd trying to comfort her as she passes. The girl makes a brave final speech and goes to meet her fate. [21] – [22] From the tower, Pippo and Antonio excitedly shout down to Giorgio: they've found not just the coin but Lucia's cutlery too in the magpie's nest! They ring the bells and cry out 'She is innocent!' A crowd gathers and passes on the news, but

can they save her in time? Shots ring out and the truth dawns: they are too late. [23] And yet no – she can be seen coming down the hill! So why the shots? 'Mere rejoicing!' [24] Ninetta joins her celebrating friends, but she is still not at peace. Where is her father? As if on cue, he appears with his saviour Ernesto. [25] Now all can enjoy the happy ending. All, that is, except the Mayor, trapped in a tragedy of his own making.

© 2003 Daniel Slater



Irish soprano **Majella Cullagh** trained with Maeve Coughlan at the Cork School of Music, and at the National Opera Studio, London.

She now studies with Gerald Martin Moore.

Roles include Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Countess Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Micaela (*Carmen*) for Opera North; Ninetta (*La gazza ladra*) for Garsington Opera; Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) for Royal Danish Opera; Massenet's Manon for

New Zealand Opera; Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) for Las Palmas Opera; La Comtesse Adèle (*Le Comte Ory*) for Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Elsie Maynard (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) for Welsh National Opera; Melissa in the Opera Theatre Company production of Handel's *Amadigi* at the Covent Garden Festival; and the title role in the British premiere of Gavin Bryars's *Medea* for BBC Scotland. Other performances have included the British Dancing Girl in John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw under Edo de Waart, and Marguerite (*Huit Scènes de Faust*) at La Fenice, Venice, conducted by Jeffrey Tate.

Recordings include the complete version of Wallace's *Maritana*, Mendelssohn's Second Symphony, for Opera Rara Donizetti's *Zoraida di Granata*, Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* and *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra*, and Mercadante's *Zaira*. For Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation she has recorded the role of Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*).

A graduate of The Royal Northern College of Music (where he was a Peter Moores Scholar), **Barry Banks** has established himself as one of the finest tenors of his generation for his outstanding appearances in opera and concert.

Roles include the title role in English National Opera's *The Rake's Progress*; both Belfiore and Libenshof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) in Bologna; Oreste (*Ermione*) for Santa Fe Opera; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) at the Salzburg Festival, La Monnaie, Leipzig Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Scottish Opera; Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) for Frankfurt Opera and English National Opera; Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) at Basel Opera; Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) at the Metropolitan Opera and with Glyndebourne Festival Opera; the title role in *Candide* for Chicago Lyric Opera; Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for San Francisco Opera; Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) for Welsh National Opera; Aufidio (*Lucio Silla*) at the Salzburg Festival and for Frankfurt Opera; Andres (*Wozzeck*) in Frankfurt; Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*) in Brussels and Paris; and L'Astrologue (*Le coq d'or*) at the Châtelet.

A committed concert artist, Barry Banks has performed Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle* with The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under



Catherine Ashmore

Daniele Gatti, *Fidelio* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Walter Weller, *War Requiem* with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg under Jan Latham-Koenig, Bruckner's *Requiem* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Sir Charles Mackerras, and a performance of Rossini's *Armida* at the Edinburgh Festival under Carlo Rizzi.

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



Christopher Purves was a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge where he read English. On leaving Cambridge he spent four years performing and recording with the vocal group *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. He then resumed

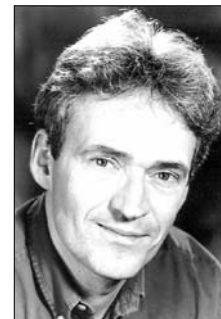
vocal training with David Keren and now studies with Diane Forlano.

Christopher Purves's operatic engagements include appearances with English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Birmingham Opera Company, Opera Northern Ireland, the Garsington Festival, and the Edinburgh Festival, in repertoire which includes the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Agamemnon (*Iphigénie in Aulis*), Mayor (*La gazza ladra*), Siegfried (*Genoveva*), Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Forester (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Dandini (*La Cenerentola*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Marcello (*La bohème*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), and the title role in *Don Pasquale*. Foreign engagements include performances in Paris, Dublin, Beaune, Lisbon and Barcelona.

Christopher Purves has a large concert repertoire including works by composers ranging from Charpentier and Handel to Stravinsky, Honegger and James MacMillan. He has appeared with the St James' Baroque Players, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Sixteen, the Gabrieli Consort, Royal Liverpool

Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, the Academy of Ancient Music, London Sinfonietta and City of London Sinfonia.

Russell Smythe is one of Britain's most experienced international baritones. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and the London Opera Centre, and became a



founding member of the English Music Theatre in 1976. He then became a principal with Welsh National Opera, singing roles such as the title roles in *Billy Budd* and *Eugene Onegin*, Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*), Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*), and Yeletsky (*The Queen of Spades*).

After leaving Welsh National Opera he performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and with English National Opera. Roles include Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with Opéra de Lausanne; Sharpless at the Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin and for Castleward Opera; Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*) and Arbace

(*Idomeneo*) for De Vlaamse Opera; Redburn (*Billy Budd*) for New Israeli Opera; and Fernando (*La gazza ladra*) at the Garsington Festival. He has also performed at the Hamburg Staatsoper, Vienna Volksoper, Paris Opera, De Nederlandse Opera, Opera Zuid, in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Basel, Brussels, Frankfurt, Madrid, Nancy, New York, San Sebastian, Vancouver, and with Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and Opera North.

Recordings include a number of discs for Opera Rara including King Edward (*L'Assedio di Calais*), and Teucer (Rameau's *Dardanus*).



Born in Liverpool and educated at Oxford, **Jeremy White** enjoys an international career in opera, concert and recording, in repertoire ranging from early music to the latest of contemporary composition. He has had a long association with conductors such as Trevor Pinnock, Andrew Parrott, Adam Fischer and Harry

Christophers in music by Bach, Handel and Mozart, while engagements in the twentieth-century repertoire have included Webern with Pierre Boulez and Britten with Graf, as well as appearances with Luciano Berio, Arvo Pärt and John Adams in their own works. Concert tours have taken him all over Europe and to the USA, Brazil and Israel.

Roles have included Kečal (*The Bartered Bride*) for The Royal Opera; Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*) and the title role in Rossini's *The Turk in Italy* for English National Opera; Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), the King (*Aida*), Dikoy (*Kat'a Kabanova*), Talbot (*Giovanna D'Arco*) and Tiresias (*Oedipus Rex*) for Opera North; and *La bohème* at the Bregenz Festival.

Recordings include *Israel in Egypt*, Monteverdi's *Vespers*, and, for Chandos, Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Britten's *Paul Bunyan*, both conducted by Richard Hickox.

Susan Bickley was born in Liverpool and studied music at City University, London and the Guildhall School, where she won the Gold Medal for singers. She made her operatic debut in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* at the Maggio Musicale in Florence, singing the role of Proserpina.

Roles have included Florence Pike (*Albert Herring*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Kostelnicka (*Jenůfa*), Hippolyta (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Anna (*The Electrification of the Soviet Union*), Kabanicha (*Katya Kabanova*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Nan (*New Year*) and Irene (*Theodora*) for Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Feodor (*Boris Godunov*) for The Royal Opera; and Cassandra (*The Trojans*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Andromache (*King Priam*), Kurfürstin (*The Prince of Homburg*), *Twice Through the Heart* and Meg Page (*Falstaff*) for English National Opera. She has also appeared with Paris Opera, San Francisco Opera, Flanders Opera, New Israeli Opera, at the Hong Kong and Göttingen Festivals and in Japan

Highlights from Susan Bickley's busy concert schedule include Ligeti's *Requiem* at



the Salzburg Festival, Nicholas Maw's *Scenes and Arias*, Benjamin's *Upon Silence* and Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles* at the BBC Proms, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with Les Arts Florissants in Vienna and Paris. She performs with leading conductors including Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Nicholas McGegan, Paul McCreesh, Mark Wigglesworth, Oliver Knussen, William Christie and Robert King.

Recordings include Handel's *Serse*, *Theodora* and *Solomon*, *The Fairy Queen*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and Rubbra's *Ode to the Queen* for Chandos.



Nerys Jones was born in Wales and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, with Patricia MacMahon. In 1994 she joined English National Opera where she remained a company principal for six seasons, with roles including Cherubino, Despina, Zerlina, Second Lady, Melissa (*Princess Ida*), Bird (*Blond Eckbert*), Proserpina

(*Orfeo*), Flora (*La traviata*), Pitti Sing (*The Mikado*), Mercédès (*Carmen*), Nursing Sister (*Sister Angelica*), Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Cherubino and Sister Mathilde (*The Carmelites*).

She has performed with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Scottish Early Music Consort, and the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Recitals include the North Wales Music Festival and St John's Smith Square, London.

Other appearances include Cherubino, Rosina and Dorabella for Grange Park Opera, *Il mondo della luna* and *La gazza ladra* at Garsington, and Stewardess (*Flight*) with Reisopera in Holland and Vlaamse Opera.

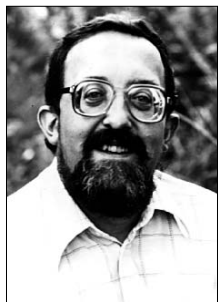


An English National Opera company principal, **John Graham-Hall** has appeared with all the major British opera companies in roles including Albert Herring, Kudrjas (*Katya Kabanova*), Flute and Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Cassio (*Otello*), Eisenstein,

Ferrando, Basilio, Monostatos, Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*), Herod (*Salome*), Shabby Peasant (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*) and Anatole (*War and Peace*).

As an international singer he is a regular visitor to Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Salzburg, Stuttgart, Toronto, Vancouver, Lisbon, Rome and Antwerp where engagements include Painter (*Lulu*), Shapkin (*The House of the Dead*), Basilio, Achilles (*King Priam*), and Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*). Other roles include Alwa (*Lulu*), Mime (*The Ring Cycle*), Sylvester (*The Silver Tassie*), Valzacchi and Sellem (*The Rake's Progress*) (all for English National Opera); Mayor (*Albert Herring*) for Opera North; and Tanzmeister (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) for The Royal Opera.

John Graham-Hall has worked with many distinguished conductors including Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Pierre Boulez, Andrew Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, John Eliot Gardiner and Claudio Abbado. His concert career has taken him all over Europe, working with all the major British orchestras and appearing frequently at the Barbican and the South Bank. Recordings include *Peter Grimes* for Chandos, *The Coronation of Poppea*, *Carmina Burana* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Stuart Kale is internationally recognised as one of the most outstanding singing actors in the operatic world. A consummate musician, 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 in Martinů's *Julietta*, Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*), and Nanki-Poo in Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado*. In 1987 he began his flourishing freelance career singing Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) at the Opera du Rhin and in Nancy, also returning to English National Opera to sing Herod (*Salome*).

Notable engagements have included the High Priest in *Idomeneo* at Covent Garden; Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) in San Francisco, Geneva, Zürich, Montpellier, Bordeaux and Bologna; Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) in Strasbourg, Bordeaux and Montpellier; Quint

(*The Turn of the Screw*) and Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*) for English National Opera; Zinoviev (*Lady Macbeth*) in Toulouse and Marseille; Idomeneo in Drottningholm; and the three tenor roles in *Lulu* at the Châtelet; Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*) at the Munich State Opera, Covent Garden, Genova and Strasbourg; Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) in Cologne; Gregor (*The Makropoulos Case*) in Strasbourg, and appearances with the State Opera of South Australia, in Drottningholm, Turin and Parma.

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

The baritone **Toby Stafford-Allen** studied under Robert Alderson at the Royal Northern



College of Music, where roles included Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), the title role in the baritone version of *Werther*, and the Foreman of the Mill (*Jenůfa*) among others. On leaving the College he

joined English National Opera and with this and other British companies has sung Valletto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Henry (*The Fairy Queen*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fiorello (*The Barber of Seville*), Baron Douphol (*La traviata*) and Schaunard (*La bohème*). His festival performances have included Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Mars and Euro in Cesti's *Il pomo d'oro* at the Batignano Festival, Schaunard at the Bregenz Festival and Grimbald and Aeolos in Purcell's *King Arthur* at the Kings Lynn Festival. His oratorio repertoire includes the Requiems by Mozart and Fauré, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* and Bach's Mass in B minor.



Nicholas Garrett studied at Trinity College of Music and is the recipient of a Wolfson Foundation Award. Roles include Baron Douphol (*La traviata*) with English National Opera; Colline (*La bohème*) for Scottish Opera; Round; Escamillo (*Carmen*) for Opera North; Commendatore/Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) for

Pimlico Opera; Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Nourabad (*The Pearl Fishers*) for English Touring Opera; Sourin (*The Queen of Spades*) for Scottish Opera; Jenkins (*Of Thee I Sing*) for Opera North; Nikitich and Chernikovskiy (*Boris Godunov*) for Opera de Nantes, as well as engagements with Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park and Almeida Opera. In 2001 he made his debut with The Royal Opera in performances of *Palestrina*.

Conway van Gelder



Prunella Scales trained at the Old Vic Theatre School and with Uta Hagen in New York. She has appeared in repertory in Huddersfield, Salisbury, Oxford, Bristol and the Old Vic, and has

performed in Stratford Upon Avon and the Chichester Festival Theatre. Her many theatre credits include *Just the Three of Us* (directed by Peter Hall), *A Perfect Ganesb* and *Happy Days* (directed by Jude Kelly), *Single Spies* (directed by Alan Bennett/Simon Callow),

Quartermaine's Terms (directed by Harold Pinter), and *The Merchant of Venice* (directed by Timothy West). Television appearances include *Fawlty Towers*, *Silent Witness*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Midsomer Murders*, *What the Butler Saw*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Question of Attribution* and *Breaking the Code*. Prunella Scales was created a CBE in the 1992 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Geoffrey Mitchell's singing career has encompassed a remarkably wide repertoire from early to contemporary music and has taken him to Scandinavia, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, Canada and Australasia. Early conducting experience with the BBC led to a wider involvement with his own singers and in turn to the establishment of the **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Early recordings resulted in the Choir's long-term involvement with Opera Rara for which it has made over thirty recordings. The Choir is enjoying a growing reputation with further work from the BBC and international record companies. For Chandos the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir has participated in numerous recordings in the acclaimed Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation.

One of the world's great orchestras, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** is now in its sixth season with renowned German maestro Christoph von Dohnányi as Principal Conductor. That post was first held by Otto Klemperer, and the Orchestra has since had important collaborations with Lorin Maazel (as Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (as Principal Conductor and Music Director), Giuseppe Sinopoli (as Music Director) and, currently, Kurt Sanderling (as Conductor Emeritus), Vladimir Ashkenazy (as Conductor Laureate) and Sir Charles Mackerras (as Principal Guest Conductor), besides such eminent figures as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan and Carlo Maria Giulini. It continues to engage world-class conductors and soloists, and attracts Europe's most talented young players to join its orchestral ranks.

Resident Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, it maintains a central position in British musical life also through regional residencies which provide an ideal opportunity to expand a dynamic educational and community-based programme. Winner of numerous awards, it has garnered unanimous critical acclaim for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of

which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new music by today's leading composers.

An increasing number of the Orchestra's concerts are being broadcast by BBC Radio 3, including its annual performance at the BBC Proms. As the world's most recorded symphony orchestra, with over 1000 releases to its credit, among these a number of television and feature film soundtracks, the Philharmonia Orchestra enjoys a worldwide reputation. The discography includes, for Opera Rara, several recital discs as well as eleven complete operas, and for Chandos, in the Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation, *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, the award-winning *Tosca* and solo recital albums of operatic arias with Elizabeth Futral, Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny and John Tomlinson. The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to consolidate its international renown through regular tours and through recent prestigious residencies at the Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, the Megaron in Athens and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

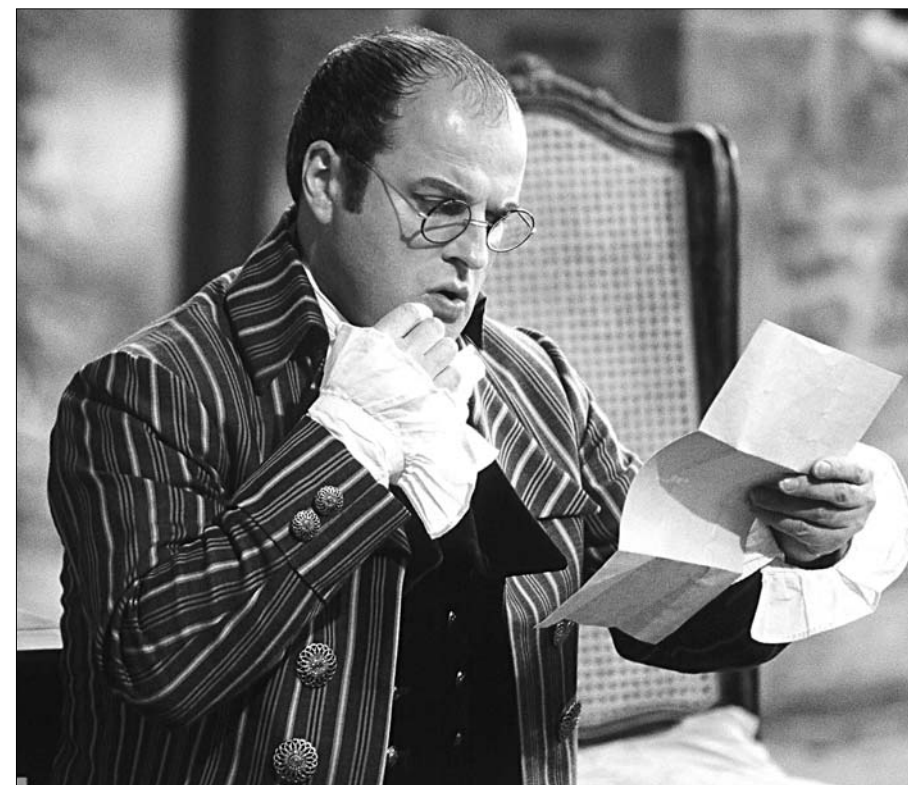
David Parry studied with Sergiu Celibidache and began his career as Sir John Pritchard's assistant. He made his debut with English Music Theatre, then became a staff conductor at Städtische Bühnen, Dortmund and at Opera North. He was Music Director of Opera 80 from 1983 to 1987 and since 1992 has been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

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

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

with a tour of *Carmen*, and in Mexico with the UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recent new productions he has conducted include *Fidelio* at the New Zealand Festival, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New Israeli Opera and *Don Giovanni* at Staatsoper Hannover.

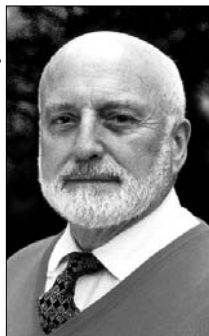
His work in the recording studio includes the BBC Television production of Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and twenty-eight complete opera recordings under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation. Among these are numerous discs for the Opera Rara label which have won several awards, including the Belgian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



Keith Saunders

Christopher Purves as the Mayor in Garsington Opera's production of *The Thieving Magpie*

Bill Cooper/PMF



SIR PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied Italian and German. He had a 'gap year' at Glyndebourn working as a behind-the-scenes administrator before going to Oxford, then studied for three years at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and was a production assistant with the Vienna State Opera working as assistant producer of performances by Viennese artists at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, at the Geneva Festival and at the Rome Opera.

In 1957 he joined his father's business, Littlewoods, becoming Vice-Chairman in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remaining a director until 1993. His public appointments include from 1981 to 1983 Governor of the BBC, Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1992 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 1992 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant (DL) of Lancashire by HM Queen Elizabeth II. He was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1991 and received a Knighthood in the New Year's Honours List for 2003 in recognition of his charitable services to the arts.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

Peter Moores' philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he identified and helped a number of young artists in the crucial, early stages of their careers, several of whom – Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Colin Davis and the late Sir Geraint Evans amongst them – became world-famous. He set up his eponymous Foundation in 1964 when he was thirty-two, in order to develop his charitable aims, not only in music and the visual arts, but also in education, health,

youth, social and environmental projects. To date, because of his initiatives and life-long commitment to these causes, he has disbursed more than £85 million of his own money through the Foundation and the Peter Moores Charitable Trust – 'to get things done and to open doors'.

Projects to help the young have ranged from a scheme to encourage young Afro-Caribbeans to stay on at school to the endowment of a Faculty Directorship and Chair of Management Studies at Oxford University (providing the lead donation in 1991 for the new School of Management Studies). In 1994 a permanent Transatlantic Slave Trade Gallery, initiated by Peter Moores, opened at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, with the aim of fostering discussion about the heritage and true history of the slave trade. Substantial help was given to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Development Trust, whilst through annual PMF Scholarships established in 1971 well over two hundred young singers have received practical support at the outset of their careers, enabling a significant number to become international opera stars.

In 1993 the Foundation acquired Compton Verney, an eighteenth-century mansion, and established the Compton Verney House Trust, an independent charity which it funded in order to transform the mansion into an art gallery designed especially to encourage newcomers to the visual arts. Alongside major international touring exhibitions, it will house permanent collections of North European art, Neapolitan paintings and one of the finest collections of archaic oriental bronzes in the UK, as well as a British Portrait Collection and a British Folk Art Collection. The gallery is scheduled to open in Spring 2004.

Opera has given the Foundation its most public 'face'. Since Peter Moores initiated the live recording of the 'Goodall Ring' at the London Coliseum in the 1970s, the Foundation has enabled some eighty recordings to be produced: Chandos Records' Opera in English series – 'Opera that speaks your language' – is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English whilst Opera Rara's recordings of rare bel canto operas have opened up an immensely rich repertoire previously only accessible to scholars. In live performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financing the publication of scores and enabling rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals.



Keith Saunders

Nerys Jones as Pippo in Garsington Opera's production of *The Thieving Magpie*



Keith Saunders

Russell Smythe as Fernando in Garsington Opera's production of *The Thieving Magpie*

Rossini: The Thieving Magpie

Als Rossinis Freund, der Schriftsteller Honoré de Balzac *La gazza ladra* 1821 zum ersten Mal in Paris hörte, gab er sich dem Erlebnis ganz und gar hin. "Der Mann riecht nach Alkohol!" beschwerte sich eine Frau in der Reihe hinter ihm, doch Balzac, der wirklich bereits vor seinem Besuch des Théâtre Italien prophylaktisch eine Flasche Wein getrunken und zwei Zigarren geraucht hatte, war durchaus in der Lage, diese Stichelei zu ignorieren. Die Musik Rossinis war nun sein neues Rauschmittel.

Wie ganz anders alles auf der anderen Seite des Ärmelkanals aussah. Als früher im gleichen Jahr gerade jener konservativste unter den englischen Musikliebhabern, Lord Mount Edgumbe die Oper in London hörte, schimpfte und meckerte er:

Die Finales und viele der zahlreichen *Pezzi concertati* sind ungemein *laut*, und der verschwenderische Einsatz der *lärmenden* Instrumente scheint meines Erachtens für den Stoff völlig ungeeignet, der, obwohl er schon anrührend hätte dargestellt werden können, weit davon entfernt ist, solch kriegerische Begleitung zu verlangen.

Man fragt sich, worum es Mount Edgumbes Meinung nach in dem Werk wohl ging. Eine Oper, die in einer Zeit der Revolution spielt und zu deren Hauptfiguren ein Deserteur gehört – vom Marsch zum Schafott im letzten Akt ganz zu schweigen – hat doch sicherlich ein Recht auf die eine oder andere gelegentliche "kriegerische Begleitung". Tatsache ist, Mount Edgumbe mochte keinen Lärm. Für ihn und andere gleichgesinnte englische Musikliebhaber war Rossini das Heavy Metal seines Zeitalters.

Bei der Uraufführung am 31.5.1817 in Mailand hatte sich das Publikum von dem eröffnenden Aufruf der kleinen Trommel in der Ouvertüre und dem anschließenden, imposanten *Maestoso marziale* mitreißen lassen. In welch großem Maße die Ouvertüre auf die Ereignisse, die sich auf der Bühne entfalten sollten, zugeschnitten war, konnte das Premierenpublikum aber nicht wissen. Hier handelte es sich nicht um eine von Rossinis berühmten Selbstanleihen, also ein bereits fertig komponiertes Stück, das er sozusagen zur Generalprobe aus seinem Handkoffer hervorkramte, sondern um eine

maßgeschneiderte Komposition, von deren Themen viele im Hauptteil der Oper wiederkehren.

In einem Brief an seine Mutter aus der Zeit des Mailänder Auftrags im März 1817 schrieb Rossini:

Ich komponiere eine Oper *La gazza ladra*. Die Geschichte ist von einem Neuling in Verse gesetzt worden, was mich ganz verrückt macht; doch sie hat ein sehr schönes Thema, und ich hoffe, so Gott will, daß wir ein "feines Fiasko" daraus machen können.

Das "schöne Thema" basierte auf der wahren Geschichte eines französischen Bauernmädchens, das wegen Diebstählen, die, wie sich später herausstellte, von einer diebischen Elster begangen worden waren, verurteilt und gehängt wurde. Dieses Ereignis war zur Quelle einer großen Anzahl fiktiver Darstellungen geworden, wie etwa eines sogenannten *Mélo-historique* oder *Mélodrame de boulevard* mit dem Titel *La Pie voleuse*, das im April 1815 am Pariser Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin von Théodore Badouin d'Aubigny und dem Theatermanager Louis-Charles Caigniez ("der Racine der Boulevards") auf die Bühne gebracht worden war. Rossinis französischer Biograph, Stendhal, hielt mit seinem Spott nicht lange hinter dem Berg:

Und um alles noch schlimmer zu machen, scheint es, als basiere diese widerwärtige kleine Anekdote auf einer wahren Geschichte; es gab wirklich ein armes Dienstmädchen, das in Palaiseau gehängt wurde, und ihr zum Andenken wurde eine Messe, später als *Elsternmesse* bekannt, eingesetzt.

Stendhals Bemerkung verdeutlicht die mehr oder weniger unüberbrückbare Kluft, die im damaligen Frankreich zwischen jenen melodramatischen Theaterstücken mit Musikbegleitung, welche die mittleren und niedrigen Schichten in Massen anzogen, und solchen auf der Bühne der Pariser Opéra, dem Zuhause der Aristokratie und der *Haute Bourgeoisie*, herrschte.

Die Italiener waren da weniger engstirnig. Da Dutzende italienischer Opernhäuser pro Spielzeit zwei oder drei neue Opern auf die Bühne bringen wollten, wurden plausible Geschichten hoch geschätzt. Außerdem waren intellektuelle Kreise in Italien keineswegs abgeneigt, sich mit der populären Literatur zu beschäftigen. Der "Neuling" Giovanni Gherardini (1778–1861), der aus *La Pie voleuse* ein für eine italienische Oper geeignetes Libretto machte, hatte sogar einen recht hohen Status. Von Hause aus Arzt, aber von seiner Neigung her Dichter, Übersetzer und

Philologe, arbeitete Gherardini als leitender Redakteur des *Giornale Italiano*, der offiziellen Zeitung des Königreichs Italiens – ein Amt, in das er bereits 1806 im Alter von achtundzwanzig Jahren berufen worden war.

Es ist ein Unterpand Gherardinis künstlerischer und intellektueller Neugierde, daß er seine Bearbeitung von *La Pie voleuse* (etwas gespreizt in *Eine Mahnung an die Richter* umbenannt) als Beitrag zu einem 1816 von der Mailänder Scala organisierten Librettistenwettbewerb fertigte. Gewinnen tat er nicht. Der erste Preis von 1000 österreichischen Lire (etwa €1200 in heutigem Geld) ging an einen jungen Senkrechstarter des italienischen Theaters, Felice Romani. Das Vorhaben der Scala, das Textbuch Rossini anzubieten, traf jedoch schon bald auf Schwierigkeiten. Nach einem Briefwechsel zwischen Rossini und Angel Petracchi, dem Theaterdirektor der Scala, im Winter 1816–1817 wurde schließlich das Gherardini-Libretto ausgewählt. Aus einem Brief Vincenzo Montis (Mitglied der Jury und Mentor Romanis) geht hervor, daß das Gherardini-Textbuch bei der Kommission gut angekommen war, und zwar nicht zuletzt, weil es zu einer Zeit, in der, so Monti, die Libretti drohten, zu kaum mehr als „monströsen

Zusammenschmelzungen nichts als sinnloser Worte“ zu verkommen, durch seine Ordnung bestach.

Gerade für die Geschichte von *La gazza ladra* war Gherardinis Ordentlichkeit nicht zu unterschätzen. Ähnlich wie Charles Dickens' Roman *The Pickwick Papers*, der lebhaftes Abenteuer mit Gefängniszenen von ungewöhnlicher Trostlosigkeit verknüpft, besticht auch dieses Stück durch eine breite Vielfalt von mitfühlend, sentimental und gelegentlich schrullig gezeichneten Charakteren. Im Mittelpunkt der Geschichte steht eine ländliche Gemeinde, dem König untertan, aber dominiert von ihrem geschäftigen, sadistischen Bürgermeister, so einer Art rustikalem Scarpia. Zentrale Figuren der Gemeinschaft sind der leutselige, dem Wein äußerst zugetane Pächter, Fabrizio Vingradito, seine Frau, Lucia, und deren kürzlich aus den Kriegen zurückgekehrter Sohn, Giannetto. (Monti hielt die Rolle des Giannetto für etwas unterbelichtet – „man würde sich schon ein bißchen mehr Entschlossenheit und militärischen Eifer wünschen“ –, und in der Tat fällt es schwer, sich dieser Kritik nicht anzuschließen.)

Giannetto will das bescheidene und reizende Dienstmädchen Ninetta heiraten. Sie ist die

Hauptperson der Oper und ohne Zweifel eine Variante des Aschenputtel-Typus, für den sich Rossini offenbar interessierte. (Die Verhandlungen mit der Scala zu *La gazza ladra* fielen zeitlich mit der Komposition und den Proben zu *La Cenerentola* für das Teatro Valle in Rom zusammen.) Ninetta selbst ist von einer Schar kleinerer Charaktere umgeben, zu denen der Dienstjunge Pippo und der Hausierer Isacco gehören, von dessen „jaulender“ Kavatine Stendhal sich zu derartigen Schimpfreden gegen die polnischen Juden hinreißen ließ, daß man ihn heutzutage dafür eingesperrt würde. (Trabuco in Verdis *La forza del destino* ist eindeutig ein Nachkomme Isaccos.) Außerdem gibt es noch die beeindruckende Figur von Ninettas Vater Fernando Villabella, der von der Armee desertiert ist, allerdings ohne eigenes Verschulden. Man kann nur spekulieren, welchen Eindruck wohl die Demütigung dieses starken und mitfühlenden Mannes bei der Lektüre des Textbuches auf Rossini gemacht haben mag. Sein eigener Vater, ein redegewandter und durch und durch ehrlicher Republikaner, war nämlich 1800 von den Österreichern in Bologna verhaftet und inhaftiert worden.

Der Rahmen, in dem Rossini inzwischen seine Musikdramen gestaltete, erlaubte ihm

seine Vertonung von Gherardinis Text mit genügend Pracht auszustatten, um selbst den hohen Erwartungen der Mailänder Scala gerecht zu werden. Das Theater für seinen Teil ließ sich bei den Produktionskosten nicht lumpen. Es wurde eine distinguierte Besetzung, mit Filippo Galli als Fernando an ihrer Spitze, zusammengestellt, und Alessandro Sanquirico, einer der innovativsten Bühnenkünstler seiner Zeit, wurde mit dem Bühnenbild beauftragt. Besonders imposant waren seine Entwürfe für die Gerichtsszene.

Besinnt man sich auf ihre Wurzeln im französischen *Mélodrame*, so nimmt *La gazza ladra* gleichermaßen den italienischen *Verismo* voraus. Ninetta selbst ist gerade die Art von lebenswerter und ungerecht behandelter Frau, die man in einer Oper von Puccini erwarten würde. Und eben sie ist in einer der bemerkenswertesten Sequenzen des ganzen Stückes von zentraler Bedeutung. Im ersten Akt erhält der Bürgermeister, als Ninetta und ihr Vater vor ihm stehen, einen Brief, in dem der Deserteur ausführlich beschrieben wird. Da der Bürgermeister seine Brille vergessen hat, bittet er Ninetta, die Beschreibung vorzulesen. Das tut sie (ihre Worte sind mit einer siedenden Orchesterbegleitung

unterlegt), den Text beim Lesen ändernd. In seinem Theaterstück *Boris Godunow* beschreibt Alexander Puschkin, der 1823–24 *La gazza ladra* in Odessa sah, eine mehr oder weniger identische Szene, wenn der falsche Dmitri seiner Verhaftung entgeht, indem er die Angaben eines Haftbefehls ändert, den ihm ein des Lesens unkundiger Wächter zum Vorlesen gegeben hat. Modest Mussorgsky übernahm diese Szene in seine gleichnamige Oper, allerdings ist seine deklamatorische Vertonung des Vorlesens um einiges weniger wirkungsvoll als Rossinis revolutionäres Mittel der Verwendung rein gesprochener Worte. Es ist vielleicht nicht weiter erstaunlich, daß *La gazza ladra* ihre Rückkehr ins Repertoire in den 40er und 50er Jahren in nicht unerheblichem Maße einer frei-innovativen Adaption (Pesaro 1941) von Riccardo Zandonai verdankte, einem *Verismo*-Komponisten der Avantgarde, dessen Vorlieben sich gegen Ende seines Lebens einem durch Rossini inspirierten Neoklassizismus zuwandten.

Ansonsten ist *La gazza ladra* eine im großen und ganzen herkömmlich konzipierte Oper. Weder gibt es für die namengebende Elster irgendwelche musikalischen Höhenflüge, noch werden Rossinis eigene Formen – Duette, Terzette, traditionell aufgebaute Finales und

dergleichen – irgendwelchen unmittelbaren Zugeständnissen an den Realismus geopfert. Trotz der drohenden Ankunft des Bürgermeisters erhalten Ninetta und ihr Vater noch ihre Cabaletta, was sowohl von Rossinis Sinn für Ordnung zeugt, als auch von einem vielleicht etwas trägen Festhalten an den Formen, die er selbst mit ins Leben gerufen hatte. Während der ganzen Oper ist es die Musik selber – und insbesondere ihr Rhythmus –, durch die Gefühle von Ekstase, Befreiung, Verwirrung und Verstrickung ausgelöst werden. Wenn der wohlwollende Gefängniswärter Antonio versucht, Ninetta und Giannetto von einander zu trennen, um zu verhindern, daß der Bürgermeister entdeckt, daß Antonio Ninetta ein paar Augenblicke außerhalb ihrer Zelle erlaubt hat, ist die Situation identisch mit derjenigen im zweiten Akt des *Barbiere di Siviglia*, in der Figaro sich heimlich über die zögernden Liebenden lustig macht. Die Szene aus *La gazza ladra* ist jedoch nicht nur bar jeglichen Gefühls von Komödie, sondern die rhythmische Bewegung sowie das die Stimmen der Liebenden untermalende militaristische Ostinato erzählen eine ganz andere und viel unerbittlichere Geschichte.

Die Darstellung des Bürgermeisters ist gleichermaßen berechnet. Zunächst entsteht der Eindruck einer komischen Figur, der jedoch in dem großen Terzett nach der Briefszene revidiert werden muß. Wenn der Bürgermeister dann in der Gefängniszene im 2. Akt vor das Gericht gerufen wird, färbt das zweite Thema der Ouvertüre – mit sehr vordergründiger kleiner Trommel – die Stretta auf sowohl brillante als auch bedrohliche Art und Weise.

Manchmal heißt es, die Rolle der Ninetta sei zu blaß gezeichnet, wobei aber ihre Unverdorbenheit und die ausgesprochen passende Musik, die Rossini für sie schreibt, übersehen werden. Ihre Cavatina, mit ihrer unbelasteten, rhythmisch spontanen Cabaletta ist wunderbar unverbraucht. Dann sind da noch das Dur-Pathos ihrer Antwort auf Isaccos Enthüllungen im Finale des 1. Aktes und das herrliche Gefängnisduett, in dem Pippo seine eigenen anrührenden Antworten hinzufügt; und schließlich Ninettas Gebet zu Beginn der Schlußzene, umrahmt von einem unheimlich instrumentierten Marsch zum Schafott. Auch wenn die Rolle keineswegs als „Star-Vehikel“ bezeichnet werden kann, interessierte sie doch Sängerinnen wie Colbran und Pasta. Allen Berichten zufolge war die bewußt und

bezaubernd rustikale Malibran eine denkwürdige Ninetta, bei der realistische und idealistische Elemente derart miteinander verschmolzen, daß sie Rossinis musikalischer und dramatischer Vision perfekt entsprochen haben muß.

Wer mehr Tiefgang sucht, sollte sich Ninettas Beziehung zu ihrem Vater genauer anschauen. Wie Verdi war auch Rossini für das Thema elterlicher Liebe sehr empfänglich, und *La gazza ladra* verdankt einen großen Teil ihrer grundlegenden Macht und Wirkung der Figur des Fernando. Sein Duett mit Ninetta im 1. Akt sowie sein Eingreifen in die Gerichtsszene lassen bereits Verdi in dessen mittlerer Periode ahnen.

Rossinis Übersiedlung nach Neapel im Jahre 1815 hatte sein Interesse an ernsten Themen und groß angelegten Handlungsrahmen gesteigert. *La gazza ladra* setzte diese Entwicklung fort, allerdings mit „bürgerlicheren“ Inhalten, als es die Neapolitaner gutgeheißen hätten. Die aufgeschlossene Stimmung der pastoralen Szenen nimmt die Vielfalt der Chor- und Tanzsätze in Rossinis nächster Oper *Armida* und seiner letzten, *Guillaume Tell* vorweg. Außerdem läßt sich im Orchester eine größere Bandbreite sowie erhöhte handwerkliche

Sorgfalt konstatieren. Aus der Reprise von Ninettas Marsch zum Schafott entsteht, während sich der Zug durch das Dorf windet, ein komplexes Ensemble: *Fortissimo*-Streicher und kleine Trommel, Holzbläser und *Pizzicato*-Streicher, und Hörner und *Smorzando*-Klarinetten.

Die Entdeckung des Horts der Elster und Ninettas Rettung in letzter Minute sorgen für ein strahlendes Ende. Auch wenn er nicht so bewegend sein mag, wie der Schluß von Beethovens *Fidelio*, bildet er doch den triumphalen Abschluß einer Oper, die – wie alle reifen Meisterstücke Rossinis, ob *Buffa* oder *Semiseria* – die Bindungen der menschlichen Zuneigung und die Stärke des menschlichen Geistes angesichts einer Welt voller Unordnung feiert.

* * * * *

Der riesige Erfolg von *La gazza ladra* im Jahre 1817 in Mailand zog einen besonders interessanten Nebeneffekt nach sich: eine Inszenierung der Oper für die Gala-Eröffnung eines neuen Opernhauses in Rossinis Geburtsort Pesaro im Juni 1818 unter der Oberaufsicht des Komponisten selbst.

Es gibt noch Briefe – die einzigen uns erhalten gebliebenen in denen Rossinis

Mitarbeit an der Inszenierung einer seiner eigenen Opern detailliert dokumentiert wird –, die gerade das belegen, was gut informierte Rossini-Anhänger schon immer gewußt haben, was aber durch das gängige Bild des müßigen Bonvivants mutwillig verdeckt wurde, nämlich seine enorme Arbeitsfähigkeit sowie die akribische Aufmerksamkeit, die er jedem Detail widmete.

Der Briefwechsel ermöglicht einen Einblick in die Geschehnisse ab dem 27.1.1818, und zwar mit einem Brief von Rossini an die Organisatoren des Projekts, Giulio Perticari und Antaldo Antaldi. Darin bestätigt Rossini, daß er darum bemüht sei, zwei Stars der Oper von Neapel, Colbran und Nozzari, zu engagieren, und zwar um seine neuste neapolitanische Oper *Armida* auf die Bühne zu bringen. Die Verhandlungen zogen sich über zwei Monate hin, und während dieser Zeit wurde deutlich, daß Pesaro weder in der Lage war, sich solche berühmten Künstler zu leisten, noch zu sagen, wann sie eventuell doch benötigt würden. Schließlich wurde *La gazza ladra* ausgewählt, obwohl es sich dann herausstellte, daß sie ebenso schwer zu besetzen war und die Inszenierung sogar noch teurer wurde, und zwar nicht zuletzt weil Rossini darauf bestand, nicht nur Sanquirico

sondern auch seinen noch berühmteren Lehrer Paolo Landriana als Verantwortliche für das Bühnenbild zu engagieren.

Nachdem eine Bitte an seine alte Freundin Rosa Morandi, die Partie der Ninetta zu übernehmen, im Sande verlaufen war, engagierte Rossini die achtzehnjährige Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis zusammen mit ihrem Ehemann Giuseppe De Begnis (zu reduzierter Gage) als Bürgermeister. Durch die bei dem Ehepaar De Begnis entstandenen Ersparnisse wurde es möglich, seinen Protégé, den Tenor Alberico Curioni als Giannetto und Raniero Remorini als Fernando zu verpflichten. Als Remorini klar wurde, daß er der Dreh- und Angelpunkt der gesamten Oper war, erwies er sich als teuer und auch schwierig. "Seinetwegen bin ich drei Tage durch die Hölle gegangen. O welche Misere!" rief Rossini aus, denn Remorini bestand auf einem zusätzlichen Solo.

Im Vergleich zu der Mühe, die sich Rossini wegen der Produktion selbst machte, war das jedoch noch gar nichts. Ein durch und durch bessener Perfektionist, bestand er darauf, nur die besten Instrumentalisten der Gegend für sich zu gewinnen. Die Sitzordnung des Orchesters wurde festgelegt, auch die genau

abgemessenen Abstände zwischen den Musikern sowie die beste Art und Weise, die Notenständer zu beleuchten. Die Koordination zwischen Bühnenbildnern und Technikern wurde in Gang gesetzt. Auch an den Aufenthaltsort der Elstern-Attrappe wurde noch einmal erinnert.

Der ganze Aufwand hatte seinen Preis. Die Gala-Eröffnung am 10. Juni war zwar ein Triumph, aber kurz danach wurde Rossini von einer "schwerwiegenden Halsentzündung" heimgesucht. Gerüchte von seinem Tod erreichten sogar Neapel und Paris, doch glücklicherweise überlebte er und wurde in der Villa Perticari wieder gesund gepflegt.

Von dem positiven Empfang, der *La gazza ladra* zuteil geworden war, ermutigt, kehrte Rossini im folgenden Mai nach Pesaro zurück, nur um dort von Raufbolden im Dienste von Bartolomeo Bergami, dem Liebhaber von Caroline, Prinzessin von Wales, der getrennt von ihrem Mann lebenden Ehefrau des englischen Prinzregenten, aus der Stadt verjagt zu werden. Rossini war siebenundzwanzig, und obwohl er sechsundsiebzig Jahre alt werden sollte, kehrte er nie wieder nach Pesaro zurück.

© 2003 Richard Osborne

Handlung

Vor langer Zeit in einem kleinen französischen Ort...

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] – [2] Ouvertüre

1. Akt**1. Szene**

[3] – [5] Im Hause Fabrizio und Lucia Vingraditos herrscht große Aufregung, da am heutigen Tage ihr Sohn, Giannetto, aus dem Krieg zurückkehren soll. Ein großes Fest ist geplant, und es scheint, als wolle die gesamte Nachbarschaft mithelfen.

[6] – [8] Niemand ist aufgeregter als Ninetta, das Dienstmädchen der Vingraditos, die Giannetto von ganzem Herzen liebt. Es wird allgemein angenommen, daß die beiden heiraten werden (eine Vermutung, die sogar die Zustimmung der Hauselster findet), doch Lucia ist gegen die Verbindung und scheint Ninetta für das kürzliche Verschwinden einer Silbergabel verantwortlich zu machen.

[9] Der örtliche Hausierer, Isacco, erscheint und erkundigt sich nach Ninetta, [10] doch ein anderer Bediensteter, Pippo, schickt ihn fort.

[11] – [13] Dann kommt endlich der Moment, auf den alle gewartet haben: Giannetto kommt! Der Wein fließt in Strömen. Lucia verschwindet bald mit ihrem Sohn, um Familienmitglieder zu besuchen, und überläßt es Ninetta, das Fest vorzubereiten. [14] Kaum ist ihr Geliebter fort, da taucht Ninettas Vater, Fernando Villabella, der auch aus dem Krieg zurückgekehrt ist, auf. [15] – [17] Er bringt jedoch keine willkommenen Neuigkeiten: nach einem Streit mit seinem Vorgesetzten wurde er als Deserteur zum Tode verurteilt. [18] Da er kein Geld hat, gibt er seiner Tochter zwei Stücke des Familiensilbers zum Verkauf, damit er die Kosten seiner Flucht bezahlen kann. Die Lage wird noch komplizierter als der Bürgermeister eintritt, entschlossen, Ninettas Zuneigung zu gewinnen. Sie gibt vor, ihr Vater sei ein vorbeziehender Bettler. Der Gehilfe des Bürgermeisters, Giorgio, bringt einen Haftbefehl gegen Fernando. [19] – [21] Da der Bürgermeister seine Brille vergessen hat, bittet er Ninetta ihm den Haftbefehl vorzulesen. Sie beschreibt jemanden, der ihrem Vater so wenig wie möglich ähnelt, doch als der Bürgermeister sie weiter mit seinen unerwünschten Aufmerksamkeiten bedrängt, ist Fernando

so wutentbrannt, daß der Schwindel fast auffliegt. [22] Während alle drei abgehen, fliegt die Elster herab und stiehlt einen von Lucias Silberlöffeln.

2. Szene

[23] Isacco kommt erneut vorbei, und Ninetta verkauft ihm das Silber ihres Vaters. Giannetto kehrt mit seiner Familie zurück und wird dem Bürgermeister vorgestellt. Lucia entdeckt, daß ein Löffel fehlt, was den Bürgermeister dazu veranlaßt, auf eine sofortige Untersuchung zu bestehen. Er warnt, daß das Gesetz in solchen Fällen häuslichen Diebstahls äußerst stren sei: sie werden mit der Todesstrafe geahndet. [24] Aufgrund der vereinten Bemühungen Lucias und des eifersüchtigen Bürgermeisters fällt der Verdacht bald auf Ninetta. In ihrer Verwirrung läßt sie das Geld, das sie von Isacco bekommen hat, fallen. [25] Der Hausierer wird herbeigeholt: obwohl er die Gabel und den Löffel bereits wieder verkauft hat, erinnert er sich, daß sie das Monogramm F.V. trugen. [26] – [27] Dies sind auch Fernandos Initialen, aber in ihrem verzweifelten Versuch ihren Vater zu schützen, kann Ninetta ihre Unschuld nicht beweisen. [28] Auf Anordnung des Bürgermeisters wird sie ins Gefängnis gebracht.

COMPACT DISC TWO**2. Akt****1. Szene**

[1] – [2] Dem gutmütigen Gefängniswärter Antonio tut Ninetta leid. Deshalb verspricht er, eine Nachricht an Pippo weiterzuleiten und erlaubt Giannetto sie zu besuchen. Sie überzeugt ihren Geliebten von ihrer Unschuld, [3] – [4] doch das Treffen wird durch die Ankunft des Bürgermeisters unterbrochen. Er kommt, um Ninetta einen einfachen Handel anzubieten: wenn sie seinen Annäherungsversuchen nachgibt, kommt sie frei. Ihre Antwort ist unmissverständlich – sie würde lieber sterben, als sich ihm hingeben. [5] Bevor der Bürgermeister weitere Argumente für sich anführen kann, wird er in den Gerichtssaal gerufen, [6] doch Antonio hat das Ganze mit angehört und entschließt sich, Ninetta, wo er nur kann, zu helfen. Ninetta bittet Pippo, Geld für ihren Vater in ein ausgemachtes Versteck zu bringen. [7] – [9] Sie versucht ihm das Kreuz, das sie um den Hals trägt, zu verkaufen, doch er besteht darauf, ihr das Geld zu leihen. Sie verabschieden sich voller Trauer voneinander.

[10] – [14] Ninetta wird vor Gericht gestellt, für schuldig befunden und zum Tode

verurteilt. ^[15] – ^[17] Fernando dringt in den Gerichtssaal ein und will versuchen, das Leben seiner Tochter zu retten, doch er kommt zu spät. Er wird ins Gefängnis und sie zum Schafott gebracht.

2. Szene

^[18] Aus heiterem Himmel taucht Ernesto auf. Er ist ein Freund Fernandos aus der Armee, der eine königliche Begnadigung für Ninettas Vater bei sich trägt und das Haus des Bürgermeisters sucht. Pippo beschreibt ihm den Weg und erhält zur Belohnung eine neue Silbermünze. Doch die Elster schnappt sie ihm aus der Hand und fliegt damit hinauf zum Glockenstuhl. Pippo und Antonio klettern der Diebin hinterher. ^[19] – ^[20] Unterdessen wird Ninetta zu ihrer Hinrichtung geführt, begleitet von einer Menge, die versucht ihr Trost zuzusprechen. Das Mädchen sagt ein paar tapfere letzte Worte und geht dann ihrem Schicksal entgegen. ^[21] – ^[22] Vom Turm aus rufen Pippo und Antonio aufgeregt Giorgio zu, daß sie nicht nur die Silbermünze, sondern auch Lucias Besteck im Nest der Elster gefunden haben! Sie läuten die Glocken und rufen: "She is innocent!". Eine Menge versammelt sich und gibt die Neuigkeit weiter, aber kann Ninetta rechtzeitig gerettet werden?

Schüsse verhallen, und ihnen scheint die Wahrheit zu dämmern: es ist zu spät. ^[23] Doch nein – man sieht Ninetta den Hügel hinunterkommen! Warum also die Schüsse? Freudenschüsse! ^[24] Ninetta gesellt sich zu ihren feiernden Freunden, doch noch hat sie keine Ruhe. Wo ist ihr Vater? Wie auf Stichwort erscheint er mit seinem Retter Ernesto. ^[25] Nun können alle das glückliche Ende genießen. Das heißt, alle außer dem Bürgermeister, der in einer selbstgeschaffenen Tragödie gefangen bleibt.

© 2003 Daniel Slater
Übersetzung: Bettina Reinke-Welsh

Die irische Sopranistin **Majella Cullagh** studierte bei Maeve Coughlan an der Cork School of Music und am National Opera Studio London. Sie setzt ihre Gesangsausbildung bei Gerald Martin Moore fort.

Ihre Opernrollen umfassen Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Gräfin Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Micaela (*Carmen*) für die Opera North; Ninetta (*La gazza ladra*) für die Garsington Opera; Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) für die Königlich-Dänische Oper; Massenets *Manon* für die New Zealand Opera; Fiordiligi

(*Così fan tutte*) für die Oper von Las Palmas; La Comtesse Adèle (*Le Comte Ory*) für die Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Elsie Maynard (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) für die Welsh National Opera; Melissa (Händels *Amadigi*) in einer Inszenierung der Opera Theatre Company beim Covent Garden Festival; und die Titelrolle in der britischen Erstaufführung von Gavin Bryars' *Medea* für BBC Scotland. Weitere Rollen waren die Englische Tänzerin in John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer* (Concertgebouw Amsterdam) unter der Leitung von Edo de Waart sowie Marguerite in *Huit Scènes de Faust* (La Fenice Venedig), dirigiert von Jeffrey Tate.

In ihrer Diskographie sind hervorzuheben eine Gesamtaufnahme von Wallaces *Maritana*, Mendelssohns 2. Sinfonie sowie Donizettis *Zoraida di Granata*, Rossinis *Bianca e Falliero* und *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* und Mercadantes *Zaira* für Opera Rara. Für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation hat sie die Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* aufgenommen.

Seit seinem Abgang vom Royal Northern College of Music (wo er als Peter-Moores-Stipendiat studierte) hat sich **Barry Banks** mit herausragenden Opern- und Konzertauftritten als einer der Spitzentenöre seiner Generation

profiliert. Zu seinen Rollen gehören Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress* für die English National Opera; Belfiore und Libenshof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) in Bologna; Oreste (*Ermione*) für die Santa Fe Opera; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) für die Salzburger Festspiele, La Monnaie, Opernhaus Leipzig, Glyndebourne Touring Opera und Scottish Opera; Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) für die Oper Frankfurt und English National Opera; Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) am Stadttheater Basel; Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) für die Metropolitan Opera und Glyndebourne Festival Opera; die Titelrolle in *Candide* für die Chicago Lyric Opera; Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) für die San Francisco Opera; Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) für die Welsh National Opera; Aufidio (*Lucio Silla*) für die Salzburger Festspiele und die Oper Frankfurt; Andres (*Wozzeck*) in Frankfurt; Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*) in Brüssel und Paris; und L'Astrologue (*Le coq d'or*) am du Théâtre Châtelet in Paris.

Barry Banks ist auch der Konzertbühne verpflichtet; so hat er bei Rossinis *Petite Messe solennelle* mit dem Royal Philharmonic Orchestra unter Daniele Gatti mitgewirkt, in *Fidelio* mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra unter Walter Weller, in

Brittens *War Requiem* mit dem Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg unter Jan Latham-Koenig, in Bruckners *Requiem* mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra unter Sir Charles Mackerras sowie bei einer Aufführung von Rossinis *Armida* beim Edinburgh Festival unter Carlo Rizzi.

Aufgenommen hat er u.a. Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), und Fenton (*Falstaff*), alle für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, sowie *Un ballo in maschera* und *Trial by Jury*; außerdem hat er bei Videofilmen von *Billy Budd* und *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* mitgewirkt.

Christopher Purves war Chorstipendiat am King's College Cambridge, wo er Anglistik studierte. Anschließend trat er vier Jahre lang mit der Gruppe *Harvey and the Wallbangers* auf, bevor er seine Gesangsbildung bei David Keren wiederaufnahm; heute studiert er bei Diane Forlano.

Als Opernsänger ist Christopher Purves an der English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Birmingham Opera Company und Opera Northern Ireland sowie bei den Festspielen von Garsington und Edinburgh aufgetreten.

Sein Repertoire umfasst die Titelrolle in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Agamemnon (*Iphigénie en Aulide*), Podestà (*La gazza ladra*), Siegfried (*Genoveva*), Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Förster (*Das schlaue Fuchselein*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Dandini (*La Cenerentola*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Marcello (*La bohème*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) und die Titelrolle in *Don Pasquale*. Auslandsverpflichtungen haben ihn nach Paris, Dublin, Beaune, Lissabon und Barcelona geführt.

Christopher Purves verfügt über ein breit gefächertes Konzertrepertoire, das von Charpentier und Händel bis zu Strawinsky, Honegger und James MacMillan reicht, und ist mit vielen namhaften Ensembles aufgetreten, u.a. St. James' Baroque Players, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Sixteen, Gabrieli Consort, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Academy of Ancient Music, London Sinfonietta und City of London Sinfonia.

Russell Smythe ist einer der international erfolgreichsten Baritone Großbritanniens. Er studierte an der Guildhall School of Music und am London Opera Centre und war 1976

Mitbegründer des English Music Theatre. Danach trat er der Welsh National Opera bei, wo er die Titelrollen in *Billy Budd* und *Eugen Onegin*, Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Graf Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Fürst Jeletzki (*Pique Dame*) sang.

Nach seinem Austritt aus der Welsh National Opera gastierte er an der Royal Opera Covent Garden und an der English National Opera. Weitere Rollen waren Monteverdis Orfeo (Opéra de Lausanne), Sharpless (Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin und Castleward Opera), Aeneas und Arbace (*Idomeneo*, De Vlaamse Opera), Redburn (*Billy Budd*, New Israeli Opera) und Fernando (*La gazza ladra*, Garsington Festival). Weitere Stationen waren die Hamburgische Staatsoper, Wiener Volksoper, Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, De Nederlandse Opera, Opera Zuid, Amsterdam, Antwerpen, Basel, Brüssel, Frankfurt, Madrid, Nancy, New York, San Sebastian, Vancouver und in Großbritannien die Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera und Opera North.

Er hat eine Reihe von Rollen für Opera Rara aufgenommen, darunter Edoardo III (*L'Assedio di Calais*) und Teucer (Rameaus *Dardanus*).

Jeremy White, in Liverpool geboren und in Oxford ausgebildet, erfreut sich einer internationalen Karriere als Opern-, Konzert- und Schallplattenkünstler, mit einem Repertoire von der Alten Musik bis in die jüngste Zeit. Mit Dirigenten wie Trevor Pinnock, Andrew Parrott, Adam Fischer und Harry Christophers führt er seit langem Musik von Bach, Händel und Mozart auf, während er Werke des 20. Jahrhunderts, u.a. von Webern und Britten, unter der Leitung von Boulez und Graf gesungen und an Aufführungen der Musik von Luciano Berio, Arvo Pärt und John Adams unter Leitung der Komponisten mitgewirkt hat. Konzertreisen haben ihn durch ganz Europa, in die USA, nach Brasilien und Israel geführt.

Seine Rollen umfassen Kecal (*Die verkaufte Braut*) an der Royal Opera Covent Garden; Warlaam (*Boris Godunov*) und die Titelrolle in Rossinis *The Turk in Italy* für die English National Opera; Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), König von Ägypten (*Aida*), Dikoj (*Katja Kabanowa*), Talbot (*Giovanna D'Arco*) und Tiresias (*Oedipus Rex*) für die Opera North; sowie *La bohème* bei den Bregenzer Festspielen.

Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen gehören Händels *Israel in Egypt*, Monteverdis *Vespern*

und, für Chandos, *The Pilgrim's Progress* von Vaughan Williams und Britten's *Paul Bunyan*, beide unter der Leitung von Richard Hickox.

Susan Bickley wurde in Liverpool geboren und studierte Musik an der City University London und an der Guildhall School of Music, wo sie mit der Goldmedaille für Sänger ausgezeichnet wurde. Sie gab ihr Operndebüt als Proserpina in Monteverdis *Orfeo* beim Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

Zahlreiche weitere Opernrollen folgten, u.a. Florence Pike (*Albert Herring*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Kostelnicka (*Jenůfa*), Hippolyta (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), und Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) für die Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Anna (*The Electrification of the Soviet Union*), Kabanicha (*Katja Kabanowa*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Nan (*New Year*) und Irene (*Theodora*) für die Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Feodor (*Boris Godunow*) für die Royal Opera Covent Garden; Cassandra (*The Trojans*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Andromache (*King Priam*), Kurfürstin (*The Prince of Homburg*), *Twice Through the Heart* und Meg Page (*Falstaff*) für die English National Opera. Auslandsverpflichtungen haben sie auch an die Opéra National de

Paris-Bastille, San Francisco Opera, Vlaamse Opera und New Israeli Opera, zu den Festspielen von Hongkong und Göttingen sowie nach Japan geführt.

Im Rahmen ihres umfangreichen Konzertprogramms hat Susan Bickley Ligeti's *Requiem* bei den Salzburger Festspielen, Nicholas Maw's *Scenes and Arias*, Benjamins *Upon Silence* und Strawinskys *Requiem Canticles* bei den BBC Proms sowie Beethovens *Missa Solemnis* mit Les Arts Florissants in Wien und Paris gesungen. Spitzendirektoren wie Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Nicholas McGegan, Paul McCreesh, Mark Wigglesworth, Oliver Knussen, William Christie und Robert King haben ihre Aufführungen geleitet.

Sie hat Händels *Serse*, *Theodora* und *Solomon*, Purcells *The Fairy Queen* und *Dido and Aeneas*, sowie Rubbras *Ode to the Queen* für Chandos aufgenommen.

Nerys Jones wurde in Wales geboren und studierte an der Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama bei Patricia MacMahon. 1994 trat sie der English National Opera bei, wo sie in sechs Spielzeiten Rollen wie Cherubino, Despina, Zerlina, Zweite Dame,

Melissa (*Princess Ida*), Bird (*Blond Eckbert*), Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Flora (*La traviata*), Pitti Sing (*The Mikado*), Mercédès (*Carmen*), Schwester Pflegerin (*Sister Angelica*), Hänsel (*Hansel and Gretel*) und Schwester Mathilde (*The Carmelites*) sang.

Sie ist mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra, dem Scottish Early Music Consort und dem National Youth Orchestra of Wales aufgetreten und hat Solokonzerte beim North Wales Music Festival und in St. John's Smith Square, London, gegeben.

Weitere Rollen waren Cherubino, Rosina und Dorabella für die Grange Park Opera, *Il mondo della luna* und *La gazza ladra* in Garsington und Stewardess (*Flight*) für die Nationale Reisopera in Holland und De Vlaamse Opera.

John Graham-Hall gehört der English National Opera an und ist mit allen namhaften Opernensembles Großbritanniens aufgetreten, in Rollen von Albert Herring, Kudrjas (*Katja Kabanowa*), Flute und Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*) und Cassio (*Otello*) über Eisenstein, Ferrando, Basilio, Monostatos, Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*) und Herodes (*Salome*) bis zu

Heruntergekommener Bauer (*Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*) und Anatol (*Krieg und Frieden*).

Als international gefragter Sänger ist er regelmäßig zu Gast in Paris, Amsterdam, Brüssel, Salzburg, Stuttgart, Toronto, Vancouver, Lissabon, Rom und Antwerpen, u.a. als Maler (*Lulu*), Sapkin (*Aus einem Totenhaus*), Basilio, Achilles (*King Priam*) und Lenski (*Eugen Onegin*). Weitere Rollen waren Alwa (*Lulu*), Mime (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Sylvester (*The Silver Tassie*), Valzacchi und Sellem (*The Rake's Progress*), alle an der English National Opera; Mr. Upfold (*Albert Herring*) an der Opera North; und Tanzmeister (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) an der Royal Opera Covent Garden.

John Graham-Hall hat mit vielen namhaften Dirigenten zusammengearbeitet, u.a. Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Pierre Boulez, Andrew Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, John Eliot Gardiner und Claudio Abbado. Seine Konzertkarriere hat ihn durch ganz Europa geführt, er ist mit allen großen britischen Orchestern aufgetreten und in London regelmäßig im Barbican und im South Bank Komplex zu erleben. Er hat *Peter Grimes* für Chandos, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Carmina Burana* und *A Midsummer Night's Dream* aufgenommen.

Stuart Kale gilt auf der internationalen Opernszene als einer der besten singenden Schauspieler. Das Repertoire dieses Vollblutmusikers ist denkbar breit gefächert und reicht von Monteverdi bis Messiaen. Er begann seine Karriere an der Welsh National Opera, bevor er der English National Opera beitrug, wo er in seinen acht Jahren u.a. Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael in Martinis *Julietta*, Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) und Nanki-Poo in Jonathan Millers Inszenierung von *The Mikado* sang. 1987 leitete er seine blühende Karriere als freischaffender Sänger mit dem Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) an der Opéra du Rhin in Straßburg und in Nancy ein, bevor er als Herodes (*Salome*) an der English National Opera gastierte.

Bedeutende Rollen waren der Oberpriester in *Idomeneo* für die Royal Opera Covent Garden; Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) in San Francisco, Genf, Zürich, Montpellier, Bordeaux und Bologna; Schuischi (*Boris Godunow*) in Straßburg, Bordeaux und Montpellier; Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) und Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*) für die English National Opera; Sinowi (*Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*) in Toulouse und Marseille; die Titelrolle von *Idomeneo* in Drottningholm; die drei Tenorrollen von *Lulu*

am Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris; Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*) an der Münchner Staatsoper, in Covent Garden, Genua und Straßburg; Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) in Köln; Albert Gregor (*Die Sache Makropulos*) in Straßburg, an der State Opera of South Australia, in Drottningholm, Turin und Parma.

Für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation hat er u.a. *Boris Godunov* (Auszüge), *Madam Butterfly*, *Otello* und *Falstaff* aufgenommen.

Der Bariton **Toby Stafford-Allen** studierte bei Robert Alderson am Royal Northern College of Music, wo er u.a. Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), die Titelrolle in der Baritonfassung von *Werther* und den Altgesellen (*Jenůfa*) sang. Anschließend trat er der English National Opera bei und sang mit diesem und anderen britischen Ensembles Valletto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Henry (*The Fairy Queen*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fiorello (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Barone Douphol (*La traviata*) und Schaunard (*La bohème*). Zu seinen Festspielrollen gehören Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) in Aix-en-Provence, Mars und Euro in Cestis *Il pomo d'oro* in Batignano, Schaunard in Bregenz und Grimbald und Aeolus in Purcells *King Arthur* in Kings Lynn Norfolk. Sein Oratorienrepertoire umfasst die

Requiems von Mozart und Fauré, Haydns *Schöpfung* und Bachs Messe h-Moll.

Nicholas Garrett studierte am Trinity College of Music und wurde mit dem Wolfson Foundation Award ausgezeichnet. Er hat Barone Douphol (*La traviata*) für die English National Opera, Colline (*La bohème*) für Scottish Opera Go Round, Escamillo (*Carmen*) für die Opera North, Commendatore/Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) für die Pimlico Opera, Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*) für die English Touring Opera, Sourin (*Pique Dame*) für die Scottish Opera, Jenkins (*Of Thee I Sing*) für die Opera North, Nikititsch und Tschernikowski (*Boris Godunow*) für die Opéra de Nantes sowie für die Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park und Almeida Opera gesungen. 2001 debütierte er an der Royal Opera Covent Garden in *Palestrina*.

Prunella Scales besuchte die Old Vic Theatre School und studierte bei Uta Hagen in New York. Sie hat in Repertoiretheatern in Huddersfield, Salisbury, Oxford, Bristol und London (Old Vic) gespielt und ist in Stratford-upon-Avon und am Chichester

Festival Theatre aufgetreten. Zu ihren vielen Bühnenverpflichtungen gehören *Just the Three of Us* (Regie: Peter Hall), *A Perfect Ganesh* und *Happy Days* (Regie: Jude Kelly), *Single Spies* (Regie: Alan Bennett/Simon Callow), *Quartermaine's Terms* (Regie: Harold Pinter), und *The Merchant of Venice* (Regie: Timothy West). Die Fernsehzuschauer kennen sie aus Sendungen wie *Fawlty Towers*, *Silent Witness*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Midsomer Murders*, *What the Butler Saw*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Question of Attribution* und *Breaking the Code*. Prunella Scales wurde 1992 mit dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE gewürdigt.

Geoffrey Mitchells Gesangskarriere hat ihm ein bemerkenswert breitgefächertes Repertoire von der alten bis zur neuen Musik beschert und ihn nach Skandinavien, Deutschland, in die ehemalige Tschechoslowakei, nach Kanada und Australasien geführt. Nachdem er bei der BBC erste Dirigiererfahrungen gesammelt hatte, begann er mit eigenen Sängern zu arbeiten und gründete den **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Aus ersten Aufnahmen entwickelte sich eine langfristige Zusammenarbeit des Chors mit Opera Rara, für die er über dreißig Tonträger aufgenommen hat. Der Chor

genießt wachsendes Ansehen und ist bei der BBC und internationalen Plattenfirmen gefragt. Für Chandos hat der Geoffrey Mitchell Choir an zahlreichen Aufnahmen der hervorragend kritisierten Reihe Opera in English unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation teilgenommen.

Das **Philharmonia Orchestra**, eines der großen Orchester der Welt, steht nun bereits im sechsten Jahr unter der Leitung seines berühmten deutschen Chefdirigenten Christoph von Dohnányi. Er setzt eine Tradition fort, die mit Otto Klemperer begann und über Lorin Maazel (Erster Gastdirigent), Riccardo Muti (Chefdirigent und Musikalischer Leiter), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Musikalischer Leiter) bis zu Kurt Sanderling (Emeritierter Dirigent), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Ehrendirigent) und Sir Charles Mackerras (Hauptgastdirigent) führt, aber auch die Zusammenarbeit mit Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan und Carlo Maria Giulini einbezog. Das Orchester verpflichtet weiterhin Gastdirigenten und Solisten von Weltrang, während einige der größten europäischen Nachwuchstalente in seine Reihen aufgenommen werden.

Das Philharmonia Orchestra ist in der Royal Festival Hall ansässig und nimmt eine zentrale Position im Musikleben Großbritanniens ein, nicht nur durch seine Londoner Konzerte, sondern auch durch feste Kontakte mit Aufführungsstätten in anderen Teilen des Landes, die eine ideale Gelegenheit für die Erweiterung seines dynamischen und bevölkerungsnahen musikpädagogischen Programms bieten. Das Orchester ist mit zahlreichen Preisen ausgezeichnet worden und hat beispiellose kritische Unterstützung für seine innovative Programmpolitik gewonnen, die in ihrem Kern der Bestellung und Darbietung neuer Musik von führenden Komponisten unserer Zeit verpflichtet ist.

Die Konzerte des Orchesters werden immer häufiger von BBC Radio 3 übertragen, nicht zuletzt im Rahmen der jährlichen BBC Proms. Mit über 1000 Schallplattenaufnahmen verfügt das Philharmonia Orchestra über die größte Orchesterdiskographie der Welt, die auch Fernseh- und Filmmusik beinhaltet, und genießt weltweit höchstes Ansehen. Das Orchester hat für Opera Rara mehrere Recitals sowie elf komplette Opern eingespielt und in der Reihe "Opera in English" für Chandos mit Unterstützung durch die Peter Moores Foundation *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*,

L'elisir d'amore, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Opernarien in Solorecitals mit Elizabeth Futral, Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny und John Tomlinson aufgenommen. Das Philharmonia Orchestra untermauert seinen internationalen Rang durch regelmäßige Tourneen und Gastauftritte an berühmten Häusern wie dem Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, dem Megaron in Athen und dem Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

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

Er übt in Großbritannien und international eine weitgespannte Tätigkeit in den Bereichen Oper und Konzert aus, hat mehrere Produktionen der English National Opera und der Opera North dirigiert und tritt regelmäßig mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra und dem

London Philharmonic Orchestra auf. 1996 gab er sein Debüt beim Glyndebourne Festival mit *Così fan tutte* und hat dort 1998 die Uraufführung von Jonathan Doves *Flight* geleitet.

Er ist häufig in Spanien zu Gast und hat mit den meisten bedeutenden spanischen Orchestern Konzerte gegeben. In Madrid hat er die spanische Uraufführung von *Peter Grimes* dirigiert, und 1996 die erste spanische Inszenierung von *The Rake's Progress*. Er ist in Deutschland, der Schweiz und den Niederlanden aufgetreten, bei den Festspielen in Pesaro, beim Hong Kong International Festival, in Japan anlässlich einer *Carmen*-Tournee und in Mexiko mit dem UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Zu den Neuproduktionen, die er in letzter Zeit dirigiert hat, zählen *Fidelio* beim New Zealand Festival, *Lucia di Lammermoor* an der New Israeli Opera und *Don Giovanni* an der Staatsoper Hannover.

Seine Tätigkeit im Aufnahmestudio umfaßt die Produktion von Marschners *Der Vampyr* fürs BBC-Fernsehen und achtundzwanzig vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Darunter befinden sich zahlreiche Aufnahmen der Reihe Opera Rara, die mehrere Preise gewonnen haben, beispielsweise

den belgischen Prix Cecilia für Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. Für Chandos hat er die Aufzeichnung einer Serie von Programmen mit Opernarien geleitet (mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones und Andrew Shore), außerdem *Carmen*,

Don Giovanni, *Don Pasquale*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier*, jeweils in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation.



At the recording sessions: Susan Bickley, Barry Banks, Nerys Jones and Christopher Purves

© Bill Cooper



Keith Saunders

Majella Cullagh as Ninetta and Nerys Jones as Pippo in Garsington Opera's production of *The Thieving Magpie*

Rossini: The Thieving Magpie

Lorsque le romancier Honoré de Balzac, ami de Rossini, entend *La gazza ladra* pour la première fois à Paris en 1821, il s'abandonne totalement à l'expérience. "Cet homme sent le vin!", croasse une femme assise derrière lui, mais Balzac – qui a en effet pris la précaution de boire une bouteille de vin et de fumer deux cigares avant de se rendre au Théâtre-Italien – peut ignorer le sarcasme. La musique de Rossini est sa nouvelle drogue.

La réaction est tout autre outre-Manche. Ayant entendu l'opéra à Londres quelques mois plus tôt, Lord Mount Edgumbe, mélomane anglais conservateur s'il en fut, ronchonne et maugrée:

Ses finales et maints de ses nombreux pezzi *concertati* sont incroyablement tonitruants, et l'abondant recours aux instruments *bruyants* est selon moi singulièrement inapproprié au sujet, qui aurait pu être traité de manière touchante et est loin de demander un accompagnement aussi guerrier.

On peut se demander quel est le sujet de l'opéra selon Mount Edgumbe. Une œuvre dont l'action se déroule à une époque révolutionnaire, qui compte parmi ses

personnages principaux un déserteur de l'armée, et dont le dernier acte inclut une marche à l'échafaud a certainement le droit à un occasionnel "accompagnement guerrier". La vérité est que Mount Edgumbe a horreur du bruit. Pour lui, et pour d'autres mélomanes anglais de la même eau, Rossini est à son époque ce que le *Heavy Metal* est à la nôtre.

Lors de la création à Milan, le 31 mai 1817, le public a vibré aux roulements de caisse claire par lesquels débute l'ouverture, et à l'imposant *maestoso marziale* qui leur fait suite. Ce que l'auditoire de la première ne peut savoir, cependant, c'est à quel point l'ouverture est faite sur mesure pour les événements qui vont se dérouler sur la scène. Il ne s'agit pas là d'un des célèbres auto-emprunts rossiniens – morceau écrit antérieurement et que le compositeur ressort de ses tiroirs à la costumière – mais d'une page composée sur mesure, et dont plusieurs thèmes reviennent dans le corps de l'opéra.

Dans une lettre à sa mère datant de l'époque de la commande de Milan, en mars 1817, Rossini note:

J'écris un opéra intitulé *La gazza ladra*. Le livret a été versifié par un poète de fraîche date, ce qui

a pour conséquence de me faire tourner en bourrique; mais le sujet est magnifique, et j'espère (plaise à Dieu) que nous ferons un Beau Fiasco.

Ce "sujet magnifique" est basé sur une histoire réelle, celle d'une jeune paysanne française condamnée et pendue pour des vols qui s'avèreront avoir été commis par une pie. L'événement a donné lieu à toute une série d'œuvres de fiction, dont un "mélodrame historique" ou "mélodrame de boulevard" intitulé *La Pie voleuse*, mis en scène par Théodore Badoin d'Aubigny et Louis-Charles Caigniez, directeur de théâtre ("le Racine des boulevards"), au Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, à Paris, en avril 1815. Stendhal, biographe français de Rossini, est prompt à railler:

Pour comble de disgrâce, il paraît que cette vilaine histoire est fondée sur la réalité: une pauvre servante fut dans le fait pendue jadis à Palaiseau, en mémoire de quoi l'on fonda une messe appelée la messe de la pie.

La remarque de Stendhal reflète le gouffre plus ou moins infranchissable qui existe en France à l'époque entre ces pièces mélodramatiques accompagnées de musique auxquelles se pressent par milliers les classes populaires et moyennes, et les œuvres produites à l'Opéra de

Paris et qui sont la chasse gardée de l'aristocratie et de la haute bourgeoisie.

Les Italiens sont moins rigides. Avec des dizaines d'Opéras italiens en quête de deux ou trois nouvelles œuvres à mettre en scène chaque saison, les scénarios plausibles sont une denrée précieuse. L'opinion intellectuelle italienne n'a rien non plus contre les emprunts à la littérature populaire. Le "poète de fraîche date" Giovanni Gherardini (1778–1861), responsable de la transformation de *La Pie voleuse* en livret d'opéra italien, est d'ailleurs une personnalité milanaise. Médecin de formation, mais poète, traducteur et philologue par inclination, il gagne sa vie comme rédacteur en chef du *Giornale Italiano*, journal officiel du royaume d'Italie, nommé à ce poste en 1806, à l'âge de 28 ans.

Gage de sa curiosité artistique et intellectuelle, son adaptation de *La Pie voleuse* (pompeusement intitulée *Avertissement aux juges*) a été réalisée pour participer à un concours du meilleur livret organisé par La Scala de Milan en 1816. Le premier prix, de mille liras autrichiennes (environ mille deux cents euros aujourd'hui), lui échappe pour aller à une jeune étoile montante du théâtre italien: Felice Romani. Mais le projet de La Scala, d'offrir le livret de ce dernier à Rossini,

ne tarde pas à rencontrer des difficultés. Après un échange de lettres entre Rossini et l'impresario de La Scala, Angelo Petracchi, à l'hiver 1816–1817, c'est finalement le livret de Gherardini qui est choisi. Nous savons grâce à une lettre d'un des jurés, Vincenzo Monti, mentor de Romani, que le livret de Gherardini a fait bonne impression sur le jury, notamment par sa discipline formelle à une époque où, selon Monti, les livrets menacent de n'être plus guère qu'un "amas monstrueux de mots vides de sens, et rien d'autre".

Dans le cas de *La gazza ladra*, la discipline formelle de Gherardini est une vertu particulière. À l'instar des *Aventures de M. Pickwick* (*The Pickwick Papers*) de Dickens, qui associe pareillement péripéties enlevées et scènes de prison d'une rare noirceur, ce livret propose une riche galerie de portraits esquissés avec empathie, sentimentalité, et originalité parfois. L'histoire est centrée sur une communauté campagnarde, sujette du roi mais dominée par son podestat, affairé, sadique, sorte de Scarpia rural. Au cœur de la communauté se trouvent Fabrizio Vingradito, riche fermier affable et amateur de bon vin, sa femme Lucia, et leur fils Giannetto, qui revient tout juste de la guerre. (Monti estimait le rôle de Giannetto sous-caractérisé – "on

pourrait sans doute souhaiter un peu plus de résolution et d'ardeur militaire" – critique avec laquelle il est difficile de ne pas être d'accord.)

Giannetto a pour projet d'épouser la jeune, modeste et charmante servante Ninetta, héroïne de cet opéra et avatar évident de l'archétype de Cendrillon auquel Rossini s'intéresse clairement. (Les négociations avec La Scala à propos de *La gazza ladra* se déroulent à l'époque où il écrit et met en répétitions *La Cenerentola* pour le Teatro Valle de Rome.) Ninetta est elle-même entourée d'une nuée de personnages secondaires, dont le jeune domestique Pippo, et le marchand ambulant Isacco, dont la cavatine geignarde incite Stendhal à invectiver les juifs polonais dans des termes qui lui vaudraient aujourd'hui la prison. (Trabuco, dans *La forza del destino* de Verdi, est un évident descendant d'Isacco.) On trouve encore le personnage remarquable de Fernando Villabella, père de Ninetta qui a déserté l'armée, mais sans que la faute lui en incombe. On peut seulement imaginer les sentiments de Rossini à la lecture du livret, devant les humiliations subies par cet homme énergique et plein de compassion. Son propre père, républicain volubile et foncièrement honnête, a été arrêté et incarcéré par les Autrichiens à Bologne en 1800.

L'envergure que donne désormais Rossini à ses drames musicaux lui permet de composer pour le texte de Gherardini une partition suffisamment imposante pour satisfaire La Scala, le plus exigeant des théâtres milanais. En retour, l'Opéra n'épargne aucune dépense pour cette production. Une distribution éminente est rassemblée, avec à sa tête Filippo Galli dans le rôle de Fernando, et des décors sont commandés à Alessandro Sanquirico, l'un des décorateurs les plus innovants de l'époque. Sa conception de la scène du Tribunal est particulièrement imposante.

Dans certains passages, *La gazza ladra*, en reconnaissant sa dette à l'égard du mélodrame français, finit par anticiper le style veriste italien. Ninetta elle-même est exactement le type de jeune femme douce et victime que l'on s'attend à trouver dans les opéras de Puccini; et c'est elle qui est au centre d'une des scènes les plus saisissantes de l'opéra. À l'acte I, le Podestat reçoit une lettre décrivant par le détail le déserteur recherché, alors même que Ninetta et son père sont là, devant lui. Comme il a laissé ses lunettes derrière lui, le Podestat demande à Ninetta de lui lire cette description, ce qu'elle fait – voix parlée sur accompagnement d'orchestre frémissant –, en la changeant en cours de lecture. Alexandre

Pouchkine, qui voit *La gazza ladra* à Odessa en 1823–1824, inclut une scène similaire dans sa pièce *Boris Godounov*, où le Faux Dimitri évite l'arrestation en modifiant les détails du mandat d'arrêt qu'un garde analphabète lui donne à lire. Moussorgski a repris cette scène dans son opéra *Boris Godounov*, mais il faut avouer que la lecture déclamée de la lettre chez le compositeur russe est nettement moins convaincante que l'usage révolutionnaire fait par Rossini de la simple voix parlée. Sans doute n'y a-t-il rien de surprenant à ce que le retour sur scène de *La gazza ladra* dans les années 1940–1950 ait été en grande partie dû à l'adaptation très libre de Riccardo Zandonai (Pesaro, 1941), compositeur veriste d'avant-garde qui a développé, à la fin de sa vie, un penchant pour un néo-classicisme inspiré de Rossini.

Pour le reste, *La gazza ladra* adopte en grande partie un schéma classique. La pie éponyme ne donne lieu à aucune envolée de fantaisie musicologique, et les formes propres à Rossini – duos, trios, finales à grand effet – ne sont pas sacrifiées à des considérations réalistes à court terme. Malgré l'arrivée imminente du Podestat, Ninetta et son père ont droit à leur cabalette: expression de l'instinct d'ordre de Rossini autant que d'une quelconque

observation paresseuse des formes qu'il a lui-même contribué à instituer. Tout au long de l'opéra, c'est au travers de la musique même – et du rythme notamment – que s'expriment les sentiments d'extase, de libération, de confusion ou d'imbroglia. Lorsqu'Antonio, le géôlier au bon cœur, essaie de séparer Ninetta et Giannetto, de crainte que le Podestat ne découvre qu'il a autorisé la jeune fille à sortir quelques instants de sa cellule, la situation est identique à celle de l'acte II du *Barbier de Séville*, où Figaro en est réduit à railler en aparté le marivaudage des deux amants. Dans *La gazza ladra*, la scène est non seulement dénuée de toute dimension comique, mais la simple pulsion rythmique et l'ostinato militariste sous-tendant les voix des amants nous content une histoire beaucoup plus sombre.

Le portrait du Podestat est tout aussi contrôlé. La première impression est celle d'un personnage comique, mais elle est démentie par le grand Trio sur lequel débouche la lecture de la lettre. Plus tard, à l'acte II, lorsque le Podestat est appelé au tribunal au cours de la scène de la prison, le deuxième sujet de l'ouverture – caisse claire au premier plan – apporte une coloration à la fois brillante et menaçante à la strette.

D'aucuns reprochent au personnage de Ninetta de manquer de relief, mais c'est passer à côté de sa simplicité et de la justesse des pages écrites pour elle par Rossini. Sa cavatine est une merveille de fraîcheur, avec sa cabalette sans fioritures inutiles et d'une grande spontanéité rythmique. Relevons aussi la scène pathétique, en majeur, où elle est confrontée aux révélations d'Isacco dans le finale de l'acte I; le duo exquis de la prison, donnant à Pippo des réparties également touchantes; et sa prière au début de la dernière scène, encadrée par une marche à l'échafaud à l'orchestration lugubre. Bien qu'il ne s'agisse absolument pas d'un "véhicule" de star, ce rôle a attiré des chanteuses comme Colbran et Pasta. Malibran fut, au dire de tous, une mémorable Ninetta, délibérément et délicieusement rustique, les éléments réalistes et idéalistes se fondant d'une façon qui dut sembler à Rossini l'incarnation idéale de sa vision musicale et dramatique.

Ceux qui recherchent une tonalité plus profonde s'intéresseront à la relation entre Ninetta et son père. De même que Verdi, Rossini se laissait aisément toucher par l'émotion de l'amour parental, et *La gazza ladra* doit une grande partie de sa séduction et de sa force au personnage de Fernando. Son

duo avec Ninetta, à l'acte I, et son intervention lors de la scène du tribunal annoncent certaines pages du Verdi de la maturité.

Son départ pour Naples en 1815 a amené Rossini à se tourner vers les sujets graves et les formes vastes. *La gazza ladra* développe cette tendance, même si son sujet est plus "bourgeois" que ceux généralement en faveur à Naples. L'ambiance débridée des scènes pastorales annonce la variété des scènes chorales et dansées de l'opéra suivant de Rossini, *Armida*, et de son dernier opéra, *Guillaume Tell*. L'écriture orchestrale fait aussi preuve d'une plus grande diversité et d'un plus grand soin. La reprise de la marche de Ninetta vers l'échafaud donne lieu à un ensemble complexe au fur et à mesure où la procession s'avance à travers le village: cordes et caisse claire *fortissimo*, bois et cordes *pizzicato*, cors et clarinettes *smorzando*.

Avec la découverte du nid de la pie et de son butin, et la grâce *in extremis* de Ninetta, l'opéra s'achève sur une note jubilatoire. Cette scène finale n'est sans doute pas aussi émouvante que celle du *Fidelio* de Beethoven, mais elle apporte une conclusion triomphale à un opéra qui célèbre – comme tous les chefs-d'œuvre de la maturité de Rossini, *buffo* ou

semiserio – les liens de l'affection humaine et la résistance de l'esprit humain face à un monde chaotique.

* * * * *

L'immense succès de *La gazza ladra* à Milan en 1817 a une conséquence fort intéressante: une production de l'opéra, supervisée par Rossini lui-même, pour le gala d'ouverture d'un nouveau théâtre d'opéra à Pesaro, sa ville natale, en juin 1818.

Des lettres ont survécu – les seules lettres que nous possédions à détailler la participation de Rossini à la mise en scène d'un de ses propres opéras –, qui confirment ce que les Rossiniens informés ont toujours su mais que l'image populaire du Rossini oisif et bon vivant a toujours sciemment masqué: son immense capacité de travail et son attention obsessionnelle aux détails.

La correspondance nous permet de reprendre le fil de l'histoire le 27 janvier 1818, avec une lettre du compositeur adressée aux organisateurs du projet, Giulio Perticari et Antaldo Antaldi. Il y confirme qu'il cherche à engager deux stars de l'Opéra de Naples, Colbran et Nozzari, en vue de monter son tout nouvel opéra napolitain, *Armida*. Les négociations s'éternisent deux mois, et il

devient évident que Pesaro n'a ni les moyens d'embaucher de telles célébrités ni une idée claire des dates auxquelles elles seront requises. C'est finalement *La gazza ladra* qui est choisie, bien qu'elle s'avère en définitive quasiment aussi difficile à distribuer et plus coûteuse encore à mettre en scène, notamment parce que Rossini insiste pour employer non seulement Sanquirico, mais aussi son maître, plus célèbre encore, Paolo Landriana, pour superviser les décors.

Ayant en vain demandé à sa vieille amie Rosa Morandi de chanter Ninetta, Rossini engage Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis, alors âgée de 18 ans, et, à tarif réduit, son mari, Giuseppe De Begnis, dans le rôle du Podestat. Les économies réalisées sur les contrats des De Begnis lui permettent de retenir son protégé, le ténor Alberico Curioni, dans le rôle de Giannetto, et Raniero Remorini dans celui de Fernando. Découvrant qu'il est l'homme-clé du spectacle, Remorini se révèle à la fois cher et difficile. "Il m'a fait passer trois journées infernales. Oh, que de tracas!" s'exclame Rossini, faisant allusion à l'insistance avec laquelle le chanteur lui a réclamé un solo supplémentaire.

Ce n'est cependant rien en comparaison du mal que Rossini lui-même se donne pour la

production. Obsédé de perfection jusque dans les moindres détails, il exige de choisir et d'embaucher les meilleurs instrumentistes locaux. Il détermine précisément la disposition de l'orchestre et jusqu'aux distances séparant les musiciens et aux meilleures façons d'éclairer les pupitres. Il met en route la coordination entre décorateurs et machinistes et rédige un aide-mémoire pour les interventions de la fausse pie.

Ces efforts finissent par avoir un prix. L'inauguration, le 10 juin, est un triomphe, mais Rossini contracte peu après "une grave inflammation de la gorge". On annonce déjà sa mort à l'extérieur, et jusqu'à Naples et Paris. Fort heureusement, il survit, remis sur pied à la Villa Perticari.

Encouragé par la réception de *La gazza ladra*, Rossini revient à Pesaro au mois de mai suivant, pour être aussitôt chassé de la ville par des hommes de main à la solde de Bartolomeo Bergami, amant de la princesse de Galles Caroline, séparée de son époux le prince régent d'Angleterre. Rossini a alors 27 ans et, bien qu'appelé à vivre jusqu'à plus de 65 ans, il ne retournera plus jamais à Pesaro.

© 2003 Richard Osborne

Argument

Il y a bien longtemps, dans un village français...

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] – [2] Ouverture

Acte I Scène 1

[3] – [5] Branle-bas de combat chez Fabrizio et Lucia Vingradito: leur fils Giannetto doit aujourd'hui revenir de la guerre. Une grande fête est prévue, et tout le village semble y prêter son concours. [6] – [8] Nul n'est plus excité que Ninetta, la servante des Vingradito, profondément amoureuse de Giannetto. On s'accorde à les voir bientôt mariés (la pie domestique elle-même joint sa voix au concert); seule Lucia est opposée à ce mariage, semblant blâmer Ninetta pour la récente disparition d'une fourchette en argent. [9] Un marchand ambulant, Isacco, passe et s'enquiert de Ninetta, [10] mais un autre domestique, Pippo, le renvoie. [11] – [13] Enfin arrive le moment tant attendu: l'arrivée de Giannetto! On trinque. Lucia emmène sur-le-champ son fils voir le reste de la famille, laissant à Ninetta le soin de mettre la table pour le banquet. [14] À peine son amant

est-il sorti que Ninetta voit surgir son père, Fernando Villabella, lui aussi de retour de la guerre. [15] – [17] Mais les nouvelles qu'il apporte ne sont pas bonnes: s'étant battu avec son capitaine, il a été condamné à mort et a déserté. [18] Il n'a plus un sou et confie à sa fille deux couverts en argent ayant appartenu à sa famille, lui demandant de les vendre pour financer sa fuite. La situation se complique avec l'arrivée du Podestat, bien décidé à gagner les faveurs de Ninetta. Celle-ci fait passer son père pour un vagabond. Mais voici que Giorgio, l'assistant du Podestat, apporte un mandat d'arrêt contre Fernando; [19] – [21] le Podestat, qui a oublié ses lunettes, demande à Ninetta de le lui lire. Elle lui décrit alors un homme en tous points différent de son père, mais, lorsque le Podestat renouvelle ses avances, Fernando est si furieux qu'il manque vendre la mèche. [22] Tandis que les trois personnages quittent la scène, la pie vient se poser sur la table pour y voler une des cuillères en argent de Lucia.

Scène 2

[23] Ninetta profite d'une nouvelle visite d'Isacco pour lui vendre l'argenterie de son père. Giannetto revient avec ses parents, qui le présentent au Podestat. Lucia découvre alors qu'il manque une cuillère, et le Podestat décide

d'instruire aussitôt l'affaire. Il rappelle que les vols domestiques sont sévèrement punis, de la peine de mort. ^[24] Les efforts combinés de Lucia et du jaloux Podestat ont tôt fait de faire peser les soupçons sur Ninetta. Dans sa confusion, la jeune fille laisse tomber les pièces données par Isacco. ^[25] On fait venir le marchand ambulant: celui-ci a déjà revendu la fourchette et la cuillère, mais se rappelle qu'elles portaient les initiales F.V. ^[26] – ^[27] Ce sont aussi celles de Fernando, mais Ninetta, voulant à tout prix protéger son père, ne peut protester de son innocence. ^[28] Sur un ordre du Podestat, on l'emmène en prison.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Acte II

Scène 1

^[1] – ^[2] Le gardien de prison, Antonio, est un brave homme, et il prend pitié de Ninetta: il lui promet de faire porter un message à Pippo et accepte de laisser entrer Giannetto. Ninetta convainc son amant de son innocence, ^[3] – ^[4] mais leur entretien est interrompu par l'arrivée du Podestat. Le marché que celui-ci propose à la jeune fille est simple: qu'elle accepte ses avances, et elle sera libre. La réponse de Ninetta est sans ambiguïté: plutôt

mourir que d'être jamais à lui. ^[5] Sans avoir le temps de revenir à la charge, le Podestat est mandé au tribunal. ^[6] Mais Antonio, qui a entendu leur conversation, décide de tout faire pour aider la jeune fille. Ninetta demande à Pippo de porter de l'argent dans la cachette convenue avec son père. ^[7] – ^[8] Elle essaie de lui vendre la croix qu'elle porte au cou, mais le jeune homme insiste pour lui prêter la somme. Les deux jeunes gens échangent alors de douloureux adieux.

^[10] – ^[14] Conduite devant le tribunal, Ninetta est déclarée coupable et condamnée à mort. ^[15] – ^[17] Fernando fait irruption dans la salle, déterminé à sauver la vie de sa fille, mais il est trop tard. On l'envoie en prison, et Ninetta à l'échafaud.

Scène 2

^[18] Tout à coup surgit Ernesto. Camarade de Fernando à l'armée, il est porteur d'un décret royal gracieux le père de Ninetta et recherche la maison du Podestat. Pippo lui donne les indications nécessaires et reçoit une pièce d'argent en remerciement. Mais la pie lui arrache et va la cacher dans le beffroi. Pippo et Antonio grimpent dans le clocher, à la poursuite de la voleuse. ^[19] – ^[20] Entretemps, Ninetta a pris le chemin de l'échafaud, et la

foule tente de la reconforter sur son passage. Les dernières paroles de la jeune fille, prête à affronter son destin, sont empreintes de courage. ^[21] – ^[22] Du beffroi, Pippo et Antonio hèlent Giorgio: dans le nid de la pie, ils viennent de retrouver, non seulement la pièce d'argent, mais les couverts de Lucia! Sonnant les cloches à toute volée, ils clament: "She is innocent!" La foule grossit et la nouvelle passe de proche en proche, mais est-il encore temps de la sauver? On entend des coups de feu, et tous se désespèrent: trop tard! ^[23] Et pourtant, non, la voici qui descend la colline! Que signifiaient alors ces détonations? "Mere rejoicing!" ^[24] Ninetta rejoint le cortège de ses amis mais ne peut trouver la paix, s'inquiétant du sort de son père. Comme au signal, Fernando apparaît en compagnie de son sauveur, Ernesto. ^[25] Tous peuvent désormais se réjouir de cet heureux dénouement. Tous, sauf le Podestat, bien sûr, pris au piège d'une tragédie dont il est seul responsable.

© 2003 Daniel Slater

Traduction: Josée Bégaud

La soprano irlandaise **Majella Cullagh** a étudié avec Maeve Coughlan à la Cork School of Music, et au National Opera Studio de

Londres. Elle étudie maintenant avec Gerald Martin Moore.

Majella Cullagh a chanté dans les rôles de Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), la Comtesse Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), et Micaela (*Carmen*) à l'Opera North; Ninetta (*La gazza ladra*) au Garsington Opera; Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) à l'Opéra royal du Danemark; Manon de Massenet au New Zealand Opera; Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) à l'Opéra de Las Palmas; la Comtesse Adèle (*Le Comte Ory*) avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Elsie Maynard (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) au Welsh National Opera; Melissa dans *Amadigi* de Haendel produit par l'Opera Theatre Company au Festival de Covent Garden; et le rôle titre dans la création anglaise de *Medea* de Gavin Bryars pour la BBC Scotland. Elle a également interprété la British Dancing Girl dans *The Death of Klinghoffer* de John Adams au Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam sous la direction de Edo de Waart, et Marguerite (*Huit Scènes de Faust*) à La Fenice de Venise sous la direction de Jeffrey Tate.

La discographie de Majella Cullagh inclut la version intégrale de *Maritana* de Vincent Wallace, et la Deuxième Symphonie de Mendelssohn. Pour Opera Rara, elle a enregistré *Zoraida di Granata* de Donizetti,

Bianca e Falliero et *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* de Rossini, *Zaira* de Mercadante, et pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation le rôle de Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*).

Diplômé du Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester où il a étudié grâce à une bourse de la Peter Moores Foundation, **Barry Banks** s'est imposé comme l'un des meilleurs ténors de sa génération grâce à ses prestations exceptionnelles sur scène 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; Oreste (*Ermione*) au Santa Fe Opera; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) au Festival de Salzbourg, au Théâtre de la Monnaie de Bruxelles, à l'Opéra de Leipzig, avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera et au Scottish Opera; Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) à l'Opéra de Francfort et à l'English National Opera; Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) à l'Opéra de Bâle; Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) au Metropolitan Opera de New York et au Festival de Glyndebourne; le rôle titre dans *Candide* au Chicago Lyric Opera; Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) à l'Opéra de San Francisco; Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) au Welsh National Opera; Aufidio (*Lucio Silla*) au

Festival de Salzbourg et à l'Opéra de Francfort; Andres (*Wozzeck*) à Francfort; Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*) à Bruxelles et à Paris; et l'Astrologue (*Le Coq d'or*) au Théâtre du Châtelet à Paris.

Barry Banks se produit fréquemment en concert, et a chanté dans la *Petite Messe solennelle* de Rossini avec le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra sous la direction de Daniele Gatti, dans *Fidelio* avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra sous la direction de Walter Weller, dans le *War Requiem* avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Strasbourg sous la direction de Jan Latham-Koenig, dans le *Requiem* de Bruckner avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras, et dans *Armida* de Rossini au Festival d'Edimbourg sous la direction de Carlo Rizzi.

Barry Banks a enregistré *Un ballo in maschera* et *Trial by Jury*, et pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation *Nemorino* (*The Elixir of Love*), *Ernesto* (*Don Pasquale*), *Don Ottavio* (*Don Giovanni*), et *Fenton* (*Falstaff*). Par ailleurs, il figure dans les vidéos de *Billy Budd* et de *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

Christopher Purves a été "Choral Scholar" au King's College de Cambridge où il a étudié la

littérature anglaise. Après avoir quitté Cambridge, il a travaillé et enregistré pendant quatre ans avec le groupe vocal *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. Il a ensuite repris ses études vocales avec David Keren et étudie actuellement avec Diane Forlano.

Christopher Purves s'est produit avec des compagnies lyriques telles que l'English National Opera, le Scottish Opera, le Welsh National Opera, l'Opera North, la Birmingham Opera Company, l'Opera Northern Ireland, au Garsington Festival, et au Festival d'Edimbourg, dans un répertoire qui inclut le rôle titre dans *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Agamemnon* (*Iphigénie en Aulide*), *Gottardo* (*La gazza ladra*), *Siegfried* (*Genoveva*), *Dulcamara* (*L'elisir d'amore*), *Masetto* (*Don Giovanni*), le Forestier (*Le Petit Renard rusé*), *Leporello* (*Don Giovanni*), *Dandini* (*La Cenerentola*), *Faninal* (*Der Rosenkavalier*), *Papageno* (*Die Zauberflöte*), *Ned Keene* (*Peter Grimes*), *Scarpia* (*Tosca*), *Marcello* (*La bohème*), *Sharpless* (*Madama Butterfly*), et le rôle titre dans *Don Pasquale*. A l'étranger, il s'est produit à Paris, Dublin, Beaune, Lisbonne et Barcelone.

Christopher Purves possède un vaste répertoire de concert incluant des œuvres de compositeurs allant de Charpentier et Haendel

à Stravinski, Honegger et James MacMillan. Il a chanté avec les St James' Baroque Players, le Scottish Chamber Orchestra, l'ensemble The Sixteen, le Gabrieli Consort, le Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, le Britten Sinfonia, l'Academy of Ancient Music, le London Sinfonietta et le City of London Sinfonia.

Russell Smythe est l'un des barytons britanniques les plus chevronnés sur la scène internationale. Il fit ses études à la Guildhall School of Music et au London Opera Centre et fut l'un des membres fondateurs de l'English Music Theatre en 1976. Il devint ensuite l'une des vedettes du Welsh National Opera, dans des rôles tels le rôle-titre de *Billy Budd* et d'*Eugène Onéguine* ou encore *Papageno* (*Die Zauberflöte*), *Figaro* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), le Comte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) et *Eletski* (*La Dame de pique*).

Ayant quitté le Welsh National Opera, il chanta au Royal Opera House, Covent Garden et avec l'English National Opera. Parmi ses rôles, on notera *Orfeo* de Monteverdi avec l'Opéra de Lausanne; *Sharpless* au Deutsche Oper à Berlin et pour Castleward Opera; *Enée* (*Dido and Aeneas*) et *Arbace* (*Idomeneo*) pour De Vlaamse Opera; *Redburn* (*Billy Budd*)

pour le New Israeli Opera; et Fernando (*La gazza ladra*) au Festival de Garsington. Il s'est également produit à l'Opéra de Hambourg, à l'Opéra de Vienne, à l'Opéra de Paris, à l'Opéra Néerlandais, à Opera Zuid, à Amsterdam, Anvers, Bâle, Bruxelles, Francfort, Madrid, Nancy, New York, San Sebastian, Vancouver ainsi qu'avec Scottish Opera, le Welsh National Opera et Opera North.

Il a enregistré entre autres plusieurs rôles pour Opera Rara dont le roi Edward (*L'Assedio di Calais*) et Teucer (*Dardanus* de Rameau)

Né à Liverpool, **Jeremy White** a fait ses études à Oxford. Il mène une carrière internationale à l'opéra, en concert et au disque, dans un répertoire allant de la musique ancienne aux plus récentes œuvres contemporaines. Il a entretenu une longue association avec des chefs tels que Trevor Pinnock, Andrew Parrott, Adam Fisher et Harry Christophers, interprétant Bach, Haendel et Mozart. Dans le répertoire du vingtième siècle, il a chanté des œuvres de Webern sous la direction de Pierre Boulez, et de Britten sous celle de Graf. Il s'est également produit avec Luciano Berio, Arvo Pärt et Johns Adams dans leurs propres œuvres. Il a effectué des tournées de concerts à travers toute l'Europe, les États-Unis, au Brésil et en Israël.

Jeremy White a chanté Kecal (*La Fiancée vendue*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden; Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*) et le rôle titre dans *The Turk in Italy* de Rossini à l'English National Opera; le Superintendant Budd (*Albert Herring*), le Roi (*Aïda*), Dikoy (*Kat'a Kabanová*), Talbot (*Giovanna d'Arco*) et Tiresias (*Oedipus Rex*) à l'Opera North; et dans *La bohème* au Festival de Bregenz.

Parmi les enregistrements de Jeremy White, on citera *Israel in Egypt* de Haendel, les *Vêpres* de Monteverdi, et pour Chandos *The Pilgrim's Progress* de Vaughan Williams et *Paul Bunyan* de Britten dirigés par Richard Hickox.

Née à Liverpool, **Susan Bickley** a étudié la musique à Londres à la City University et à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama où elle a obtenu la Médaille d'or en chant. Elle a fait ses débuts à l'opéra dans le rôle de Proserpina dans *Orfeo* de Monteverdi au Maggio Musicale de Florence.

Parmi les rôles qu'elle a chantés, on citera Florence Pike (*Albert Herring*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Kostelnicka (*Jenůfa*), Hippolyta (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), et Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) au Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Anna (*The Electrification of the Soviet Union*), Kabanicha (*Kat'a Kabanová*),

Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Nan (*New Year*), et Irene (*Theodora*) avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Feodor (*Boris Goudonov*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden; Cassandra (*The Trojans*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Andromache (*King Priam*), la Kurfürstin (*The Prince of Homburg*), *Twice Through the Heart* et Meg Page (*Falstaff*) à l'English National Opera. Elle s'est également produite à l'Opéra de Paris, au San Francisco Opera, à l'Opéra des Flandres, au Nouvel Opéra d'Israël, au Festival de Hong Kong, au Festival de Göttingen, et au Japon.

Très demandée en concert, Susan Bickley a chanté dans le *Requiem* de Ligeti au Festival de Salzbourg, dans *Scenes and Arias* de Nicholas Maw, dans *Upon Silence* de Benjamin et dans *Requiem Canticles* de Stravinski à Londres (BBC Proms), et dans la *Missa Solemnis* de Beethoven avec Les Arts Florissants à Vienne et à Paris. Elle se produit avec des chefs importants tels que Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Nicholas McGegan, Paul McCreesh, Mark Wigglesworth, Oliver Knussen, William Christie et Robert King.

Les enregistrements de Susan Bickley incluent *Serse*, *Theodora* et *Solomon* de Haendel, *The Fairy Queen*, *Dido and Aeneas*, et

l'Ode to the Queen d'Edmund Rubbra pour Chandos.

Native du Pays de Galles, **Nerys Jones** fit ses études à la Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama avec Patricia MacMahon. En 1994, elle devint membre de l'English National Opera et en fut l'une des vedettes pendant six saisons, tenant des rôles tels Cherubino, Despina, Zerlina, la Seconde Dame, Melissa (*Princess Ida*), Bird (*Blond Eckbert*), Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Flora (*La traviata*), Pitti Sing (*The Mikado*), Mercédès (*Carmen*), la Sœur infirmière (*Sister Angelica*), Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*) et Sœur Mathilde (*The Carmelites*).

Elle a chanté avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra, le Scottish Early Music Consort ainsi que le National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Elle a donné des récitals dans le cadre du Festival de musique du Nord du Pays de Galles et à St John's Smith Square à Londres.

Elle a également tenu les rôles de Cherubino, Rosina et Dorabella pour Grange Park Opera, chanté dans *Il mondo della luna* et *La gazza ladra* au Festival de Garsington et tenu le rôle de l'Hôtesse de l'air dans *Flight* avec Reisopera en Hollande et De Vlaamse Opera.

“Company Principal” à l’English National Opera, **John Graham-Hall** s’est produit avec toutes les grandes compagnies lyriques britanniques dans des rôles tels que Albert Herring, Kudrjas (*Kát’a Kabanová*), Flute et Lysander (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Cassio (*Otello*), Eisenstein, Ferrando, Basilio, Monostatos, Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*), Herod (*Salome*), Shabby Peasant (*La Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*) et Anatole (*Guerre et paix*).

La carrière internationale de John Graham-Hall le conduit régulièrement à Paris, Amsterdam, Bruxelles, Salzbourg, Stuttgart, Toronto, Vancouver, Lisbonne et Anvers, dans des rôles aussi divers que le Peintre (*Lulu*), Shapkin (*La Maison des morts*), Basilio, Achilles (*King Priam*), et Lensky (*Eugène Onéguine*). Il a également chanté Alwa (*Lulu*), Mime (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Sylvester (*The Silver Tassie*), Valzacchi et Sellem (*The Rake’s Progress*) (tous à l’English National Opera); Mr. Upfold (*Albert Herring*) à l’Opera North; et le Maître de ballet (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden.

John Graham-Hall a collaboré avec de nombreux chefs d’orchestre éminents, notamment Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus

Harnoncourt, Pierre Boulez, Andrew Davies, Sir Simon Rattle, John Eliot Gardiner et Claudio Abbado. Il s’est produit en concert à travers toute l’Europe, avec tous les grands orchestres britanniques, et fréquemment à Londres au Barbican Centre et au South Bank. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent *Peter Grimes* pour Chandos, *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, *Carmina Burana* et *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Stuart Kale est salué dans le monde entier comme l’un des chanteurs-acteurs lyriques les plus exceptionnels de notre temps. Musicien complet, son répertoire très vaste s’étend de Monteverdi à Messiaen. Après avoir débuté sa carrière au Welsh National Opera, il est entré à l’English National Opera où pendant huit ans il a chanté des rôles tels que Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael dans *Julietta* de Martinů, Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*), et Nanki-Poo dans la production de Jonathan Miller de *The Mikado*. En 1987, il a commencé une brillante carrière indépendante en chantant Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) à l’Opéra du Rhin et à Nancy. Il est également revenu à l’English National Opera pour chanter le rôle de Herod (*Salome*).

Parmi ses engagements importants, on citera le rôle du Grand Prêtre dans *Idomeneo* au Royal Opera de Covent Garden; Hauptmann

(*Wozzeck*) à San Francisco, Genève, Zurich, Montpellier, Bordeaux et Bologne; Shuisky (*Boris Godounov*) à Strasbourg, Bordeaux et Montpellier; Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) et Truffaldino (*The Love for Three 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 à Paris; Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*) à l’Opéra d’état de Munich, à Covent Garden, Gênes et Strasbourg; le Capitaine Vere (*Billy Budd*) à Cologne; Gregor (*L’Affaire Makropoulos*) à Strasbourg. Il s’est également produit au State Opera of South Australia, à Drottningholm, Turin et Parme.

Pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation, Stuart Kale a enregistré des extraits de *Boris Godounov*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Otello* et *Falstaff*.

Le baryton **Toby Stafford-Allen** fit ses études avec Robert Alderson au Royal Northern College of Music où il chanta entre autres le rôle de Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), le rôle-titre dans la version pour baryton de *Werther* ainsi que le Contremaître du moulin (*Jenůfa*). À sa sortie du College, il devint membre de l’English National Opera; avec cette compagnie et d’autres troupes britanniques,

il a été Valletto (*L’incoronazione di Poppea*), Henry (*The Fairy Queen*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fiorello (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), le baron Douphol (*La traviata*) et Schaunard (*La bohème*). Il a chanté Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) au Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, Mars et Euro dans *Il pomo d’oro* de Cesti au Festival de Batignano, Schaunard au Festival de Bregenz ainsi que Grimbald et Aeolos dans *King Arthur* de Purcell au Festival de Kings Lynn dans le Norfolk. Son répertoire d’oratorio comprend les Requiem de Mozart et Fauré, *Die Schöpfung* de Haydn et la Messe en si mineur de Bach.

Nicholas Garrett a étudié au Trinity College of Music de Londres, et a remporté un prix de la Wolfson Foundation. Il a chanté le rôle du Baron Douphol (*La traviata*) à l’English National Opera; Colline (*La bohème*) au Scottish Opera Go Round; Escamillo (*Carmen*) à l’Opera North; le Commandeur/Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) au Pimlico Opera; Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) et Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*) avec l’English Touring Opera; Sourine (*La Dame de pique*) au Scottish Opera; Jenkins (*Of Thee I Sing*) à l’Opera North; Nikitich et Chernikovsky (*Boris Godounov*) à l’Opéra de

Nantes. Il s'est également produit avec le Grange Park Opera, l'Opera Holland Park et l'Almeida Opera. En 2001, Nicholas Garrett a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden dans *Palestrina*.

Prunella Scales reçut sa formation à l'Old Vic Theatre School à Londres et auprès d'Uta Hagen à New York. Elle a fait partie de la troupe des théâtres de Huddersfield, Salisbury, Oxford, Bristol et de celle de l'Old Vic à Londres; elle a également joué à Stratford-upon-Avon ainsi qu'au Festival Theatre de Chichester. Sur scène, elle a joué entre autres dans *Just the Three of Us* (mise en scène de Peter Hall), *A Perfect Ganesh* et *Happy Days* (mises en scène de Jude Kelly), *Single Spies* (mise en scène d'Alan Bennett/Simon Callow), *Quatermain's Terms* (mise en scène de Harold Pinter) et *The Merchant of Venice* (mise en scène de Timothy West). Au petit écran, on la retrouve dans *Fawlty Towers*, *Silent Witness*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Midsomer Murders*, *What the Butler Saw*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Question of Attribution* et *Breaking the Code*. Prunella Scales s'est vu conférer le titre honorifique de Companion of the British Empire par la reine à l'occasion de son anniversaire officiel en 1992.

Durant sa carrière de chanteur, Geoffrey Mitchell aborda un répertoire remarquablement varié, depuis la musique ancienne jusqu'à la musique contemporaine, se produisant en Scandinavie, en Allemagne, dans l'ancienne Tchécoslovaquie, au Canada et en Australasie. Après avoir fait ses premières armes de chef d'orchestre avec la BBC, il décida de prendre une part active dans ce domaine avec ses propres chanteurs et fonda le **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Par suite de ses premiers enregistrements l'ensemble travaille depuis longtemps avec Opera Rara pour qui il a réalisé plus de trente enregistrements. Ce Chœur ne cesse d'élargir sa réputation, travaillant avec la BBC et plusieurs maisons de disques internationales. Pour Chandos, le Geoffrey Mitchell Choir a participé à plusieurs enregistrements pour Opera in English, une série de disques très prisés financée par la Peter Moores Foundation.

Reconnu comme l'un des plus grands orchestres du monde, le **Philharmonia Orchestra** a depuis plus de cinq ans le grand maestro allemand Christoph von Dohnányi pour chef principal. Le premier à avoir tenu ce poste fut Otto Klemperer et l'Orchestre depuis lors a collaboré avec succès avec Lorin Maazel

(au poste de chef principal assistant), Ricardo Muti (chef principal et directeur musical), Giuseppe Sinopoli (directeur musical), une tradition qui se poursuit aujourd'hui avec Kurt Sanderling (chef émérite), Vladimir Ashkenazy (chef lauréat) et Sir Charles Mackerras (chef principal invité). L'ensemble a également été associé à des personnalités aussi éminentes que Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan et Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestre continue à collaborer avec des chefs et des solistes de stature mondiale et recrute les jeunes instrumentistes les plus talentueux d'Europe.

Orchestre résident au Royal Festival Hall, il joue également un rôle central dans la vie musicale britannique en choisissant des résidences régionales qui sont l'occasion idéale de développer un programme éducatif dynamique centré sur la communauté. Lauréat de nombreux prix, l'ensemble a été salué unanimement par les critiques pour ses programmes innovateurs dont l'un des objectifs principaux est l'interprétation et la commande d'œuvres nouvelles des plus grands compositeurs d'aujourd'hui.

Un nombre croissant de concerts de l'Orchestre sont retransmis par BBC Radio 3,

entre autres sa participation annuelle aux Promenade Concerts de la BBC. L'orchestre symphonique le plus enregistré au monde, avec plus de mille disques à son actif, parmi lesquels plusieurs bandes originales pour le cinéma et la télévision, le Philharmonia Orchestra est réputé dans le monde entier. Sa discographie comprend, pour Opera Rara, plusieurs disques de récitals ainsi que onze intégrales d'opéras et, pour Opera in English chez Chandos, série financée par la Peter Moores Foundation, *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aïda*, *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, une version primée de *Tosca* ainsi que plusieurs récitals solistes d'airs lyriques avec Elizabeth Futral, Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny et John Tomlinson. Le Philharmonia Orchestra consolide constamment sa réputation internationale grâce à des tournées régulières et récemment de prestigieuses résidences au Châtelet Théâtre Musical à Paris, au Megaron à Athènes et au Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts à New York.

Après avoir étudié avec Sergiu Celibidache, **David Parry** commença sa carrière comme assistant de Sir John Pritchard. Il fit ses débuts

avec l'English Music Theatre avant de devenir l'un des chefs d'orchestre au Städtische Bühnen à Dortmund et à Opera North. Directeur musical d'Opera 80 de 1983 à 1987, il est directeur musical d'Almeida Opera depuis sa fondation en 1992.

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

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

d'UNAM. Il a récemment dirigé plusieurs nouvelles productions dont *Fidelio* au Festival de Nouvelle-Zélande, *Lucia di Lammermoor* avec le New Israeli Opera et *Don Giovanni* à l'Opéra d'état de Hannover.

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

At the recording sessions:
Jeremy White



Rossini: The Thieving Magpie

Quando lo scrittore Honoré de Balzac, amico di Rossini, assisté per la prima volta alla rappresentazione della *Gazza ladra* a Parigi nel 1821, ne fu completamente conquistato. “Quest’uomo puzza di vino!” esclamò una donna seduta dietro di lui, ma Balzac, che aveva appunto preso la precauzione di scolarsi una bottiglia di vino e fumare due sigari prima di presentarsi al Théâtre Italien, riuscì a ignorare la frecciata. La musica di Rossini era molto più inebriante.

Sull’altra sponda della Manica, le cose andarono molto diversamente. Lord Mount Edgumbe, il più conservatore dei melomani inglesi, che aveva assistito all’opera in precedenza durante lo stesso anno, reagì con una serie di lamentele:

I suoi finali e molti dei tanti *pezzi concertati* sono eccessivamente fragorosi, e l’uso abbondante degli strumenti *rumorosi* mi sembra singolarmente inadeguato all’argomento che avrebbe potuto essere reso toccante, ma è ben lungi dal richiedere un accompagnamento così marziale.

Viene da chiedersi se Mount Edgumbe sapesse di cosa stava parlando. Un’opera

ambientata all’epoca di una rivoluzione, con un disertore tra i protagonisti e una marcia verso il patibolo nell’ultimo atto avrà pur diritto a qualche “accompagnamento marziale” di tanto in tanto. Il fatto è che a Mount Edgumbe non piaceva il rumore. Per lui e per altri appassionati inglesi come lui, Rossini doveva essere l’equivalente del genere heavy metal.

Alla prima esecuzione a Milano il 31 maggio del 1817, il pubblico era rimasto entusiasta dell’ouverture con i suoi tamburi militari e l’imponente *maestoso marziale*. Quello che il pubblico di quella prima non poteva sapere, tuttavia, era che l’ouverture era stata creata appositamente per gli eventi che stavano per essere rappresentati sulla scena. Non si trattava di uno dei famosi prestiti di Rossini dalle proprie opere, un brano composto in precedenza e tirato fuori alla prova generale, ma una composizione su misura, di cui diversi temi ricorrono nel corpo principale dell’opera.

In una lettera inviata a sua madre all’epoca della commissione di Milano nel marzo 1817, Rossini rivelava:

Scrivo l’opera che ha per titolo *La Gazza Ladra*. Il Libro è versificato da un poeta di fresca data ed in conseguenza mi fa impazzire; il soggetto però è bellissimo e spero (se piace a Dio) faremo un Fiasco Fotuto.

Il “bellissimo soggetto” era ispirato a un fatto realmente accaduto: una paesana francese era stata condannata e impiccata per alcuni furti che si sarebbero poi rivelati opera di una gazza ladra. Dall’evento erano nati numerosi racconti, compreso un cosiddetto *mélo-historique* o *mélodrame de boulevard* intitolato *La Pie voleuse* che Théodore Badouin d’Aubigny e il direttore teatrale Louis-Charles Caigniez (“il Racine dei boulevard”) avevano messo in scena al Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin di Parigi nell’aprile 1815. Il biografo francese di Rossini, Stendhal, si affrettò a schernirli:

E per peggiorare le cose, sembra che questo piccolo e disgustoso aneddoto sia basato sulla realtà; una povera serva fu davvero impiccata al Palaiseau e in suo ricordo fu istituita una messa, che in seguito sarebbe stata nota come la *Messa della gazza*.

L’osservazione di Stendhal rispecchia l’abisso più o meno incolmabile esistente in Francia tra questi melodrammi accompagnati dalla musica che erano la passione di migliaia di

appartenenti alle classi medie e basse e i drammi allestiti all’Opéra di Parigi che erano appannaggio dell’aristocrazia e dell’alta borghesia.

In Italia la mentalità era più aperta. Decine di teatri andavano in cerca di opere nuove per allestirne due o tre per stagione, quindi le trame plausibili erano un bene prezioso. Inoltre all’opinione intellettuale italiana non dispiaceva affatto il materiale popolare. Il “poeta di fresca data” Giovanni Gherardini (1778–1861), che trasformò *La Pie voleuse* in un libretto italiano, era in realtà una persona molto importante. Medico, ma anche poeta, traduttore e filologo per inclinazione, lavorava dal 1806 come editore del *Giornale Italiano*.

Il rimaneggiamento de *La Pie voleuse* (pomposamente ribattezzato *Avviso ai giudici*) fu preparato da Gherardini per un concorso dell’Impresa dei Reali Teatri di Milano nel 1816. Non vinse. Il primo premio di 1000 lire austriache (circa 1200 euro di oggi) andò a un giovane astro nascente del teatro italiano, Felice Romani. La Scala intendeva offrire subito il libretto a Rossini, ma il progetto incontrò degli ostacoli. Dopo uno scambio epistolare nell’inverno del 1816–17 tra Rossini e Angelo Petracchi, impresario della Scala, fu scelto il libretto di Gherardini. Sappiamo da

una lettera scritta da uno dei giudici, Vincenzo Monti, mentore di Romani, che il testo di Gherardini era stato molto apprezzato dalla commissione, soprattutto per il suo ordine in un'epoca in cui, secondo Monti, i libretti drammatici minacciavano di diventare un "mostruoso coagulo di parole vòte di senso, e null'altro".

L'ordine di Gherardini era una virtù particolare nel caso della storia della *Gazza ladra*. Come *Il circolo Pickwick* (*The Pickwick Papers*) di Dickens, alterna a momenti di avventura scene di prigionia stranamente sinistre, ci presenta tutta una serie di personaggi caratterizzati in maniera solidale, sentimentale e occasionalmente bizzarra. La storia si incentra su una comunità di campagna, governata da un re, ma dominata da un podestà faccendiere, sadico, una sorta di Scarpia campagnolo. Alcuni importanti rappresentanti della comunità sono il geniale Fabrizio Vingradito, fittaiolo dal nome indicativo, sua moglie Lucia e il figlio Giannetto, rientrato da poco dalla guerra. (Secondo Monti il ruolo di Giannetto era poco caratterizzato: "sarebbe a desiderarsi un poco più di risoluzione e di impeto militare". Difficile non essere d'accordo con questa critica).

Giannetto desidera sposare la modesta e deliziosa domestica Ninetta, eroina dell'opera e ovvia variazione dell'archetipo di Cenerentola che doveva stare particolarmente a cuore a Rossini. (Le trattative con La Scala per *La gazza ladra* coincisero con la composizione e le prove della *Cenerentola* per il Teatro Valle di Roma.) Ninetta è circondata da una quantità di personaggi minori, tra cui il servo Pippo e il venditore ambulante Isacco, la cui lamentosa cavatina spinse Stendhal a inveire contro gli ebrei polacchi in termini che oggi lo avrebbero fatto finire in galera. (Trabuco ne *La forza del destino* di Verdi è chiaramente un discendente di Isacco.) C'è anche la suggestiva figura del padre di Ninetta, Fernando Villabella, disertore suo malgrado. Si può solo cercare di indovinare l'impressione che deve aver fatto a Rossini l'umiliazione di quest'uomo forte e pietoso quando lesse il libretto. Suo padre, onestissimo repubblicano dalla parola pronta, era stato arrestato e imprigionato dagli austriaci a Bologna nel 1800.

Le dimensioni che adesso Rossini assegnava ai suoi drammi musicali gli consentirono di musicare il testo di Gherardini in maniera sufficientemente grandiosa da soddisfare persino le pretese della Scala di Milano. Il teatro ricambiò senza badare a spese. Fu

riunito un cast illustre, capeggiato da Filippo Galli (Fernando) e furono commissionati bozzetti ad Alessandro Sanquirico, uno degli scenografi più innovativi dell'epoca. I disegni per la scena del tribunale furono particolarmente imponenti.

Ci sono momenti in cui, rivelando le proprie radici collegate al melodramma francese, *La gazza ladra* finisce con il preannunciare lo stile del verismo italiano. Ninetta è appunto la donna dolce, offesa che potremmo ritrovare in una delle opere di Puccini, ed è lei il fulcro di una delle sequenze più notevoli dell'opera. Nel primo atto, davanti a Ninetta e a suo padre, il podestà riceve una lettera con una descrizione completa del disertore e chiede alla ragazza di leggerla perché ha dimenticato gli occhiali. Con un parlato su un tremolo orchestrale, Ninetta obbedisce, ma la modifica mentre la legge. Alexander Puškin, che vide *La gazza ladra* a Odessa nel 1823–24, crea una scena più o meno identica nel dramma *Boris Godunov*, quando il falso Dimitri sfugge all'arresto modificando un mandato di cattura che una guardia analfabeta gli ha dato da leggere. Musorgskij incluse la scena nell'opera omonima, anche se bisogna dire che l'accompagnamento declamatorio della lettura

della lettera è molto meno efficace del rivoluzionario esperimento di Rossini con il normale parlato. Forse non è sorprendente che il ritorno della *Gazza ladra* in teatro negli anni '40 e '50 debba molto a un adattamento a ruota libera (Pesaro, 1941) di Riccardo Zandonai, compositore verista d'avanguardia i cui gusti, verso la fine della sua vita, si rivolsero a un neoclassicismo di ispirazione rossiniana.

Per molti altri aspetti *La gazza ladra* è un'opera formulata su linee classiche. Non sono previsti voli pindarici musicologici per la gazza eponima e le forme tipiche di Rossini – duetti, trii, finali convenzionali e simili – non vengono sacrificate sull'altare di qualche effimera considerazione di realismo. Mentre si attende il podestà, Ninetta e suo padre hanno sempre la loro cabaletta, espressione tanto dell'istinto di Rossini per l'ordine quanto del pigro rispetto delle forme di cui lo stesso compositore aveva favorito la nascita. In tutta l'opera attraverso la musica, e soprattutto attraverso il ritmo, vengono espresse le sensazioni di estasi, liberazione, confusione o intrigo. Quando il carceriere buono, Antonio, cerca di separare Ninetta e Giannetto perché il podestà non si accorga che ha lasciato uscire Ninetta per qualche momento dalla cella, la

situazione è identica a quella del secondo atto del Barbiere di Siviglia, in cui Figaro è costretto a un'ingegnosa presa in giro degli innamorati che perdono tempo. Nella scena della *Gazza ladra* manca la commedia e il movimento stesso dei ritmi e l'ostinato militaristico che sottolinea le voci degli innamorati suggeriscono un'atmosfera molto più sinistra.

Il ritratto del podestà è controllato in maniera analoga. Inizialmente il suo può apparire un personaggio comico, ma questa impressione cambia nel grande trio che segue la lettura della lettera. Nella scena della prigionia nel secondo atto, quando il podestà viene chiamato in tribunale, il secondo soggetto dell'ouverture, con i tamburi in primo piano, colora la stretta in maniera brillante e al contempo minacciosa.

È stato detto che Ninetta è disegnata in maniera troppo pallida, ma così si perde di vista la sua semplicità, esaltata in maniera del tutto appropriata dalla musica che Rossini le assegna. La sua cavatina è meravigliosamente ingenua, con la cabaletta libera, dal ritmo spontaneo. C'è il pathos in tonalità maggiore della sua risposta alle rivelazioni di Isacco nel finale del primo atto e lo squisito duetto in prigionia, con le commoventi repliche aggiunte

da Pippo. C'è anche la sua preghiera all'inizio della scena finale, incorniciata da un'orchestrazione che incute timore per la marcia al patibolo. Sebbene questo non sia un ruolo da star, ha conquistato cantanti come la Colbran e la Pasta. Per opinione universale la Malibran fu una Ninetta memorabile, decisamente rustica e affascinante; nella sua interpretazione la fusione tra gli elementi realistici deve essere stata per il compositore la personificazione ideale del suo ideale musicale e drammatico.

Chi va in cerca del tema più profondo può esaminare il rapporto tra Ninetta e suo padre. Come Verdi, Rossini era sensibile al sentimento dell'amore paterno e nella *Gazza ladra* è Fernando a conferire in gran parte all'opera il suo potere e il suo richiamo di fondo. Il suo duetto con Ninetta nell'atto primo e il suo intervento nella scena del processo preannunciano il periodo medio verdiano.

Dopo il suo trasferimento a Napoli nel 1815, Rossini si era appassionato agli argomenti seri e ai grandi affreschi. *La gazza ladra* sviluppa questa tendenza, anche se con un argomento più 'borghese' di quanto i napoletani avrebbero tollerato. Lo stato d'animo libero delle scene pastorali fa

pregustare la varietà di movimenti corali e di danza dell'opera successiva di Rossini, *Armida*, e della sua ultima opera, *Guglielmo Tell*. Esiste anche prova di una gamma crescente e di una maggiore cura nella scrittura orchestrale. La ripresa della marcia di Ninetta al patibolo crea un insieme complesso mentre la processione attraversa il villaggio: *fortissimo* per archi e tamburi, *pizzicato* per legni e archi, *smorzando* per corni e clarinetti.

La scoperta del nido della gazza con i suoi tesori e il perdono all'ultimo momento di Ninetta portano a una conclusione esultante. Non sarà entusiasmante come l'epilogo del *Fidelio* di Beethoven, ma chiude trionfalmente un'opera che celebra, come tutti i capolavori buffi o semiseri della maturità di Rossini, i legami dell'affetto e la resistenza dello spirito tra il disordine del mondo.

* * * * *

L'enorme successo della *Gazza ladra* a Milano nel 1817 produsse un interessantissimo fenomeno successivo: un allestimento dell'opera controllato dallo stesso Rossini per il gala di inaugurazione del Nuovo Teatro di Pesaro, sua città natale, nel giugno 1818.

Rimangono alcune lettere, le uniche in nostro possesso con dettagli del coinvolgimento

di Rossini nell'allestimento di una delle sue opere, che confermano quello che i rossiniani competenti sanno da sempre, ma che l'immagine pubblica di pigro *bon viveur* del compositore ha sempre ostinatamente nascosto: la sua enorme dedizione al lavoro e l'ossessione per i particolari.

Abbiamo la possibilità di ripercorrere la storia attraverso il carteggio rossiniano. Il 27 gennaio 1818 Rossini scrive una lettera agli organizzatori del progetto, Giulio Perticari e Antaldo Antaldi in cui conferma che sta cercando di ingaggiare due star dell'Opera di Napoli, la Colbran e Nozzari, per la sua ultima opera napoletana: *Armida*. Le trattative si trascinano per due mesi, durante i quali si capisce che Pesaro non può permettersi tali celebrità né dare indicazioni chiare sulla data in cui saranno necessarie. Alla fine viene scelta *La gazza ladra*, ma risulta quasi altrettanto difficile trovare gli interpreti e il costo dell'allestimento è ancora maggiore, anche perché Rossini insiste nell'assumere non solo Sanquirico, ma anche il suo ben più famoso insegnante, Paolo Landriana, per controllare i bozzetti.

Quando una supplica alla sua vecchia amica Rosa Morandi perché interpreti Ninetta cade nel vuoto, Rossini ingaggia la diciottenne Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis e, a un

compenso ridotto, suo marito, Giuseppe De Begnis, nel ruolo del podestà. Questi risparmi gli consentono di ingaggiare il suo protetto, il tenore Alberico Curioni, nel ruolo di Giannetto e Raniero Remorini in quello di Fernando. Ma quando viene a sapere che il suo ruolo è quello del perseguitato, Rumorini alza il prezzo e fa il difficile. “Mi ha fatto passare tre giorni infernali. Oh, che guaio”, esclama Rossini, riferendosi alle insistenze di Remorini che pretende un assolo in più.

Ma tutto questo è nulla in confronto all’impegno di Rossini per l’allestimento. Perfezionista assoluto, il compositore insiste nel nominare e ingaggiare i migliori strumentisti locali. Vengono specificate la disposizione dell’orchestra e persino le misure degli spazi tra i musicisti e l’illuminazione migliore dei leggit per gli spartiti. Viene impostato il coordinamento tra scenografi e macchinisti. Viene emesso un promemoria sui movimenti della falsa gazza.

Tutto questo sarebbe costato caro a Rossini. L’inaugurazione di gala del 10 giugno fu un trionfo, ma poco dopo il compositore si ammalò di una seria infiammazione della gola. Si sparse la notizia della sua morte a Napoli e persino a Parigi. Fortunatamente si riprese e fu curato presso Villa Perticari.

Rallegrato dall’accoglienza concessa alla *Gazza ladra*, Rossini tornò a Pesaro il maggio successivo solo per essere bandito dalla città da alcuni energumani al soldo di Bartolomeo Bergami, amante della principessa di Galles, Carolina, moglie separata del principe reggente inglese. Rossini aveva appena ventisette anni e gli rimaneva ancora mezzo secolo da vivere, ma non rimise mai più piede a Pesaro.

© 2003 Richard Osborne

COMPACT DISC ONE

Trama

Tanto tempo fa in un villaggio francese...

[1] – [2] Overture

Atto I

Scena prima

[3] – [5] C’è un gran trambusto in casa di Fabrizio e Lucia Vingradito: il loro figlio, Giannetto, oggi torna dalla guerra. Si prepara un’enorme festa e sembra che tutti gli abitanti del villaggio siano qui a dare una mano.

[6] – [8] Ma la più felice di tutti è Ninetta, una

fanciulla a servizio dei Vingradito e profondamente innamorata di Giannetto. A detta di tutti i due giovani finiranno per sposarsi (persino la gazza di casa si aggiunge al coro generale), ma Lucia è contraria all’unione e sembra prendersela con Ninetta perché da qualche tempo è sparita una forchetta d’argento. [9] Isacco, il venditore ambulante locale, passa e chiede di Ninetta [10] ma un altro servo, Pippo, lo manda via.

[11] – [13] Infine ecco il momento tanto atteso: l’arrivo di Giannetto. Viene offerto da bere a tutti. Lucia porta via il figlio a far visita ai parenti e lascia Ninetta a preparare la tavola per la festa. [14] Non appena Giannetto è uscito arriva Fernando Villabella, padre di Ninetta, anch’egli reduce dalla guerra. [15] – [17] Ma non è latore di buone notizie: dopo un litigio con il suo capitano, è stato dichiarato disertore e condannato a morte. [18] Dal momento che non ha denaro, consegna alla figlia due posate d’argenteria di famiglia da vendere, per poter fuggire. Le cose si complicano con l’ingresso del Podestà, deciso a conquistare le grazie di Ninetta. La fanciulla finge che suo padre sia un mendicante di passaggio. Giorgio, assistente del Podestà, porta un mandato d’arresto per Fernando: [19] – [21] dal momento che si è dimenticato gli occhiali, il Podestà

chiede a Ninetta di leggerglieli. La fanciulla descrive una persona il più possibile diversa dal padre, ma quando il Podestà insiste nel farle la corte, Fernando è talmente sdegnato che quasi si tradisce. [22] Mentre i tre si allontanano, la gazza scende e ruba uno dei cucchiaini d’argento di Lucia.

Scena seconda

[23] Ritorna Isacco e Ninetta gli vende l’argenteria del padre. Rientrano Giannetto e i suoi genitori che lo presentano al Podestà. Lucia scopre che manca un cucchiaino, e questo spinge il Podestà a insistere perché si svolga subito un’indagine: la legge è molto severa in fatto di furti domestici, che vengono puniti con la pena capitale. [24] A causa dell’ostilità di Lucia e della gelosia del Podestà, i sospetti si incentrano su Ninetta. Nella confusione la fanciulla lascia cadere il denaro che ha avuto da Isacco. [25] Viene convocato il venditore ambulante: ha già venduto la forchetta e il cucchiaino, però ricorda che sulle posate erano incise le iniziali di Fernando, F.V. [26] – [27] Nel disperato tentativo di proteggere il padre, Ninetta è incapace di protestare la propria innocenza. [28] Per ordine del Podestà viene condotta in tribunale.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Atto II

Scena Prima

[1] – [2] Antonio, un carceriere dal cuore buono, ha compassione di Ninetta; promette di consegnare un messaggio a Pippo e consente a Giannetto di farle visita. La fanciulla convince l'innamorato della propria innocenza, [3] – [4] ma il loro colloquio viene interrotto dall'arrivo del Podestà, che viene ad offrire a Ninetta un accordo: è disposto a liberarla purché accetti le sue profferte. La risposta della ragazza è inequivocabile: preferisce morire che concedersi a lui. [5] Il Podestà viene chiamato in tribunale prima di poter insistere, [6] ma Antonio ha sentito e decide di fare di tutto per aiutare Ninetta. La fanciulla chiede a Pippo di nascondere del denaro per suo padre in un posto convenuto [7] – [9] e cerca di vendergli la croce che porta al collo, ma lui insiste nel prestarle il denaro. I due si danno un doloroso addio.

[10] – [14] Ninetta viene processata, dichiarata colpevole e condannata a morte. [15] – [17] Fernando irrompe nella sala del tribunale per cercare di salvarle la vita, ma è troppo tardi. Viene condotto in prigione mentre la figlia è scortata verso il patibolo.

Scena seconda

[18] Compare all'improvviso Ernesto, un militare amico di Fernando, latore di un perdono reale per lui. Chiede dove si trovi la casa del Podestà; Pippo gli dà delle indicazioni e viene ricompensato con una moneta d'argento nuova di zecca, ma la gazza gliela strappa di mano e si innalza in volo per portarla sul campanile. Pippo e Antonio la inseguono. [19] – [20] Nel frattempo Ninetta viene condotta al patibolo; la folla cerca di confortarla al suo passaggio. La fanciulla pronuncia un ultimo discorso coraggioso e si avvia per ché si compia il suo destino. [21] – [22] Dal campanile arrivano le esclamazioni eccitate di Pippo e Antonio che richiamano l'attenzione di Giorgio: nel nido della gazza, oltre alla moneta, hanno trovato anche le posate di Lucia! Entrambi suonano le campane e gridano: "She is innocent!" Si radunano alcune persone che si passano la notizia. Riusciranno a salvare la fanciulla in tempo? Alcuni spari farebbero pensare che sia troppo tardi, [23] ma non è così: eccola scendere dalla collina. E allora come mai gli spari? "Mere rejoicing!" [24] Ninetta si unisce agli amici che festeggiano, ma non è ancora tranquilla. Dov'è suo padre? Per tutta risposta, eccolo comparire con il suo salvatore Ernesto.

[25] Adesso tutti possono rallegrarsi per il lieto fine. Tutti, tranne il Podestà, naturalmente, vittima di una tragedia di cui egli stesso è stato artefice.

© 2003 Daniel Slater

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Il soprano irlandese **Majella Cullagh** ha studiato con Maeve Coughlan presso la Cork School of Music e presso il National Opera Studio di Londra. Oggi studia con Gerald Martin Moore.

I suoi ruoli comprendono Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), la contessa Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e Micaela (*Carmen*) per Opera North; Ninetta (*La gazza ladra*) per la Garsington Opera; Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) per la Royal Danish Opera; *Manon* di Massenet per la New Zealand Opera; Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) per l'Opera di Las Palmas; la contessina Adèle (*Le Comte Ory*) per la Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Elsie Maynard (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) per la Welsh National Opera; Melissa nell'allestimento dell'*Amadigi* di Handel della Opera Theatre Company per il Covent Garden Festival; il ruolo di protagonista della *Medea* di Gavin Bryars in occasione della prima britannica per la BBC scozzese. Altre

interpretazioni comprendono la British Dancing Girl in *The Death of Klinghoffer* di John Adams al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam per la direzione di Edo de Waart, e Marguerite (*Huit Scènes de Faust*) alla Fenice di Venezia per la direzione di Jeffrey Tate.

La discografia include la versione integrale della *Maritana* di Wallace, la seconda Sinfonia di Mendelssohn, *Zoraida di Granata* di Donizetti, *Bianca e Falliero* ed *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* di Rossini e *Zaira* di Mercadante per Opera Rara. Per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation ha registrato il ruolo di Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*).

Dopo aver conseguito il diploma del Royal Northern College of Music grazie a una borsa di studio Peter Moores, **Barry Banks** si è affermato tra i migliori tenori della sua generazione per le sue notevoli interpretazioni in teatro e in concerto. I suoi ruoli comprendono quello di protagonista in *The Rake's Progress* per English National Opera; Belfiore e Libenskof (*Il viaggio a Reims*) a Bologna; Oreste (*Ermione*) per l'Opera di Santa Fe; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) al festival di Salisburgo, al teatro La Monnaie, all'Opera di Lipsia, per la Glyndebourne Touring Opera e la Scottish Opera; Nemorino (*L'elisir*

d'amore) per l'Opera di Francoforte ed English National Opera; Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*) all'Opera di Basilea; Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) alla Metropolitan Opera e con la Glyndebourne Festival Opera; il ruolo di protagonista in *Candide* per la Chicago Lyric Opera; Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) per l'Opera di San Francisco; Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) per la Welsh National Opera; Aufidio (*Lucio Silla*) al Festival di Salisburgo e all'Opera di Francoforte; Andres (*Wozzeck*) a Francoforte; Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*) a Bruxelles e Parigi; e l'astrologo (*Il gallo d'oro*) allo Châtelet.

Barry Banks svolge una ricca attività concertistica e ha interpretato la *Petite Messe solennelle* di Rossini con la Royal Philharmonic Orchestra diretta da Daniele Gatti, *Fidelio* di Beethoven con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra diretta da Walter Weller, il *War Requiem* di Britten con l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg diretta da Jan Latham-Koenig, il *Requiem* di Bruckner con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra diretta da sir Charles Mackerras e *Armida* di Rossini al Festival di Edimburgo per la direzione di Carlo Rizzi.

La discografia comprende Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don

Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) e Fenton (*Falstaff*) per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Un ballo in maschera* e *Trial by Jury*. Il tenore è comparso in registrazioni su video di *Billy Budd* e *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

Christopher Purves ha ottenuto una borsa di studio per il coro presso il King's College di Cambridge, dove ha frequentato il corso di laurea in inglese. Dopo la laurea si è esibito per quattro anni con il gruppo vocale *Harvey and the Wallbangers* con cui ha effettuato alcune registrazioni. Ha ripreso poi a studiare canto con David Keren e oggi con Diane Forlano.

I suoi impegni operistici comprendono apparizioni con English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Birmingham Opera Company, Opera Northern Ireland, Garsington Festival ed Edinburgh Festival, in un repertorio che include il protagonista en titre delle *Nozze di Figaro*, Agamennone (*Iphigénie en Aulide*), il Podestà (*La gazza ladra*), Siegfried (*Genoveva*), Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), il guardacaccia (*La volpe astuta*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Dandini (*La Cenerentola*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*),

Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Marcello (*La bohème*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), e il ruolo di protagonista nel *Don Pasquale*. All'estero si è esibito a Parigi, Beaune, Lisbona e Barcellona.

Christopher Purves ha un vasto repertorio concertistico che spazia da compositori come Charpentier e Handel a Stravinskij, Honegger e James MacMillan. Ha cantato con numerosi organici, tra cui: St James' Baroque Players, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Sixteen, Gabrieli Consort, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Academy of Ancient Music, London Sinfonietta e City of London Sinfonia.

Russell Smythe è un baritono britannico di straordinaria esperienza a livello internazionale. Ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music e il London Opera Centre, ed è diventato uno dei membri fondatori dell'English Music Theatre nel 1976. In seguito è stato solista presso la Welsh National Opera, con cui ha interpretato ruoli di protagonista in *Billy Budd* ed *Eugenio Onieghin*, oltre a Papageno (*Il flauto magico*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), il Conte (*Le nozze di Figaro*), ed Eleckij (*La dama di picche*).

Dopo aver lasciato la Welsh National Opera il baritono si è esibito presso la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, e con la English National Opera. I suoi ruoli comprendono l'Orfeo di Monteverdi con l'Opéra de Lausanne; Sharpless alla Deutsche Staatsoper di Berlino e per la Castleward Opera; Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*) e Arbace (*Idomeneo*) per l'Opera De Vlaamse; Redburn (*Billy Budd*) per la New Israeli Opera; Fernando (*La gazza ladra*) al Garsington Festival. Si è esibito inoltre in diversi teatri quali l'Opera di Amburgo, la Volksoper di Vienna, l'Opéra di Parigi, la Nederlandse Opera, l'Opera Zuid, oltre che ad Amsterdam, Anversa, Basilea, Bruxelles, Francoforte, Madrid, Nancy, New York, San Sebastian, Vancouver, e con la Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera e Opera North.

La discografia include diversi dischi per Opera Rara tra cui King Edward (*L'Assedio di Calais*), e Teucer (*Dardanus* di Rameau).

Nato a Liverpool ed educato a Oxford, **Jeremy White** svolge una carriera internazionale in teatro, in concerto e in registrazioni in un repertorio che va dalla musica antica alle composizioni contemporanee più recenti. Collabora da tempo con direttori quali Trevor

Pinnock, Andrew Parrott, Adam Fischer e Harry Christophers con cui ha eseguito brani di Bach, Handel e Mozart, mentre i suoi impegni nel repertorio del XX secolo lo hanno visto interpretare Webern con Pierre Boulez e Britten con Graf, oltre ad apparizioni con Luciano Berio, Arvo Pärt e John Adams nelle loro opere. Ha svolto tournée concertistiche in tutta Europa e in USA, Brasile e Israele.

I suoi ruoli hanno compreso Kezal (*La sposa venduta*) per la Royal Opera; Varlam (*Boris Godunov*) e il ruolo di protagonista in titre del *Turk in Italy* di Rossini per English National Opera; il sovrintendente Budd (*Albert Herring*), il re (*Aïda*), Dikoy (*Kat'a Kabanova*), Talbot (*Giovanna d'Arco*) e Tiresia (*Oedipus Rex*) per Opera North; *La bohème* al festival di Bregenz.

La discografia comprende *Israel in Egypt*, *I Vespri* di Monteverdi e, per Chandos, *The Pilgrim's Progress* di Vaughan Williams e *Paul Bunyan* di Britten, entrambi diretti da Richard Hickox.

Susan Bickley è nata a Liverpool e ha studiato musica presso la City University di Londra e la Guildhall School, dove ha vinto la Medaglia d'oro di canto. Ha esordito in teatro nell'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi al Maggio Musicale fiorentino, nel ruolo di Proserpina.

I ruoli comprendono Florence Pike (*Albert Herring*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Kostelnicka (*Jenůfa*), Hippolyta (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) e Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) per la Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Anna (*The Electrification of the Soviet Union*), Kabanicha (*Kat'a Kabanová*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Nan (*New Year*) e Irene (*Theodora*) per la Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Fjodor (*Boris Godunov*) per la Royal Opera; Cassandra (*The Trojans*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Andromaca (*King Priam*), Kurfürstin (*The Prince of Homburg*), *Twice Through the Heart* e Meg Page (*Falstaff*) per English National Opera. Ha cantato anche con l'Opera di Parigi, di San Francisco, delle Fiandre, la New Israeli Opera, è intervenuta ai festival di Hong Kong e Göttingen e si è esibita in Giappone.

Tra i momenti salienti dell'intenso programma concertistico di Susan Bickley vanno ricordati il *Requiem* di Ligeti al festival di Salisburgo, *Scenes and Arias* di Nicholas Maw, *Upon Silence* di Benjamin e *Requiem Canticles* di Stravinskij ai Prom della BBC, e la *Missa Solemnis* di Beethoven con Les Arts Florissants a Vienna e Parigi. La cantante si esibisce con importanti direttori tra cui sir Andrew Davis, sir Roger Norrington, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Nicholas McGegan, Paul

McCreesh, Mark Wigglesworth, Oliver Knussen, William Christie e Robert King.

La discografia include *Serse*, *Theodora* e *Solomon* di Handel, *The Fairy Queen*, *Dido and Aeneas* di Purcell e *Ode to the Queen* di Rubbra per Chandos.

Nerys Jones è nata in Galles e ha studiato presso la Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama con Patricia MacMahon. Nel 1994 entrava alla English National Opera dove rimaneva come solista per sei stagioni, con ruoli che comprendevano Cherubino, Despina, Zerlina, Seconda signora, Melissa (*Princess Ida*), Bird (*Blond Eckbert*), Proserpina (*Orfeo*), Flora (*La traviata*), Pitti Sing (*The Mikado*), Mercédès (*Carmen*), la suora infermiera (*Sister Angelica*), Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Cherubino e sorella Mathilde (*The Carmelites*).

Si è esibita con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra, lo Scottish Early Music Consort e la National Youth Orchestra of Wales. È comparsa in concerto al North Wales Music Festival e presso St John's Smith Square a Londra.

Altre apparizioni comprendono Cherubino, Rosina e Dorabella per Grange Park Opera,

Il mondo della luna e *La gazza ladra* a Garsington, Stewardess (*Flight*) con la Reisopera in Olanda e la Vlaamse Opera.

Solista della English National Opera, **John Graham-Hall** è comparso con le principali compagnie liriche britanniche in ruoli che comprendono Albert Herring, Kudrjas (*Kat'a Kabanova*), Flute e Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Cassio (*Otello*), Eisenstein, Ferrando, Basilio, Monostatos, Aschenbach (*Morte a Venezia*), Herod (*Salome*), il contadino ubriaco (*La lady Macbeth del distretto di Mzensk*) e Anatole (*Guerra e pace*).

Come cantante internazionale visita regolarmente Parigi, Amsterdam, Bruxelles, Salisburgo, Stoccarda, Toronto, Vancouver, Lisbona, Roma e Anversa dove i suoi impegni comprendono il pittore (*Lulu*), Shapkin (*Da una casa di morti*), Basilio, Achilles (*King Priam*) e Lenski (*Eugenio Onieghin*). Altri ruoli comprendono Alwa (*Lulu*), Mime (*Tetralogia del Ring*), Sylvester (*The Silver Tassie*), Valzacchi e Sellem (*The Rake's Progress*) (tutti per English National Opera); Mayor (*Albert Herring*) per Opera North; Tanzmeister (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) per la Royal Opera.

John Graham-Hall ha lavorato con molti illustri direttori d'orchestra tra cui Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Pierre Boulez, Andrew Davis, sir Simon Rattle, John Eliot Gardiner e Claudio Abbado. La sua carriera concertistica lo ha portato in tutta Europa, dove ha lavorato con le principali orchestre britanniche, comparando spesso al Barbican e al South Bank. Le registrazioni comprendono *Peter Grimes* per Chandos, *Il coronazione di Poppea*, *Carmina Burana* e *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Stuart Kale ha una reputazione a livello internazionale come uno dei più notevoli cantanti-attori del mondo della lirica. È un eccellente musicista; i suoi ruoli coprono un repertorio estremamente vasto che va da Monteverdi a Messiaen. Ha iniziato la sua carriera alla Welsh National Opera prima di entrare alla English National Opera, dove è rimasto per otto anni, interpretando, fra l'altro, il ruolo di Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael nella *Julietta* di Martinů, Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) e Nanki-Poo nell'allestimento del *Mikado* per la regia di Jonathan Miller. Nel 1987 iniziava una carriera indipendente di successo cantando Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) all'Opéra du Rhin e a

Nancy e facendo ritorno alla English National Opera per interpretare Herod (*Salome*).

Tra i suoi principali impegni vanno ricordati l'Alto Sacerdote in *Idomeneo* al Covent Garden; Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) a San Francisco, Ginevra, Zurigo, Montpellier, Bordeaux e Bologna; Sciusi (*Boris Godunov*) a Strasburgo, Bordeaux e Montpellier; Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) e Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*) per English National Opera; Zinovij (*La lady Macbeth del distretto di Mzensk*) a Tolosa e Marsiglia; Idomeneo a Drottningholm; e i tre ruoli per tenore nella *Lulu* allo Châtelet; Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*) all'Opera di Monaco, al Covent Garden, a Genova e a Strasburgo; Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*) a Colonia; Gregor (*L'affare Makropoulos*) a Strasburgo. Inoltre è comparso con la State Opera of South Australia a Drottningholm, Torino e Parma.

Le registrazioni per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation comprendono *Boris Godunov* (brani salienti), *Madam Butterfly*, *Otello* e *Falstaff*.

Il baritono **Toby Stafford-Allen** ha studiato con Robert Alderson presso il Royal Northern College of Music, dove ha interpretato i ruoli di Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), di protagonista

nella versione per baritono del *Werther*, e di mugnaio (*Jenůfa*) tra gli altri. Dopo aver conseguito il diploma è entrato alla English National Opera e con questa e altre compagnie inglesi ha interpretato i ruoli di Valletto (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Henry (*The Fairy Queen*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fiorello (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), barone Douphol (*La traviata*) e Schaunard (*La bohème*). Le sue partecipazioni ai festival musicali lo hanno visto interpretare il ruolo di Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) al Festival di Aix-en-Provence, quelli di Marte ed Euro in *Il pomo d'oro* di Cesti al Festival di Batignano, quello di Schaunard al Festival di Bregenz e quelli di Grimbaldo e Aeolos nel *King Arthur* di Purcell al Kings Lynn Festival nel Norfolk. Il suo repertorio di opere da oratorio comprende le messe da Requiem di Mozart e Fauré, *Die Schöpfung* di Haydn e la Messa in si minore di Bach.

Nicholas Garrett ha studiato presso il Trinity College of Music e ha ricevuto un premio della Wolfson Foundation. I suoi ruoli comprendono il barone Douphol (*La traviata*) con English National Opera; Colline (*La bohème*) per Scottish Opera Go Round; Escamillo (*Carmen*) per Opera North; il

Commendatore/Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) per la Pimlico Opera; Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e Nourabad (*I pescatori di perle*) per English Touring Opera; Sourin (*La dama di picche*) per Scottish Opera; Jenkins (*Of Thee I Sing*) per Opera North; Nikitich e Chernikovskiy (*Boris Godunov*) per l'Opéra de Nantes, oltre a impegni con Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park e Almeida Opera. Nel 2001 ha esordito alla Royal Opera nell'allestimento di *Palestrina*.

Prunella Scales reçut sa formation à l'Old Vic Theatre School à Londres et auprès d'Uta Hagen à New York. Elle a fait partie de la troupe des théâtres de Huddersfield, Salisbury, Oxford, Bristol et de celle de l'Old Vic à Londres; elle a également joué à Stratford-upon-Avon ainsi qu'au Festival Theatre de Chichester. Sur scène, elle a joué entre autres dans *Just the Three of Us* (mise en scène de Peter Hall), *A Perfect Ganes* et *Happy Days* (mises en scène de Jude Kelly), *Single Spies* (mise en scène d'Alan Bennett/Simon Callow), *Quartermaine's Terms* (mise en scène de Harold Pinter) et *The Merchant of Venice* (mise en scène de Timothy West). Au petit écran, on la retrouve dans *Fawlty Towers*, *Silent Witness*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Midsomer Murders*,

What the Butler Saw, The Merry Wives of Windsor, A Question of Attribution et *Breaking the Code*. Prunella Scales s'est vu conférer le titre honorifique de Companion of the British Empire par la reine à l'occasion de son anniversaire officiel en 1992.

La carriera di cantante di Geoffrey Mitchell racchiude un repertorio notevole che spazia dalla musica antica a quella contemporanea e che l'ha portato in Scandinavia, Germania, nella ex Cecoslovacchia, in Canada e Australasia. L'esperienza di direzione degli inizi con la BBC lo ha condotto ad un maggiore coinvolgimento con i suoi stessi cantanti e inoltre alla creazione del **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Le prime registrazioni sono sfociate nel coinvolgimento a lungo termine del Coro con Opera Rara, per la quale ha inciso più di trenta registrazioni. Il Coro gode di una fama sempre maggiore con ulteriore lavoro dalla BBC e da case discografiche internazionali. Per la Chandos il Geoffrey Mitchell Choir ha partecipato a numerose registrazioni nelle applaudite serie di Opera in English con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation.

La **Philharmonia Orchestra**, una delle più grandi orchestre del mondo, è diretta per la

sesta stagione consecutiva dal famoso maestro tedesco Christoph von Dohnányi, in qualità di Direttore Principale. In precedenza questa carica era appartenuta a Otto Klemperer e da allora l'Orchestra ha collaborato con nomi di prestigio come Lorin Maazel (Direttore Principale Associato), Riccardo Muti (Direttore Principale e Direttore Musicale), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Direttore Musicale) e, attualmente, Kurt Sanderling (Direttore Emerito), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Direttore Laureato) e Sir Charles Mackerras (Direttore Principale Ospite), oltre che con artisti importanti come Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan e Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestra continua a collaborare con direttori e solisti di fama mondiale, oltre ad attrarre nelle sue fila i giovani musicisti europei di maggiore talento.

Orchestra Residente presso la Royal Festival Hall di Londra, occupa una posizione centrale nella vita musicale britannica anche attraverso residenze regionali che offrono un'opportunità ideale per espandere il suo dinamico programma educativo, basato sulle comunità. Vincitrice di numerosi premi, è stata lodata all'unanimità dai critici per la sua politica di programmazione particolarmente innovativa e

fortemente incentrata sull'impegno ad eseguire e commissionare musiche nuove firmate dai maggiori compositori contemporanei.

I concerti dell'Orchestra sono trasmessi sempre più frequentemente da BBC Radio 3, incluso l'apparizione annuale in occasione dei BBC Proms. La Philharmonia Orchestra gode di una reputazione a livello mondiale ed è l'orchestra sinfonica che ha inciso di più in tutto il mondo, con un catalogo di oltre 1000 incisioni, tra cui una serie di colonne sonore per film e televisione. La sua discografia include, per Opera Rara, numerosi dischi di recital, oltre a undici opere complete, e nella serie Opera in English per Chandos, sponsorizzata dalla Peter Moores Foundation, *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, la *Tosca*, vincitrice di un premio, e vari album di recital, con assoli di arie d'opera eseguite da Elizabeth Futral, Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny e John Tomlinson. La Philharmonia Orchestra continua a consolidare la sua fama internazionale con frequenti tournèe e attraverso le recenti, prestigiose residenze presso il Châtelet Théâtre Musical di Parigi, il Megaron di Atene e il Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts di New York.

David Parry ha studiato con Sergiu Celibidache ed ha cominciato la sua carriera come assistente di Sir John Pritchard. Ha debuttato all'English Music Theatre, quindi è diventato direttore d'orchestra presso la Städtische Bühnen di Dortmund e la Opera North. È stato Direttore Musicale di Opera 80 dal 1983 al 1987 e dal 1992 è stato Direttore Musicale fondatore dell'Opera di Almeida.

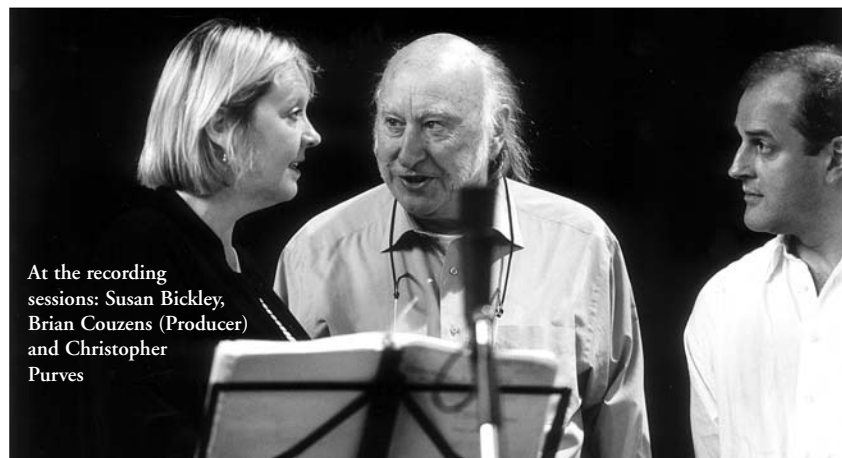
Lavora copiosamente in opere e concerti, a livello nazionale ed internazionale. Ha diretto diverse produzioni presso la English National Opera e la Opera North e appare regolarmente con la Philharmonia Orchestra e la London Philharmonic Orchestra. Nel 1996 ha debuttato con *Così fan tutte* al Glyndebourne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

È un frequente visitatore della Spagna dove si è esibito in concerto con la maggior parte delle maggiori orchestre spagnole. Ha diretto la prima spagnola di *Peter Grimes* a Madrid e nel 1996 la prima produzione spagnola di *The Rake's Progress*. È apparso in Germania, Svizzera, Paesi Bassi, al Festival di Pesaro in Italia, al Festival Internazionale di Hong Kong, in Giappone con una tournèe della *Carmen* e in Messico con la UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recenti nuove produzioni da lui

dirette comprendono il *Fidelio* al Festival della Nuova Zelanda, *Lucia di Lammermoor* alla New Israeli Opera e *Don Giovanni* alla Staatsoper di Hannover.

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

d'Inghilterra di Donizetti. Per Chandos ha diretto una serie di registrazioni di arie d'opera (con Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones e Andrew Shore), nonché *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, *Tosca* (vincitrice di un premio) e brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier*, tutte in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation.



At the recording sessions: Susan Bickley, Brian Couzens (Producer) and Christopher Purves

© Bill Cooper



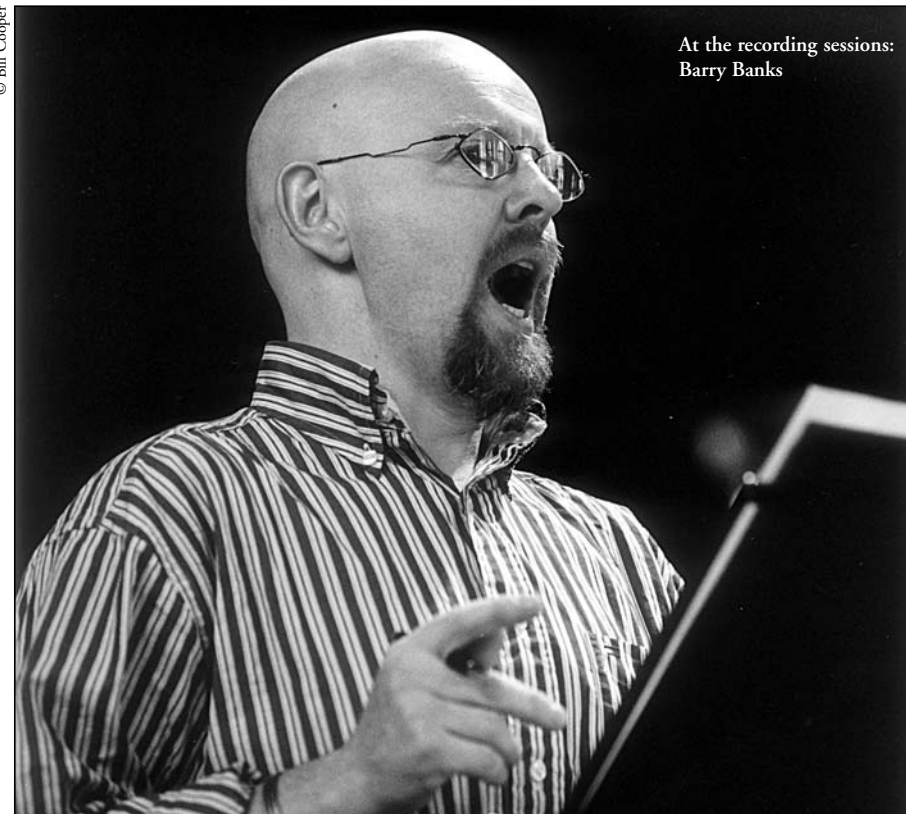
At the recording sessions: John Graham-Hall

© Bill Cooper



© Bill Cooper

At the recording sessions: Majella Cullagh



© Bill Cooper

At the recording sessions:
Barry Banks

COMPACT DISC ONE

Overture

- [1] Maestoso marziale –
[2] Allegro

Act I

Scene 1

The house of Fabrizio Vingradito

Servants

- [3] What a day of celebration!
What a happy day!

Pippo

After many months of fighting,
doing battle with the enemy,
he returns to join his family.
Our young master's on his way, he's on his way.
Welcome, welcome.

Servants

Let us welcome our Giannetto,
let us welcome our young hero.

Magpie

Pippo? Pippo?

Pippo

Who is calling?

Servants

Couldn't tell you.

Magpie

Pippo? Pippo?

Pippo

Who is it?

Servants

It's the magpie.

Pippo

Stupid bird, what is the matter?
Will you never stop your chatter?

Magpie

Pippo? Pippo?

Pippo

That's enough, that will do!
Stupid magpie.
Do shut up or it will be the worse for you.

Servants

Pippo?

Pippo

Quiet. That will do.

Lucia

- [4] Get moving – do something.
My God, you're so lazy.
There's work to do – get busy.
You people amaze me!
There's food to get ready and tables to lay,
I've told you my son is coming here today.
Just look at you standing there
there's work to be done.
You know that my son is coming today.
My doubts and misgivings are fading away.

Pippo and Servants

Giannetto, the hero, is coming today!

Lucia

Hey Ninetta! Where is she now?
Is she deaf or am I dumb?
And where's that fool Fabrizio?
Yes, where are you, husband dear?

Pippo and Servants

Where's Fabrizio?
Look no further, look, he is here!

Fabrizio

I am here, my dear Lucia,
come like Bacchus, yes like Bacchus in his glory.
I have emptied out my cellar for the party,
I've enough to see that ev'ryone is hearty,
I am laden with Chianti and Frascati.
Let us praise the God of Wine, the God of Wine!

Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio and Servants

Long live Bacchus, our great protector,
for his nectar is divine!

Lucia (to Fabrizio)

Oh what joy that our Giannetto
is returning from the war!

Fabrizio

And if I could see him married,
that would please me even more.

Lucia

You can leave all that to me,
for I am sure that you agree,

a woman's choice is always better.
And our son's wife will be...

Magpie

Ninetta! Ninetta!

Fabrizio

Ah, the magpie guessed the answer.

Lucia

Don't be stupid!

Fabrizio

Guessed it right!
Well done! Well done!
Ow, ow, ow!

Lucia

What happened?

Fabrizio

Curse the bird, it went and bit me!

Lucia

That serves you right!

Fabrizio

Still the magpie guessed the answer.

Lucia

Don't be stupid!

Fabrizio

Guessed it right!

Pippo and Servants

Yes, the magpie guessed the answer,
and it fills us with delight! Yes, yes!

Fabrizio

- [5] I can see my beloved Giannetto,
with the girl of his choice by his side,
not forgetting his dutiful father
who'll be bursting with pride.

Lucia

I can see my beloved Giannetto,
with the girl of his choice by his side,
not forgetting his dutiful mother
who'll be bursting with pride.

Pippo

I can see our beloved Giannetto,
with the girl of his choice by his side,
not to mention his mother and father
who'll be bursting with pride.

Lucia and Pippo

He will thrill us with tales of the battle,
tales of courage and bloodshed and valour.

Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio and Servants

In the meanwhile we'll all be rejoicing.
We'll be toasting the bridegroom and bride.

(They all leave. Ninetta comes into the courtyard.)

Cavatina

Ninetta

- [6] Oh, my heart is full of joy!
For my father, my father dear,
and my love, my darling boy,
very soon will both be here.

They'll soon be here, they'll soon be here.

One will hold me to his heart,
but the other – what will he do?
God of Love, I trust in you,
for my heart is pure and true.

- [7] Spring is returning,
sunlight is burning,
now all my sorrows are past.
It is the end of all my sadness,
now joy and gladness are mine at last.

(Fabrizio enters.)

Fabrizio

- [8] Dearest Ninetta, today's a special day!
My son, I know you like him...

Ninetta

Sir! But what are you saying?

Fabrizio

Giannetto doesn't hide things from his father –
why should he? He loves you. He does, and
come to that, who can blame him?

Ninetta

Just what I longed for.

Fabrizio

Quiet! Here comes Lucia!

Ninetta

Thank you, Fabrizio.

Lucia

Take this and lay the tables – be very careful that
nothing should go missing!

Ninetta

Oh no, you know I'd rather die than see that
happen again.

Lucia

The usual protestations – in the meantime that
silver fork has not been found yet.

Ninetta

That wasn't my fault!

Lucia

None the less.

Fabrizio

For God's sake, let's go.
Be patient, Ninetta!

(Fabrizio and Lucia leave.)

Isacco

- [9] Penknives and needles, leather patches,
combs and scissors and sulphur matches,
knives and forks and pots from Hungary,
lots and lots of ironmongery!
Come to the pedlar, oh, don't be shy!
What will you barter, what will you buy?
Penknives and needles!

Pippo

- [10] I thought so, it's old Isacco. Be off now. You can
spare us all your knick knacks and your beautiful
singing.

Isacco

I'm buying as well as selling. I've bargains at all
prices. I've ribbons and I've laces, and petticoats
and earrings

Pippo

Be off – we don't want you!

Isacco

Give my compliments to the lovely Ninetta.

(Isacco leaves.)

Ninetta

- [11] What's that shouting? What is it?

Servants and Villagers

Bravo! Bravo!

Ninetta

Is he coming?

Villagers

He is coming.

Pippo

It's Giannetto!

Ninetta

My best beloved. I have nothing more to fear!
How I longed to see this moment!
How my aching heart has yearned!

Pippo

Quickly, quickly, ev'rybody –
for the hero has returned!

Villagers and Servants

Bravo! You are welcome!
Welcome to the hero!
Bravo, bravo, Giannetto
you are welcome, welcome home'

Cavatina

Giannetto (*to Ninetta*)

- [12] Darling! Darling, let me embrace you –
and clasp you to my breast.
For thus is my love expressed,
the language of my longing.
Even in doubt and danger,
still you were by my side.
You were my angel and guide,
filling me with courage, valour, honour,
with courage and with pride.

Villagers and Servants

Bravo! Bravo!
You must stay and never part!

Giannetto

- [13] Yes, even in the battle,
your love was there to guide me,
and now you're here beside me,
I swear we'll never part.
No, no, no, no! And now you're here beside me,
I swear we'll never part.

Villagers

A loving oath has bound them both
forever heart to heart. Bless them!

Giannetto

- [14] Goodbye for now, my darling.

Ninetta

Yes, but you'll be back very soon.

Lucia

You're a sweet little magpie. Come here, kiss
mummy's hand. Goodbye then, Ninetta.

(*Lucia leaves.*)

Ninetta

God, how I love him. It's time to count the
silverware. My hero, my Giannetto, my darling.

Fernando

This is the house.

Ninetta

No, nothing's missing. Ah, heavens! What's that.
The poor man is weeping. Tell me, how can I
help you?

Fernando

Oh my darling, my daughter!

Ninetta

Ah, dearest father!

Fernando

Careful! Don't give me away!

Ninetta

What are you saying?

Fernando

Listen, I'll tell you – I'll tell you!

- [15] Yesterday, just as the sun was setting, I arrived in
Paris with my regiment. I asked my Captain
leave to come and see you, as a favour – cruelly
and contemptuously he refused me. So I swore, I
cursed him, insulted my superior. 'Ah, how dare
you!' he shouted. He drew his sword and fell
upon me. My fury boiled the blood in my veins
– I drew my sabre – attacked him. The clash of
weapons rang out across the camp. The soldiers
heard the commotion, rushed to the scene – they
pinned me down, restrained me.

Ninetta

Oh, father, then what happened?

Fernando

Now, hear the worst! I was imprisoned, then
they condemned me... to death...

Ninetta

It cannot be.

Fernando

Ah, but my friends helped me escape. Brave
Ernesto disguised me, led me here. 'My friend,
God bless you' he stammered. He could not bear
to say farewell.

Ninetta

- [16] I can be strong no longer,
for now all my courage deserts me,
for now all my strength has left me.

Tears are my consolation.

Now all my strength has left me.
But on the far horizon,
a hope begins to shine,
yes on the distant horizon,
a ray of hope begins to shine.

Fernando

No, no, all hope has vanished.
My daughter, not even you can save me!
Ninetta, I will be banished.
Long lonely days of exile,
a dreadful fate is mine.

Long days of exile await me,
a dreadful fate is mine.

- [17] Oh, daughter let me embrace you.
(Ah no, I cannot bear it!
For we alone can share it,
this bitter, bitter pain!)

Ninetta

Oh, father, let me embrace you.
(Ah no, I cannot bear it!
For we alone can share it,
this bitter, bitter pain!)

Fernando

Listen carefully.

Ninetta

Yes, my father

Fernando

There is something I must tell you. Ah, Ninetta.

Ninetta

There's someone coming.

Fernando

But who is it?

Ninetta

It is the Mayor.

Fernando

Then I'm done for – you must tell me what to do!

Ninetta

Sit down and wait.

Fernando

If he finds me...

Ninetta

Quickly, quickly hide these clothes!

Fernando

My poor heart, can I bear it?

Ninetta and Fernando

Can I bear this cruel fate?

I tremble with terror, I shudder in torment.

The storm is upon us, as danger approaches.

Ah, doom and foreboding are freezing my heart!

The fate which has brought us together

has chosen to drive us apart.

The rolling of thunder will drive us asunder,

now fate has conspired to drive us apart.

Mayor

¹⁸ Good morning, my pretty lady.

Ninetta

Your servant.

Mayor

Tell me, who is this man?

Ninetta

Only a poor old beggar, he asked me for help.

Mayor

So you gave him a drink. To tell you the truth I'm thirsty myself.

Ninetta

I will get some more then.

Mayor

I think you understand.

Ninetta

Had you heard that Giannetto's returned?

Mayor

That's why I've come here – to join in the celebrations.

Ninetta

Well you've missed him. They've all gone to Church.

Mayor

That doesn't matter. As long as you're here, I'm happy. Oh, if only you knew, my darling, how I've been longing to find you here alone!

Ninetta

Oh, come Sir, you're joking.

Mayor

But why are you so coy and so standoffish?

(Enter Giorgio.)

Giorgio

Sir, these papers are urgent – and you should read them.

Mayor

Oh yes – and who has sent them?

Giorgio

A sergeant.

Fernando

A sergeant!

Ninetta

Ah dearest father, you must escape!

Fernando

But how, Ninetta? With no money, with nothing?

Ninetta

God help us – for I've no money either!

Fernando

Well then, here's two bits of cutlery, they're all that I possess. Go quickly and sell them, but careful, do it in secret. Up on the hillside there's a hollow tree, a chestnut, you remember, take the money and hide it there.

Mayor

Ninetta?

Ninetta

(God in heaven!)

Mayor

Not so fast, sir, one moment. This paper is the description of a deserter who has escaped. Then there are further details I can't read without my spectacles. My love, would you be a dear and read them for me?

Ninetta

(May Heaven either kill me at once or save my father!)

¹⁹ THIS IS MOST URGENT. THE DESCRIPTION OF A SOLDIER – SENTENCED TO DEATH – WHO HAS ESCAPED MY CUSTODY. HIS NAME IS...

Mayor

Is what?

Ninetta

'FER – FER – FER – NAN – DO'. (God of mercy, inspire me – how can I rescue my father?)

Mayor

(Look how she's blushing – it makes her twice as lovely!)

Ninetta

'HIS NAME IS FERNANDO VI... VINELLA'

Mayor

Pray, continue.

Ninetta

(Oh heavens, if I read on, my father is done for!)
'His age approaching forty – his height, five foot six.'

Mayor

What's wrong? I can't hear you! Read out loud and stop mumbling!

Fernando

(Poor Ninetta!)

Ninetta

It is almost illegible.

Mayor

Here – if I had my glasses.

(He fumbles in his pocket.)

Ninetta

I can read it. (Now heaven help me.)
'AGE: TWENTY-FIVE; HEIGHT: SIX FOOT TWO INCHES.'

Mayor

A pity – let's hear the rest.

Ninetta

'HAIR, BLONDE, EYES DARK, HIGH OF FOREHEAD AND ROUND OF FACE.'

Mayor

Good heavens! You make him sound like a real Adonis – dark eyes, blonde hair... delightful!

Ninetta

'YELLOW UNIFORM WITH SCARLET TRIMMINGS – WHITE BOOTS – IF YOU SHOULD SEE THIS DANGEROUS MAN, IMPRISON HIM AT ONCE...'

Mayor

I will, with pleasure. Who knows, we may be lucky. Hey you wake up there!

Ninetta

(Oh Heav'ns!)

Fernando

My lord.

Mayor

Get up will you, and let me see your face.

Ninetta

(God help me,)

Mayor

Ha, ha, age twenty-five, well almost – high of forehead with blonde hair, and dark eyes, and round of face. Such a handsome young man cannot be you, sir!

Ninetta

^[20] (Thank heavens!)

Mayor *(taking Ninetta by the hand)*
(My darling.)

Fernando *(to Ninetta, as if he wants to tell her something)*
My lady...

Mayor

Get moving! D'you hear me? Get moving and be on your way!

(Fernando hides in a doorway.)

Fernando

(Oh great God of justice,
Ah, do not reject me.
Smile down and protect me,
have mercy I pray!)

Mayor

(Oh great Aphrodite,
look down and protect me.
She must not reject me;
I must have my way!)

Ninetta

(Oh great God of justice,
Ah, do not reject me!
Smile down and protect me,
have mercy I pray!)

(Fernando leaves.)

Mayor

^[21] We're alone here – quite alone here.
Oh, God of love, pour down your blessing on my passion and inspire me.
If you say you don't desire me,
you are heartless and unjust!

Ninetta

We're alone here – quite alone here.
No one listening, so I do not need to spare you.

I detest you, I abhor you,
and you fill me with disgust!

(Fernando has come back into the courtyard.)

Fernando

Rage and hatred burn within me
and my heart cries out for vengeance!
I can hear the roar of thunder
as the storm begins to break!
But I have to hide my anger
for my darling daughter's sake.

Mayor

Rage and hatred begin to burn within me.
Now my heart cries out for vengeance!
I can hear the roar of thunder
as the storm begins to break.
I was wrong to show my anger,
my approach was a mistake.

Ninetta

Rage and hatred begin to burn within me,
now my heart cries out for vengeance!
Now the storm begins to break.
But I have to hide my anger
for my darling father's sake.

Mayor

What's the point in being angry?
Come with me, I'll calm you down.

Fernando

What an outrage! What a scandal!
Such behaviour! This is disgraceful!

And at your age – in your position!
Do you not have any shame?
Your behaviour is a scandal –
do you not have any shame?
You, a man in your position,
do you not have any shame?

Mayor
What the devil?

Fernando
What a way to treat an innocent young woman!

Ninetta
Father, father you must be careful!

Mayor
Ah, how dare you!

Fernando
Keep your voice down!

Ninetta (*aside, to Fernando*)
You must take care, you must take care or we are ruined!

Mayor
Come, Ninetta.

Ninetta
Do not touch me!

Fernando
What a way to treat an innocent young woman!

Mayor
Who the hell do you think you are?

Ninetta
Quickly, father!

Fernando
Yes, I'll leave you.

Mayor
If I see your face again.
(*to Ninetta, taking her by the hand*)
Will you trust me?

Ninetta
You disgust me, you disgust me!

Fernando
Now I've found you, I must leave you,
oh, my daughter, we must part!

Ninetta
Now you've found me, you must leave me,
oh, my father, we must part!

Mayor
I will teach you to deceive me
and to trifle with my heart!

Fernando, Ninetta and Mayor
[22] Such madness and confusion,
passion and delusion!
Ah, my poor heart will break,
yes, it is more than I can bear!
Ah, such a dreadful moment,
what anguish, what despair.
Mayor
I will catch you, yes, I'll catch you,
when I do, then you beware!
(*The magpie flies down and snatches up a spoon.*)

Scene 2

Isacco
[23] Penknives and needles, leather patches,
combs and scissors and sulphur matches.

Ninetta
Isacco! Isacco!

Isacco
I'm here – Isacco at your service!

Ninetta
Pedlar – I have something, something to sell you.

Isacco
Let's have a look then.

(*She hands him the cutlery.*)

Ninetta
What will you give me?

Isacco
Not very heavy – but matching – let's call it ten.

Ninetta
Ah, that won't do!

Isacco
Ah, well then, if you're twisting my arm... let us
say fifteen. Can't say fairer than that!

Ninetta
I have no choice.

Isacco
Five, ten fifteen, I'm the loser!

Ninetta
Then thank you. But pedlar, not a word to a
soul!

Isacco
I can keep secrets.

Pippo
Please will you tell me, how could you deign to
deal with him, or even talk to that disgusting old
pedlar?

Ninetta
I was in desperate need of money, and that's why
I sold him something.

Pippo
Ah, I'm with you. You sold some old odds and
ends which...

Ninetta
I sold him something, and that's the long and
short of it. Now leave me, please. Really, I've got
so much to do.

Pippo
Miss High and Mighty. I've even more to do
than you have, and I'm exhausted.

Ninetta
I'll go quickly and put the money inside the
hollow tree.

(*Lucia, Giannetto and the Mayor enter. Lucia
presents Giannetto to the Mayor.*)

Lucia

Here he is – here's my Giannetto! Our young hero, who has earned so much glory!

Mayor

So young, so courageous!

Giannetto

I do not deserve such commendation.

Lucia

My God! Now a spoon has gone missing. What is happening?

Ninetta

Mistress!

Lucia

Yes, it is missing – you can see for yourself. Can you explain it? Now a spoon has disappeared – and before it was a fork. It's too much to bear.

Mayor

You've reason and cause to be angry, there are thieves in this house. We will investigate, we'll press charges.

Fabrizio

I'll have no trials in my house. I won't allow it! Ninetta!

Ninetta

She's right, though. Something's missing, a spoon, and yet I counted just now and they were all there.

Fabrizio

Nothing to cry about!

Mayor (*to Lucia*)

Quickly, bring pen and paper.

Fabrizio

I repeat, I want no trials in my house.

Lucia

Be quiet, idiot! Only the guilty need be frightened, for when the culprit has been discovered they will be punished.

Giannetto

Oh heavens, for such a little thing!

Mayor

And in such cases the law is very severe, for all domestic larceny is punishable by death!

All

By death!

Giannetto

Who can have done it – who can it be?

Maggie

Ninetta!

Fabrizio

Again sir, I beseech you – this matter must go no further!

Mayor

Impossible.

Giannetto

But...

Mayor

Be silent! Giorgio, take down the evidence.

[24] This morning in the house of Fabrizio Vingradito, a precious object was stolen.

Giannetto

It was mislaid, not stolen.

Mayor

Silence!

Mislaid or stolen, it's all the same.

Put stolen. Now what was stolen?

Yes, a spoon made of silver – to wit a silver spoon.

Ninetta and Giannetto

A terrible disaster.

There's nothing I can do.

Ninetta, Giannetto and Fabrizio

A terrible disaster

is sure to happen soon!

Lucia

I treated her unfairly, perhaps I spoke too soon.

Pippo

What judgement, oh, what wisdom, the stupid old buffoon!

Mayor

You thought that you would thwart me,

[I'll see you change your tune.

What's the name of your father? Speak!

Ninetta

Fernando Villabella!

Mayor

Villabella! I don't believe it!

Now I see that you have cheated me;

that scoundrel was your father!

Do not worry, for my men

will apprehend him very soon,

and then the villain will be here before your eyes,

and the the villain will be here before our eyes!

Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto and Fabrizio

What is happening?

Mayor

Oh, nothing serious, just a stupid little girl, who's trying to fool us with her lies.

Ninetta

Oh, heavens, I cannot bear it!

(*Ninetta drops the money she received from Isacco.*)

Lucia

But what is all this money?

Ninetta

It's mine, my lady, I swear it.

Lucia

You little liar, you little liar!

Mayor

Quickly, put it all on the record!

Ninetta

It's mine, you must believe it!

Pippo

Yes, I saw her receive it – she got it from Isacco.

Mayor

The pedlar? What has she done for him?

Pippo

He gave it in return for certain trifles that he bought.

Mayor

She sold him certain trifles, eh? Like what?

Ninetta

I cannot tell you.

Mayor

I've caught you in my trap!

Giannetto

Be silent! Tell us everything.

Ninetta

I cannot.

Giannetto

Please, just tell us.

Lucia

You're shaking, you look nervous!

Ninetta

No, no, my lady, I'm hoping...

Mayor

But why all this confusion?

Deny it if you dare.

But we can draw our own conclusion from the evidence that's there.

Ninetta, Giannetto, Lucia, Pippo and Fabrizio

(This dreadful situation will drive me to despair, this dreadful situation is more than I can bear!)

Mayor

Ah, now she's mine completely.

I caught her in my snare!

Giannetto

Let's fetch Isacco!

Pippo

Certainly.

Fabrizio (*to Pippo, who is leaving*)

You'll find him in the village.

Lucia, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Soon all this pain and anguish will vanish into air.

Mayor (*to Ninetta*)

I had better keep the money.

Ninetta

Keep the money! Oh someone – please help me!

Mayor

It belongs to the Exchequer.

Ninetta

This is more than I can bear.

Mayor

I will teach you to be proud and to disdain me,

I will teach you that I always have my way!

Now's the moment of my triumph,

I'll be sure to make you pay!

Ninetta

Oh, my father, I cannot help you,

there is nothing that I can say!

If I speak, then I betray you,

Ah, my strength has drained away!

Oh, beloved father, what can I say?

Lucia

She is pale and she is trembling.

Ah, it fills me with such dismay!

I do not know what to think or feel,

I don't know what to say!

Giannetto

What to think, ah, what to feel,

I do not know what I should say!

What should I say?

Ah, Heavens, what should I say?

Fabrizio

She is pale, and she is trembling.

Ah, it fills me with dismay!

I do not know what to think or what to feel,

ah, I do not know what to say!

Oh God, I don't know what to say!

(*Isacco enters.*)

Isacco

²⁵ Did somebody want me?

Mayor

Tell us what she sold you a short while ago!

Isacco

Just one silver spoon, and also a fork.

Giannetto

Ninetta! Ninetta! You really are guilty!

(And I thought that she was pure and honest, was I wrong?)

Lucia

I knew she was guilty,

I knew all along!

Pippo

I did not foresee this,

I'm sure she is honest,

I'm sure that they're wrong!

Fabrizio

Perhaps she is guilty,

perhaps I was wrong.

Mayor

I knew she was guilty,

I knew all along.

Ninetta

But where have you put them?

Please tell them!

Isacco

I bought them to sell them,

the goods have been sold.

Ninetta

Oh God – a catastrophe!

Mayor

Giorgio, go quickly, do what I tell you!

Giannetto

Were they initialised?

Ninetta

Oh, God in heaven; they were initialised with the same letters – How can this be?

Mayor

Were they initialised?

Isacco

Well, there was an 'F' and a 'V' together.

Ninetta

^[26] Grief and calamity tumble around me!
Darkness and misery, oh God what can I do?

Lucia and Pippo

Darkness and misery, what can we do?

Mayor

Grief and calamity, it's going splendidly.
(Now you're in my power, there's nothing you can do.)

Ninetta

Darkness and misery, what can I do?

Lucia and Pippo

Darkness and misery, what can we do?

Pippo

Grief and calamity tumble around me,
darkness and misery, Oh God, what can we do?

Ninetta

Darkness and misery, what can I do?

Lucia and Pippo

Darkness and misery, what can we do?

Fabrizio

Heartbreak and tragedy, how can I help her?
Darkness and misery, what can we do?

Ninetta

Darkness and misery, what can I do?
What shall I do?

Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Grief and calamity tumble around me,
What shall we do?

Mayor

You're in my power, so what can you do?
It's going splendidly, could not be better,
it's going splendidly, pretty Ninetta!
You're in my power, so what can you do?
Now I have conquered you, what shall I do?

Giannetto

^[27] Someone is coming.

Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Heavens, the army!

Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Spare her, your worship,
have mercy, I pray!

Mayor

^[28] Take this girl away and throw her into prison!

Giannetto

If you touch her I swear you will regret it!

Mayor

That's an order!

Ninetta

Oh Heavens!

Lucia, Pippo and Fabrizio

Do not take her! Oh my God!

Mayor

No, I have to. Do you dare to disobey me?

Giannetto

Will you hear me? Will you listen?

Mayor

Be quiet!
(Now I've caught her, I'm delighted!)

**Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto, Fabrizio,
Servants and Villagers**

Such emotions are raging within me,
I am frozen with fear!
Such fury is raging within me,
I am frozen with fear!

Mayor

(Now at last she is mine,
she's completely in my power,
she is petrified with terror,

she is petrified with fear!)
It is the moment of my triumph,
I have won her!

Ninetta

Ah Giannetto!

Giannetto

My love!

Mayor

Get away from her!

Ninetta and Giannetto

You are heartless!

Lucia, Pippo, Fabrizio, Servants and Villagers

You are cruel!

Mayor

Take hold of her!

All

Oh, my Lord!

Mayor

Enough, get her out of here!

Ninetta

Must I leave you?

Lucia, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Ninetta!

Mayor

Enough of this, enough of this!

All

Such emotions are raging within me,
I am frozen with fear!
Such fury is raging within me,
I am frozen with fear,
I am frozen with terror!

Ninetta

Don't forget poor Ninetta.
Ah, have pity on my broken heart!
My poor broken heart!

Lucia, Giannetto, Isacco, Fabrizio and Villagers

Who will take a dagger and plunge it into his heart,
in his dark evil heart!

Mayor

She is mine, and for ever,
she brings pleasure
and joy to my heart!
She is mine and forever,
we never will part!
For the girl brings such pleasure
and joy to my heart!

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II

Entrance hall of the prison

Antonio

[1] She's shut up in that dark and dismal dungeon,
groaning with grief and sorrow. No one could
see her, could see how she is suffering without
feeling her pain. Dearest Ninetta, I'll do the best
I can to alleviate her anguish. Hey, young lady.

(He opens her cell door.)

Ninetta

Oh no!

Antonio

No, don't be frightened, it's Antonio, a friend.
Come, come with me, yes, come into the
daylight, you can enjoy a brief breath of fresh air.

Ninetta

Oh, thank you, I'm so grateful. Tell me, do you
know Pippo? Could you possibly tell him, only
if it's no trouble, that I would like a word.

Antonio

Hmm. I'm not sure, I'll try, but I'm not sure if...
(Someone is heard at the door.)
Who is there?

Giannetto

Open up. Let me in, I beg of you.

Antonio

That's not possible.

Ninetta

But you have been so generous.

Antonio

And then, who is to know. Young man, please
enter. I'll leave you alone.

(Antonio leaves.)

Ninetta

Darling!

Giannetto

If I'm still your darling, then banish my suspicions.
Tell me the truth. Tell me if you are guilty.

Ninetta

I am not guilty.

Giannetto

Then why did you not try to clear your name?

Ninetta

I have nothing I can present in my own defence.

Giannetto

If you persist, persist in saying nothing and
keeping your secret, I'm fearful. Maybe today's
the day that you must... I cannot say it.

Ninetta

That I must go to my death. I know, I know it.

[2] Maybe one day you'll forgive me,
you will know I was not guilty,
you will see that you misjudged me.
But if you should weep for me,
those are tears I'll never see.

Giannetto

Dry your eyes, oh, my beloved,
you must fight and not surrender.
(In that heart so young and tender
there's no guilt that I can see,
yet she may be lost to me.)

Ninetta and Giannetto

Only death can bring more anguish,
so much sorrow and such despair.
Now my poor heart is breaking,
it's more than I can bear.
With so much sorrow my heart is breaking,
ah, yes, it's more than my heart can bear.

Antonio

[3] You'd better go, and quickly. The Mayor is on
his way.

Giannetto

Oh, my beloved...

Ninetta

My darling...

Antonio

I'll have to lock you up again.

Giannetto

I'm going.

Ninetta

My darling.

Antonio

Go quickly, young man, go quickly.

Giannetto

Farewell.

(Giannetto leaves.)

Antonio

This is intriguing. Why is the Mayor being quite
so relentless and so severe? The crime scarcely
deserves it. Yes, there's more to this business than
meets the eye.

Mayor

Antonio, do you hear me? Bring out the prisoner
– quickly – and then leave us! Ninetta – Ninetta.
Aha! Come here, my little darling, come closer –
my heart is bleeding with compassion for your
plight. I have forgotten that you dared to insult
me. I'd love to save you. Do not lose heart. We'll
have you out of prison. You have my promise.

[4] You're so lovely, your eyes are sparkling.
I'll do anything you ask me,
but my darling, if I'm to save you,
then you must do something for me.

Ninetta

Who can help me?

Mayor

Don't you worry!

Ninetta

Who can help me?

Mayor

Don't you worry – put your trust in one who
loves you!

Yes, trust me, you know I love you!

Yes, I promise, that I will save you,
if you listen to my plea!

Yes, I promise that I will save you
if you listen to my humble plea.

I promise I will save you,
but you must do something for me.

Ninetta

Never, never!

Mayor

Ungrateful creature... I warn you, I warn you!

Villagers

Ah, Ninetta, poor Ninetta!

Mayor

I hear voices, someone's coming!
Ah, let me hold you, and let me kiss you!
Curses – they're coming!

Villagers

Now the Council has assembled, but the Mayor
is still not there!

Mayor

(I must leave her for I cannot keep them waiting.
I must leave her, I must leave her, how
frustrating.)

Yes I heard you, just a moment! Patience,
patience – I'll join you!

Did you hear that? It's now or never!

Ninetta

My resolve will last forever.

Mayor

But the sentence?

Ninetta

I'm not frightened.

Mayor

They may shoot you.

Ninetta

Let them do it.

Mayor

Go then, I curse you.
You are unworthy,
you'll regret your foolish pride!
Curse you, I hate you!

[5] When you hear the sentence,
you'll beg me for mercy,
your words of repentance
will come much too late!
The love you denied me
has curdled inside me,
the passion you spurned
now has turned into hate.

Villagers

You heard that? The drumming.

Mayor

I'm coming, I'm coming!

Villagers

The signal, the signal!

Mayor

Be patient, be patient! Your answer?

Ninetta

I've decided.

Court

Your worship.

Mayor

One moment. Ninetta?

Ninetta

I've decided.

Court

Your worship.

Mayor

I'm coming.

That ungrateful creature will soon know her fate!

Court

You see how his features are twisted with hate!

Mayor

When you hear the sentence
you'll beg me for mercy,
your words of repentance
will come much too late!
The love you denied me
has curdled inside me.
The passion you spurned
now has turned into hate!
You mock me and deride me,
the love you denied me
has curdled inside me.
The passion you spurned
now has turned into hate!

Court

You see how his features are twisted with hate!
You hear him, let's leave him!

(The Mayor leaves.)

Antonio

[6] Mr Mayor, Mr Mayor – what are you up to?
How dare you do this, abusing that poor girl.

Pippo

Ninetta – Ninetta!

Ninetta

I have need of your help. All that I ask is the
loan of thirty lire. Will you please go and hide
them where I tell you. Take this cross as a
pledge.

Pippo

Slow down, slow down. Tell me what to do with
the money.

Ninetta

Do you remember that hollow chestnut tree we
used to play in high on the hillside? Hide the
money inside it, and do it, if it's possible, before
nightfall. Be sure that no one sees you.

Pippo

I will be careful.

Ninetta

But Pippo, you need to take my cross as a
pledge.

Pippo

Ah, keep it, I implore you. It really is an honour
to do something for you.

Ninetta

Take this cross as a pledge.

[7] Just think that tomorrow, even today, this most
precious object will be mine no longer!

Pippo

On no, you must not say that. Keep it, I pray!
I will be yours forever!

Ninetta

[8] No, no, I beg you to take it,
in memory of our friendship.
Ah, this is all I ask you.
Do not refuse me, I pray!

Pippo

Yes! I will treasure it always,
I'll keep it safe forever.
It will be my companion
until my dying day.
It will be my companion,
yes, I will guard it till my dying day.

Ninetta

My tears are flowing openly,
to see his sorry plight!
Oh God in heaven shine down on us
and grant your holy light!
Oh, may you grant us your holy light!

Pippo

My tears are flowing openly,
to see her sorry plight!
Oh God in heaven shine down on us
and grant your holy light!
Oh, may you grant us your holy light!

Ninetta

[9] Lest my darling should forget me,
give this ring to Giannetto!

Pippo

Such devotion and such compassion,
I have never, never known! No, no!

Ninetta

Say until my final moment
I am his, and his alone.
Do not tell him of my torment or my heartache.
Ah, this is torture, will I see my love again?

Pippo

For heaven's sake, do stop it!
No, no, I will not fail you.
It will be done. I'll tell him.

Ninetta

Do not forget.

Pippo

How could I? I've given you my promise.

Ninetta

Poor darling Pippo, farewell!

Pippo

Farewell! (If I don't leave her my heart will break in two!)

Ninetta

This is the last time that we'll be together.
Now and forever, dear friend we must part!

Pippo

This is the last time that we'll be together.
Now and forever, my dearest friend we must part!
Now she is weeping, her eyes are shining!

Ninetta

Now he is weeping, his eyes are shining!

Pippo

Ah, such sweet emotion,
such friendship and devotion
within her loving heart!
Tender emotion, love and devotion
shine in her loving heart!

Ninetta

Ah, such sweet emotion,
such friendship and devotion
within his loving heart!
Tender emotion, love and devotion
shine in his loving heart!

The Courtroom

Judge

[10] By unanimous verdict – we find her guilty.

Giannetto

Oh heavens – you can't allow this!

Judge

Silence.

Fabrizio

You must be careful!

Judge

Bring in the prisoner and draw up the sentence.

Court

[11] The wheels of justice will crush the guilty,
so let this punishment be an example!
Goddess omnipotent, mighty and merciless,
punish us equally, justice is blind.
Goddess omnipotent, mighty and merciless,
send down your sentence on all of mankind.
Although the innocent have your protection,
a hail of thunderbolts awaits the criminal –
for crime and punishment will be as one!
Sulphur and thunderbolts fall on the criminal,
justice is done! Yes, justice will be done.

Judge

[12] Most unhappy of women, your fate is in the
balance. Put your trust in the Lord. Here is the
sentence.

Clerk of the Court

THE ACCUSED, NINETTA VILABELLA,
STANDS CONVICTED OF LARCENY. BY
UNANIMOUS VOTE AND IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, THIS
ROYAL TRIBUNAL SENTENCES HER TO
DEATH!

Ninetta

God protect me!

Giannetto, Fabrizio and Mayor

[13] God protect her!

Ninetta

Darkest death begins to cast his shroud around
me.
Death has cast his shroud around me.

Giannetto and Fabrizio

Darkest death begins to cast his shroud around
her.
Death has cast his shroud around her.

Fernando

Now her face is racked with torment,
who can bear such bitter pain?

Ninetta and Giannetto

And if I survive this moment
will I ever be happy again?
Who can bear such bitter pain?

Mayor

Every face is racked with torment,
who can bear such bitter pain?
What a dreadful, dreadful moment,
what a bitter, bitter blow.

Fabrizio

Ah, her face is racked with torment,
who can bear such bitter pain?

Giannetto

[14] But, your Honours, you're mistaken.
You are punishing an innocent.
She has a secret – no one can guess it.
This poor girl conceals a secret in her heart,
yes, a secret in her heart.

Fabrizio and Mayor

A secret!

Court (to Ninetta)

What is your secret?

Ninetta

Do not force me to reveal it – respect my silence.

Giannetto

Ah, Ninetta!

Fabrizio

You must tell us!

Ninetta

Do not force me, for pity's sake!

Mayor

(Pray that this is no mistake.)

Giannetto

Now her heart begins to break.

Fabrizio

Now my heart begins to break.

Judge

She says... nothing.

Court

Enough! Remove her and carry out the sentence.

(Enter Fernando.)

Fernando

No, no!

¹⁶ Release her!

Ninetta

Oh no, father?

Giannetto, Fabrizio and Mayor

Who is this then?

Mayor

Who is this then?

Fernando

I have come to save Ninetta,
come to save my darling daughter
at the risk of my own life.
God in heaven, grant me courage
and protect me in my quest!

Ninetta, Giannetto and Fabrizio

God in heaven, grant him courage
and protect him in his quest!

Mayor

My Lords I know this man – he's the scoundrel
we've been after.

This man is a deserter!

Here's a description and with it you'll find the
legal documents
which order his arrest!

Court

Seize him!

Ninetta, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Oh heavens!

Court

Imprison him!

Ninetta, Giannetto and Fabrizio

God help him – it can't be true!

Fernando

I'll gladly be your prisoner,
I'll gladly mount the scaffold,
but spare my darling daughter!
For she is pure and innocent.
You must not shed her blood.
You must not shed my daughter's blood.

Court

The decision has been taken
and the sentence must proceed!

Fernando

But tell me, what is the sentence?

Court

Yours is imprisonment, but hers is execution.
For justice is immutable,
for none can change the law!

**Ninetta, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor and
Fernando**

¹⁶ Ah! A chasm of sorrow is yawning before me,
a desert of horror, of heartache and pain!

Fernando

A father and a daughter who face death and
dishonour,
my poor heart will never be happy again!

**Ninetta, Giannetto, Fabrizio, Mayor and
Fernando**

A father and a daughter who face death and
dishonour,
my poor heart will never be happy again!

Ninetta, Giannetto, Fabrizio and Mayor

Ah, who can bear so much pain?

Court

Take them away.

Giannetto

I cannot bear this any more.

Fabrizio

What can we do?

Ninetta

This is madness, father, madness!
I will gladly die to save you,
but you have chosen to share my fate!

Fernando

What are you saying?

Fabrizio

Tell us.

Giannetto

Everything.

Court

Come, no more procrastination,
take them down to face their sentence,

Ninetta

Ah, my father, before I die...

Fernando

My daughter – Barbarians! Get away from me!

Court

Do your duty.

(Guards separate them.)

Ninetta and Fernando

Oh, Heaven help us!

Giannetto and Fabrizio

Ah, Ninetta!

Mayor

(I regret this!)

Ninetta

Ah Giannetto! Ah, Fabrizio?

Court

Off to jail and execution.

Ninetta

May I not embrace my father?
The unkindest cut of all!

Giannetto and Fabrizio

May she not embrace her father?
The unkindest cut of all!

Fernando

May I not embrace my daughter?
The unkindest cut of all!
I may not embrace my daughter!

Fabrizio

She may not embrace her father!
The unkindest cut of all!

Fernando

My daughter! Barbarians!

Ninetta, Giannetto, Fernando and Fabrizio

[17] If I cried, I would weep for ever.
If I sighed, my poor heart would burst.
Heavenly Father, advise us and guide us.
Grant us courage to face the worst.

Fabrizio, Mayor and Fernando

No more weeping or I'll weep forever,
no more sighing, my heart will be breaking.
Heavenly Father, advise us and guide us.
Grant us courage to face the worst.

Mayor and Court

No more weeping or I'll weep forever,
no more sighing, my heart will be breaking.
But our justice can never be altered,
and our sentence cannot be reversed!

Scene 2

The village square

Ernesto

[18] What a dump of a village! No one, not even a

dog who could perhaps direct me to the mayor's house, nor that of Fabrizio... I must find out the whereabouts of Fernando, my old comrade-in arms. He'll be overjoyed to see his friend Ernesto and to hear the happy news that I bring him! Ah, Heaven bless you, oh most merciful king, for you have pardoned the most worthy of men! Ah, thank God, a sign of life! Excuse me, but can you tell me how I can find the Mayor's house?

Pippo

The Mayor's house? That's simple: down there, just past the villa, you'll see an archway: the first gate, no, it's the second gate on the left.

Ernesto

Thank you.

(Ernesto gives Pippo a coin and leaves.)

Pippo

You little devil. Just you wait and I'll catch you.

Giorgio

Who you talking to?

Pippo

To that repulsive magpie. Antonio, what's the news?

Antonio

Alas, they have condemned her.

(The magpie flies down and takes Pippo's shiny coin. It flies up to the steeple.)

Giorgio

Oh look, look!

Pippo

He's got my coin! He's flown up to the steeple.
If I could catch him, if I could catch him...
I will try it.

Antonio

Let's go and see.

Pippo

I curse you, thieving magpie.

(Pippo and Antonio run off.)

Villagers

[19] Bitter torment burns within you
as you face your final moment.
But your death may bring you comfort,
when you die you rest in peace.
But your death may bring you comfort
as a merciful release.

Ninetta

[20] God in heaven, Oh, God of justice,
God of love, hear my lonely cry!
I will suffer to save my father,
Ah, I pray that I alone will die!
I am ready now – soon my sorrows will be over –
I will go to meet my fate.

Villagers

Ah, the hardest hearts would soften
if they saw her sorry fate.

(Pippo and Antonio are in the belfry. Pippo puts his arm in a hole and pulls something out. The magpie has flown away.)

Pippo and Antonio

[21] Giorgio! Giorgio! Ah, we're so happy!

Giorgio

What about? What's this commotion?

Pippo and Antonio

Now the truth has been discovered,
(showing the cutlery)
all the goods have been recovered.
Quick, before it is too late!

Giorgio

Are you crazy?

Pippo and Antonio

Hey you! Hey you there! We must stop them –
won't you listen, won't you wait?
Won't you listen, you barbarians?

Giorgio

Ah my friends, it's very sad,
you've completely lost your senses.
(Pippo and Antonio ring the bell.)
Ringing bells for no good reason,
there's the proof they've both gone mad.

Giannetto

What is wrong?

Lucia and Fabrizio

Yes, what has happened?

Antonio

She is innocent, I tell you, completely innocent!

Lucia, Fabrizio and Villagers

Ah, Ninetta!

Antonio

For the fork and the spoon
and the money have all been found.
We've discovered that the culprit
was the magpie!

Lucia, Giannetto, Fabrizio and Giorgio

God in heaven! What a merciful relief!

Pippo

My lady, get ready, and hold out your apron.

(Lucia takes the silver.)

Giannetto and Fabrizio

The silver! Oh heavens!

Villagers

Let's hurry to stop them before it's too late!

Pippo, Antonio, Lucia, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Poor perjured Ninetta approaches her fate!

Villagers

Let's hurry to stop them before it's too late!

Mayor

Now what's all this commotion?
Who dared to ring the bell?

Lucia

Such happiness, your Honour –
such joyful news to tell!

Mayor

I don't know what you're saying!

Lucia

We know she isn't guilty!
We're going to find Ninetta,
we're going to set her free!

Giorgio

We're going to set her free!

Mayor

On no this cannot be!

(Shots are heard.)

Lucia

[22] Oh, God preserve us – too late – she's dead –
she's dead!

Mayor

I am freezing, I am burning!
My heart has turned to lead!
I am filled with nameless dread!

Pippo and Antonio *(from the belfry)*

[23] We can see her, she is coming!

Villagers

Bravo, brave, our Ninetta! Our Ninetta is alive!

Mayor

I don't believe it!

Giorgio

Oh, did you hear?

Villagers

She is coming, never fear,
yes, she is coming never fear!

Lucia

Can this be?

Villagers

She is coming.

Mayor

But the shooting?

Villagers

Mere rejoicing!

Lucia

Can this be?

Villagers

You will see!

Mayor

She is living?

Villagers

Yes, your Honour. Ninetta! Ninetta!

Pippo and Antonio

Ninetta!!

Lucia

Ah, my daughter.

Giannetto

Let Ninetta have her freedom.
She is pardoned by the law.

Lucia, Fabrizio and Giannetto

When delight is least expected,
it delights you all the more!

Villagers

Love and joy to our Ninetta,
to the girl the world adores.

Mayor

Ah, this is the price of vengeance,
and it fills me with remorse.

Ninetta

[24] Though I hear your cries of gladness,
though they move me – your happy voices –
they will never soothe my sadness.
For although you're all rejoicing,
I can never share your delight!

Lucia and Giannetto

What's the matter, dear Ninetta?
Everything has turned out right!

Fabrizio

Ah, Ninetta – are you all right?

Ninetta

No, no. Where is my father?
Will no one tell me? Is he alive?

(Fernando and Ernesto appear.)

Fernando

Ah daughter, yes, I'm here, yes, now and always!
I will be by your side.

Ninetta

Ah, father – now all my pain's forgotten.
How could my joy be greater?
What more could Fate provide?

Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto, Fabrizio and Villagers

How could our joy be greater,
what more could Fate provide?
A father and a daughter,
happily side by side,
what greater joy could Fate provide?

Mayor

Who has dared to help the traitor?
Who released him from the prison?

Fernando

I've an order for my pardon
and the King has signed his name.

Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto and Fabrizio

Ah, the King has smiled upon us,
let us praise his noble name!

Villagers

He's confused and he's astonished,
do you see him blush for shame?

Mayor

I'm confounded and embarrassed,
I am mortified with shame, bitter shame!

Ninetta

Where is Pippo? He should be here.

Pippo

Dear Ninetta, I am here!

Lucia

Here's Giannetto. He is your husband,

Ninetta

Ah, my lady, this is far too much to hope for!

Lucia

And I hope that you'll forgive me.

Fabrizio

Bravely spoken, my Lucia.

Ninetta

Ah, my love, at last you're with me,
hold me close, my darling boy!

Giannetto

Ah, my love, at last you're with me,
hold me close, your darling boy!

Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto, Antonio, Fabrizio, Fernando and Villagers

Face to face with so much happiness,
I will weep with tears of joy!

Mayor

Face to face with so much happiness,
I will weep, but not with joy!

Ninetta

^[25] Now that the storm is over,
and now that the sea's subsided,
we have been safely guided
to a bright and happy shore.

Lucia, Antonio, Fabrizio and Villagers

Now fate has been decided,
now we can breathe once more.

Mayor

Now that the storm is over,
and now that the sea's subsided,
we have been safely guided
to a safe and happy shore.

Lucia, Antonio, Fabrizio and Villagers

Now fate has been decided,
now we can breathe once more.

Pippo and Giannetto

Now that the tempest is over,
and now that the sea has subsided,
finally we've been guided
to a safe and happy shore.

Ninetta, Lucia, Pippo, Giannetto, Fabrizio and Fernando

Now fate has been decided
now we can breathe once more.
Now that the sea has subsided,
now we are safe once more.

Mayor

Would that the storm were over
and would that the sea had subsided,
I have been mocked and derided
by one that I adore.

Villagers

Now that the storm is over
and now the sea's subsided,
now fate has been decided,
now we can breathe once more.

Translation by Jeremy Sams

© Bill Cooper

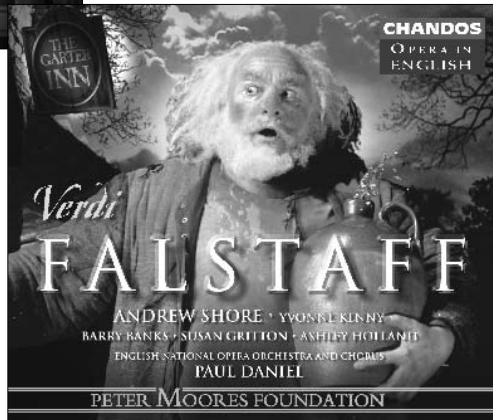


At the recording sessions:
Majella Cullagh and Barry Banks

Opera in English on Chandos

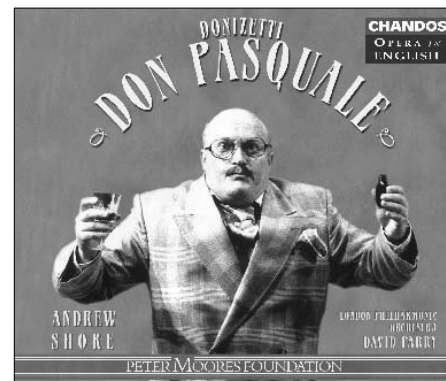


CHAN 3086(2)



CHAN 3079(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3011(2)

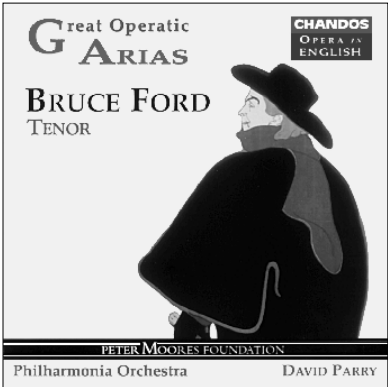


CHAN 3017(2)

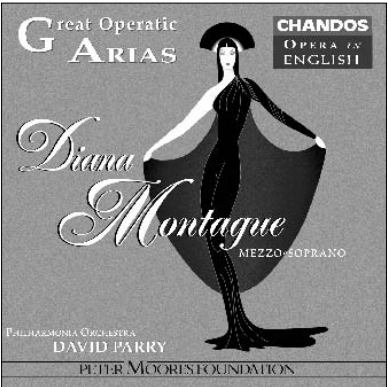


CHAN 3027(2)

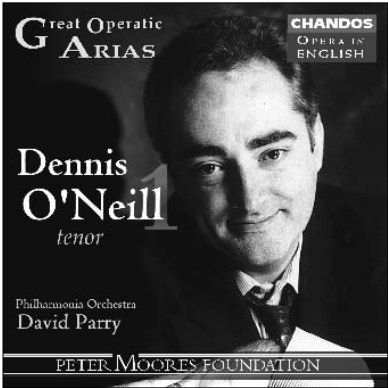
Opera in English on Chandos



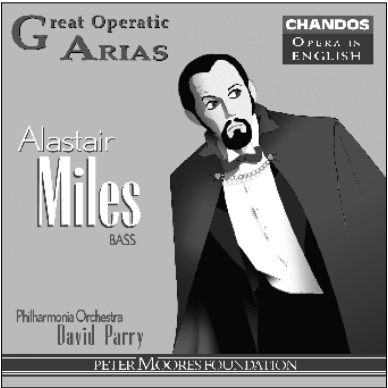
CHAN 3006



CHAN 3010



CHAN 3013

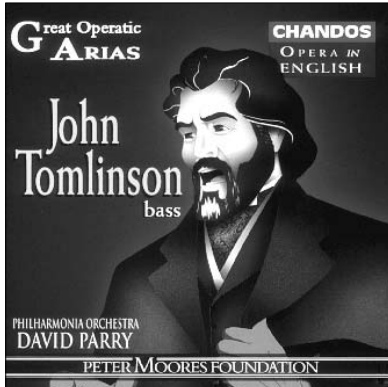


CHAN 3032

Opera in English on Chandos



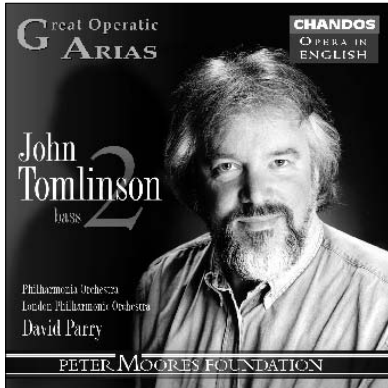
CHAN 3035



CHAN 3044



CHAN 3049

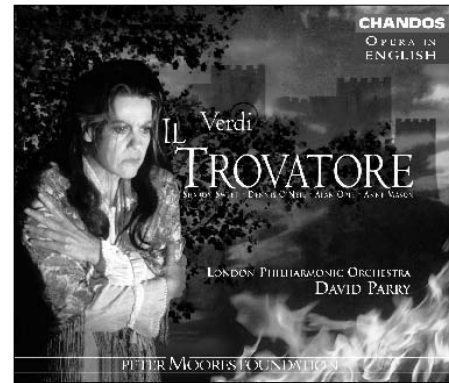


CHAN 3076

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3052(2)



CHAN 3036(2)



CHAN 3068(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3030(2)



CHAN 3023(2)



CHAN 3067

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3004



CHAN 3003



CHAN 3005(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



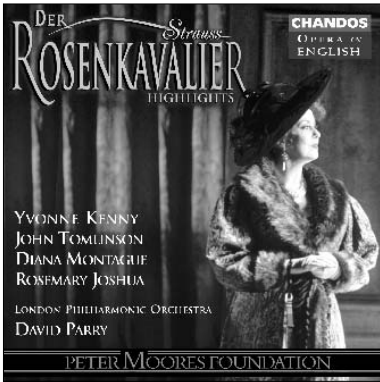
CHAN 3007



CHAN 3014(3)



CHAN 3057(3)



CHAN 3022

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3042(2)



CHAN 3033(2)



CHAN 3019(3)



CHAN 3029

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3000(2)



CHAN 3008(2)

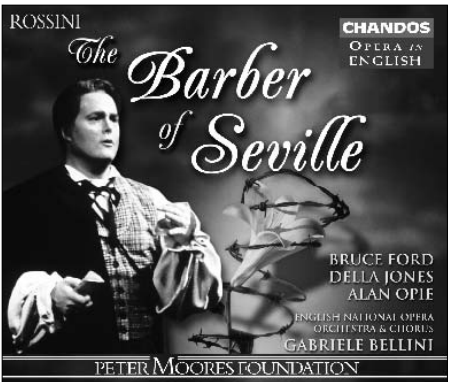


CHAN 3070(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



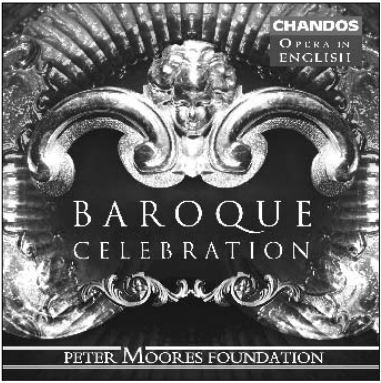
CHAN 3066



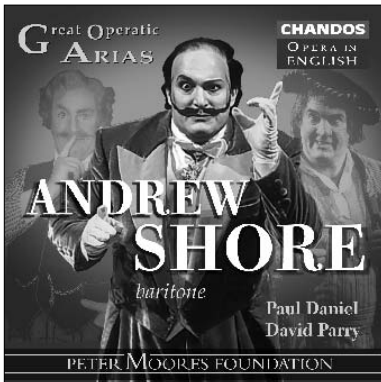
CHAN 3025(2)



CHAN 3073



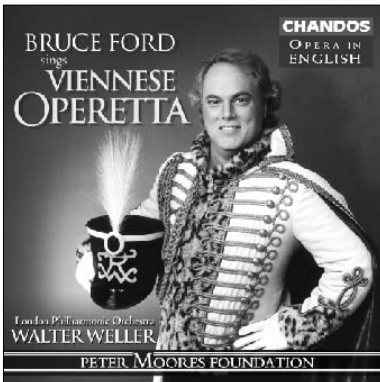
CHAN 3078



CHAN 3077



CHAN 3093



CHAN 3088



CHAN 3072

Opera in English on Chandos

CHAN 3054(3)



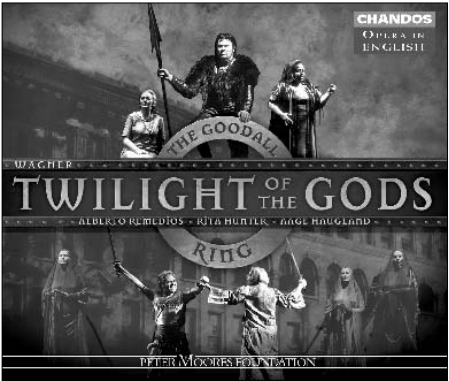
CHAN 3045(4)



CHAN 3038(4)



CHAN 3060(5)



Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3065(16)

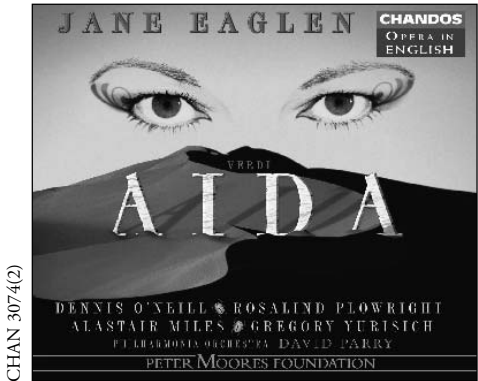
Opera in English on Chandos



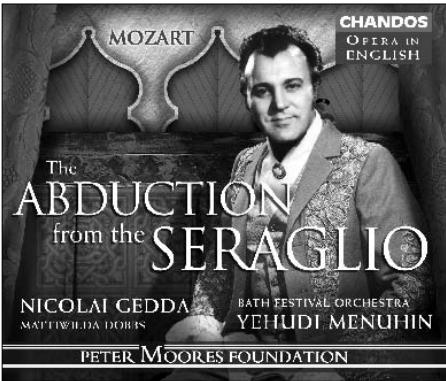
CHAN 3083(2)



CHAN 3089(2)



CHAN 3074(2)

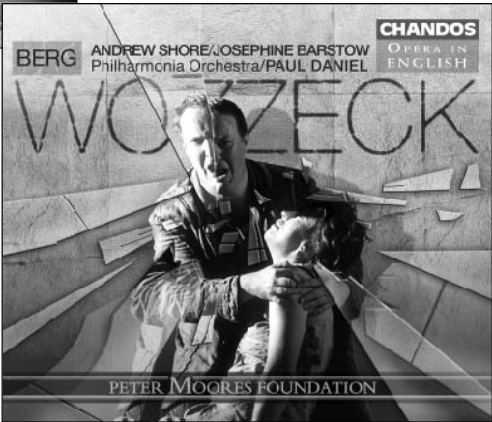


CHAN 3081(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3091(2)



CHAN 3094(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3096

Steinway Concert Grand provided and maintained by Steinway & Sons, London
Published by BMG Ricordi S.p.A. Milan/United Music Publishers Ltd, London

Artistic consultant to the Peter Moores Foundation: Patric Schmid

Repetiteur: Nick Bosworth

Staging director: Charles Kilpatrick

Vocal and language consultant: Ludmilla Andrew

Staging consultant: Daniel Slater

Music librarian: Jacqui Compton

Translation research by Henrietta Bredin

Production shots of Garsington Opera's 2002 production of *The Thieving Magpie* by Keith Saunders

Recording producer Brian Couzens

Sound engineer Ralph Couzens

Assistant engineer Matthew Walker

Editor Jonathan Cooper

Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

Recording venue Blackheath Halls, London; 21–23 & 27–28 September 2002

Front cover Digital montage including photograph of magpie by Chris Gomersall
(www.rspb-images.com)

Back cover Photograph of David Parry by Russell Duncan

Design Sean Coleman

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Booklet editor Kara Reed

Copyright English translation © Jeremy Sams

© 2003 Chandos Records Ltd

© 2003 Chandos Records Ltd

Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, UK

Printed in the EU

ROSSINI: THE THIEVING MAGPIE

CHANDOS

CHANDOS DIGITAL

2-disc set CHAN 3097(2)

Printed in the EU

LC 7038 DDD TT 151:02

Recorded in 24-bit/96kHz

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) THE THIEVING MAGPIE

Melodramma in two acts

Libretto by Giovanni Gherardini after *La Pie voleuse*, by J.M.T. Badouin
and Louis-Charles Caigniez

English translation by Jeremy Sams

Fabrizio Vinogradito, a rich farmerJeremy White *bass*
Lucia, his wifeSusan Bickley *mezzo-soprano*
Giannetto, their son, a soldier.....Barry Banks *tenor*
Ninetta, a servant in their house.....Majella Cullagh *soprano*
Fernando Villabella, Ninetta's father, a soldier.....Russell Smythe *baritone*
Gottardo, the village mayorChristopher Purves *baritone*
Pippo, a young peasant, in Fabrizio's service.....Nerys Jones *mezzo-soprano*
Isacco, a pedlarJohn Graham-Hall *tenor*
Antonio, the jailerStuart Kale *tenor*
Giorgio, the mayor's servant.....Toby Stafford-Allen *baritone*
Ernesto, friend of Fernando, a soldier.....Nicholas Garrett *bass*
Judge.....{ Darren Jeffery *baritone*
Philip Tebb *bass*
ClerkDaniel Slater
Magpie.....Prunella Scales

COMPACT DISC ONE
TT 79:58

COMPACT DISC TWO
TT 71:04

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir
Philharmonia Orchestra
David Parry

© 2003 Chandos Records Ltd © 2003 Chandos Records Ltd Chandos Records Ltd • Colchester • Essex • England

SOLOISTS/PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA/PARRY

CHAN 3097(2)